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**Understanding Youth Offending:
In search of 'social recognition'**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

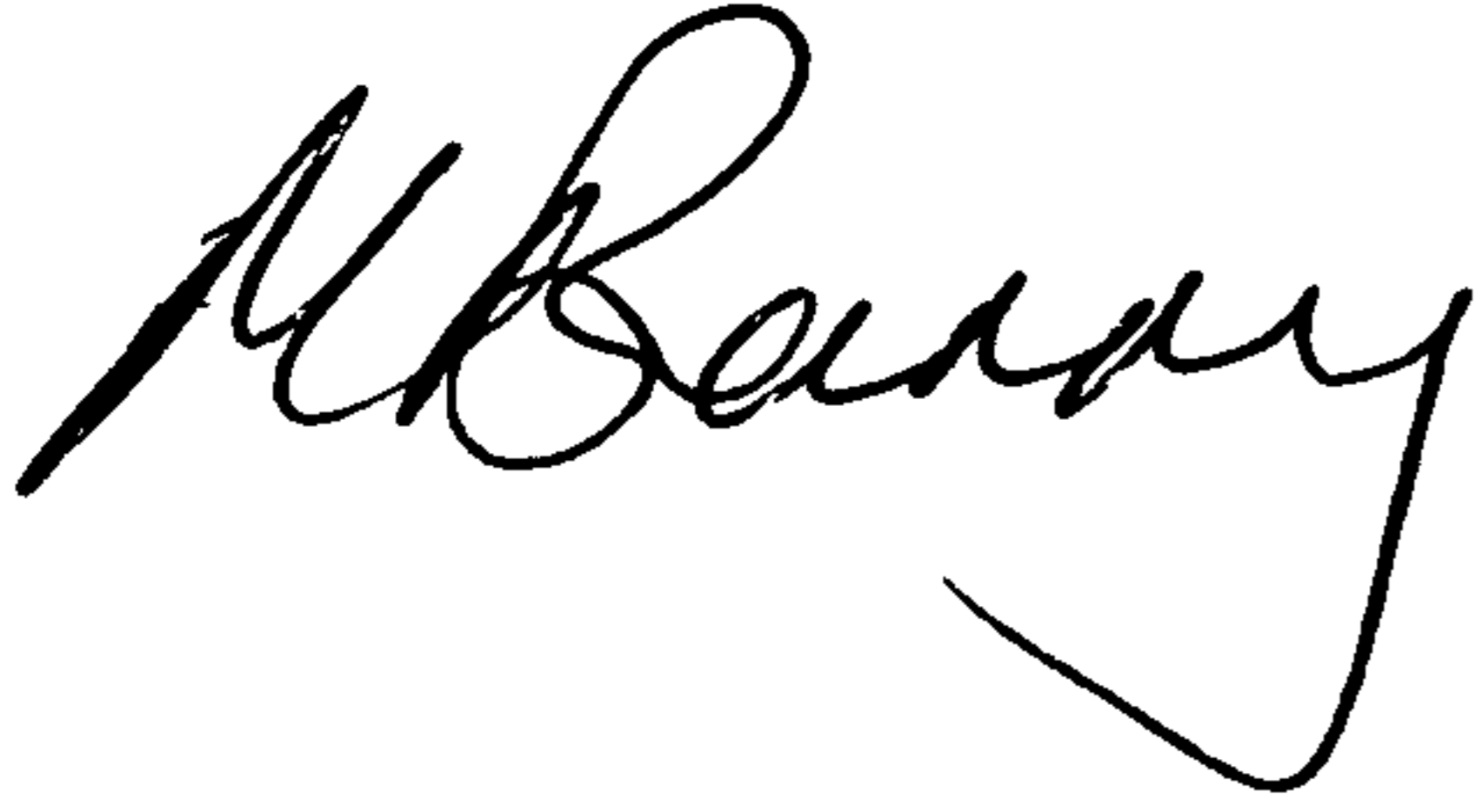
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Declaration

I declare that none of the work contained within this thesis has been submitted for any other degree at any other university. The contents found herein have been composed by the candidate, Monica Anne Barry.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Barry', written in a cursive style.

Dedicated to

Willy MacDonald

who hanged himself in prison, aged 17.

His short life and accidental death epitomised everything that is currently known and yet to be understood about crime, criminality and criminal justice.

His life made me interested in working in this field.
His death made me committed to it.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, whilst taking a predominantly criminological topic as its subject matter, incorporates other sociological and social psychological debates around youth transitions, power relations, youth culture and capital. In so doing, this thesis attempts to come to terms with the wider problems faced by young people who become embroiled in offending. It argues that the transition to 'adulthood' is heavily implicated in the fact that most offending occurs in late childhood and youth. This study asked 20 young women and 20 young men about why they started and stopped offending and what influenced or inhibited them in that behaviour as they grew older. What these young people suggested was that their decision to offend - or not offend - was very much based on their need to feel included in their social world, through friendships in childhood and through wider commitments in adulthood. The process of moving through the transitional arrangements from childhood, through youth, to adulthood seems to run parallel with the process of starting offending, maintaining such behaviour over a period of time and eventually stopping offending in favour of greater conventionality and stability. This analysis of the parallel paths between the process of youth transitions and the process of offending draws on the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, in particular that of capital accumulation. But it goes further in suggesting the need to take into account not only capital accumulation but also capital expenditure and power imbalances - power imbalances based not only on class distinctions, as Bourdieu suggests, but also on age and status.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I think everything you do now in life has consequences. Everything. It's like throwing a stone in a pool and it causes ripples. That ripple will get bigger and bigger and bigger, and that problem is gonna get bigger and bigger and bigger if it's not sorted, and if you don't cut it in the bud (Nick, 28).

BACKGROUND AND AIMS

As the Dedication at the beginning of this thesis implies, my interest in young offenders resulted from what was initially a professional engagement, but latterly a personal friendship, with one young man whose life had been severely disrupted by both family trauma and offending. At that time (the early 1980s), I was working in a voluntary organisation placing young people as volunteers both in their own communities and away from home, taking on caring roles, often with severely disabled or frail elderly people. I was particularly struck by the way that many of the young people who themselves had 'problems' (emotional, physical or criminal) were able to constructively give of themselves to the needs of the people for whom they were caring. Their sense of responsibility and concern for the 'recipient' of their care seemed to put in relative perspective their own problems and to allow them to step back from and reassess their own predicaments – albeit with the support and encouragement of those recipients, staff and often members of the wider communities in which they were placed.

The resultant, usually positive, transformation in some young people as a result of this volunteering experience gave me an increased interest in the role of responsibility, encouragement, trust and recognition in one's interactions with others, and suggested that perhaps agencies of the state could do more to foster this sense of reciprocity and

generativity¹ within individuals and communities as a means of effecting and sustaining positive changes in behaviour, criminal or otherwise. Initial questions that came to my mind, although not fully formulated at that time, were along the following lines: To what extent do young people feel a part of their community/society? Do they feel discriminated against or labelled as ‘children’ or ‘young people’ by the attitudes of ‘older’ people? To what extent, and how, do they want to take on responsibility for themselves and others? Are their future aspirations related or contrary to concepts such as ‘social inclusion’, ‘mainstream society’ and ‘social recognition’?

However, when I embarked on this doctoral study, I decided to focus specifically on young offenders, where my interests predominantly lie. I also decided, in discussion with colleagues, to undertake an exploratory study of factors influencing the onset and cessation of offending, rather than to specifically attempt to address the more nebulous themes of social inclusion, reciprocity, responsibility and transition. I hoped that this study would identify the problems facing young people which offending may well have been masking, or indeed manifesting, and I wanted to know, in particular, whether offending behaviour demonstrated a *need for*, rather than a rebellion against, social integration.

This study thus aimed to supplement and extend the existing literature on what influences or inhibits offending behaviour, but very much from the perspective of

¹ The term ‘generativity’ as coined by Erikson (1968) is explained in greater detail in Chapter 10. Broadly defined, it means having the power to produce or to generate; however, in the context of the desistance literature, it tends to mean the desire to care for others and to feel needed through productive and intergenerational outlets. Maruna (2001) cites a typology of generativity by Stewart et al. (1988) which includes caring for others; making a lasting contribution; concern for one’s offspring; being needed; and productivity/growth.

young people themselves who have been involved in such behaviour. The main research questions were:

- What are young people's experiences and views of starting, continuing and stopping offending?
- Is there a relationship between young people's reasons for starting, continuing and stopping offending?
- Are there gender differences in the reasons young people give for starting, continuing and stopping offending?

These research questions emerged as a result of three main concerns. First, I was particularly interested in seeking the views of young people directly about their attitudes towards, and experiences of, offending, since I considered them to be the key experts in describing and dissecting such behaviour. Secondly, I was keen to ascertain whether offending could be seen as a *process* of change, something that the academic literature on crime and desistance perhaps fails to consider (see Chapters 2 and 3). Thirdly, the fact that offending behaviour is viewed primarily (by both academics and crime control agencies) as the preserve of young men means that the situation for young women is largely overlooked or underplayed. Giving the views of young female offenders as much prominence as those of young male offenders may go some way towards resolving this discrepancy.

This thesis contains the views of 40 young people who have been embroiled in the criminal justice system. It explores their justifications for, and understanding of, their offending behaviour, and sets these views within the context of the criminological literature to date. The thesis then moves, in the closing chapters, from being exploratory to being interpretive, based on the findings from the data and on an analytical framework not previously attempted in criminological research. At this point, the thesis argues that the so-called ‘transition to adulthood’, although problematic in sociological terms, is nevertheless heavily implicated in offending behaviour, given the fact that most offending occurs in late childhood and youth. It is argued that the *process* of moving through the transitional arrangements from childhood, through youth to adulthood runs parallel with the *process* of embarking on offending, maintaining offending over a period of time and eventually stopping offending. This comparison between the process of youth transitions (from childhood, through youth to adulthood) and the process of offending (from onset, through maintenance to desistance) draws on the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, in particular his concepts of capital (see Chapters 5, 9 and 10).

In tying the phases of offending with the phases of transition, it is possible to engage with the temporary nature of youth offending and to draw comparisons between changes in offending over time and the contrasting levels of capital accumulated in the transition to adulthood. Whilst this study could not explore differences in offending between cultures, minority ethnic groupings or social classes, it was able to examine gender differences in offending behaviour amongst white, working class young people

and to situate that behaviour within the wider socio-political and academic context of youth transitions.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

It is often argued that antisocial behaviour has its antecedents in childhood (Rutter et al., 1998). Often, the phrase ‘children and young people’ is synonymous with trouble, and much of this bias results from public perceptions of children and young people. Children are at a distinct disadvantage in some societies because of their lack of power – physical, legal, economic and social. There are special measures in place to protect them from harm (whether this be self-inflicted or imposed by others) and, as a result, they can often be denied access to opportunities afforded ‘adults’ in mainstream society.

There is also a growing body of evidence (see, for example, Jeffs and Smith, 1998; Williamson, 1997) that young people are on the whole conformist and that their problems in youth are exacerbated by the pessimistic image and limited understanding that many adults have of the developmental phases of childhood. There is also strong evidence from self-report studies of offending behaviour within the UK that crime is ubiquitous amongst all social classes and personality types, and as Muncie (1999: 99) suggests:

The search for the aetiology of crime by identifying a criminal type or a criminal personality will continue because of a general reluctance to believe that youthful criminality is in any way ‘normal’.

Nevertheless, whilst self-reported offending may be common amongst young people (Jamieson et al., 1999), the number of young people ‘officially’ involved in crime is

minimal compared with the youth population as a whole. In Scotland, less than 2 per cent of children aged 8-15 were referred to the Reporter for reasons relating to offending behaviour in 2001/02 (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, 2002) and 93% of males and 99% of females aged 18 were **not** convicted of any crime (Scottish Executive, 2002). In 2001 in Scotland, whilst 69 per cent of all charges proved were attributable to under 21 year olds, only 4 per cent of the total population of under 21 year olds had a charge proved compared with 2 per cent of the remaining adult population (aged 21 – 70) (Scottish Executive, 2002).

In the UK, official data on offending are disproportionately concentrated on the adolescent age range, with convictions peaking at 18 for males and 14-15 for females (Flood-Page et al., 2000; Graham & Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al., 1999). Farrall (2002) depicts the age-crime curve² for men as rising rapidly from the early teens to a peak at 17-19, and falling steeply at first, then more gradually into the late twenties. For women, however, the curve rises almost as steeply as for men initially, reaches a plateau between 14 and 18, and then declines gradually into the late twenties³. In Scotland, the peak age for referral on offence grounds to the Reporter of the Children's Hearings system⁴ in 2000/01 was 15 for boys and 14 for girls. Equally, the number of convictions per 1,000 population in 2001 peaked at 18 for men and 19 for women but these rates fall markedly with age, although less so for women (Scottish Executive, 2002).

² Blumstein et al. (1988) suggest that there is a strong and invariant correlation between the level of crime and age, namely that the level of offending curve starts in the early teens, reaches a peak in the mid- to late-teens and then declines rapidly thereafter. This has been referred to by Farrington (1994: 521) as the 'age-crime curve'.

³ The self-reported peak age of offending activity for this sample was 17 for the men (in the range 12-25) and 20 for the women (in the range 14-30).

⁴ From 1971 in Scotland, the Children's Hearings system constituted a welfare-based tribunal to deal with child offenders as well as those beyond parental or educational control or in moral or other danger.

It should also be noted that the number of children coming to the attention of the Hearings system for offences has been relatively stable over the last five years (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, 2002) whilst the number of under 21 year olds convicted in Scottish courts in 2001 was almost a fifth lower than the number convicted in 1997 (Scottish Executive, 2002). Trends in the number of children and young people being dealt with for offending also need to be seen in the context of a marked reduction in the size of the overall youth population. The number of 18 year olds in the population was 61,100 in 2001 compared with 92,700 in 1982, a decrease of 34 per cent (Taylor, 2003, pers. comm).

Thus, offending behaviour – or, more specifically, the proportion of charges proved – seems to be concentrated amongst a small minority of young people. However, the political emphasis on youth crime and youth problems as opposed to adult crime and adult problems has been exacerbated by media coverage which has highlighted the apparently spiralling 'problem' of children and young people causing 'problems'. The legal and media status of children and young people has changed to some extent in the last decade, from being victims of cruelty and in need of protection from the community in the early 1990s to unruly villains from whom the community needs to be protected in the late 1990s (Franklin, 2002). Many authors suggest that this shift was prompted by the murder of two-year old James Bulger (amongst others, Muncie, 2002; Franklin, 2002). His death at the hands of two ten-year old boys in 1993 seemed to totally undermine the concept of childhood as being a time of innocence, and of children as being 'cute and contented' (Franklin, 2002: 18). In addition, as Franklin (ibid: 37) points out: 'Being "soft" on young offenders has never been a vote winning strategy for

UK politicians'. Social expectations are that whilst 'young people' may offend, 'children' should not. However the notion of childhood as the 'best years of one's life' is no longer universally accepted (James & Prout, 1997; Franklin, 2002). As Brown (1998: 2) suggests in relation to the murder of James Bulger: 'The real violence of the Bulger case is arguably the violence it did to adult notions of childhood'. And yet the opposing notions of childhood as innocence versus childhood as deviance are not new, having appeared in literature since the time of the Enlightenment (Franklin, 2002). Nevertheless, children and young people generally are becoming the benchmark of anticipated behaviour over the whole of the life course, as Cohen and Ainley (2000: 89) point out: 'young people have had to carry a peculiar burden of representation; everything they do, say, think or feel is scrutinized by an army of professional commentators for signs of the times'.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, social control mechanisms in relation to crime have focused predominantly on children and young people. However, towards the end of the twentieth century, such social control mechanisms have begun to *anticipate* rather than *react to* criminal behaviour through a broadening of the definition of crime to include the *potential* for crime. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act thus included civil injunctions such as anti-social behaviour orders, parenting orders and child curfews and the abolition of the presumption of *doli incapax* for children of 10-14 years of age (Scraton, 2002). The proposed Anti-Social Behaviour Bill argues for the police to have the right to disperse groups of young people on the streets and to remove into care those deemed in need of greater control than that offered by their own families. Parenting orders, curfews on children and young people and youth courts have equally

undermined children's (and parents') rights to freedom of expression and privacy (Brown, 1998). Brown argues that there is 'a recurring and ongoing preoccupation with the perceived threat to social stability posed by unregulated, undisciplined and disorderly youth outside adult control' (1998: 77).

This increasing scapegoating of children and young people as 'disorderly' masks the fact that over a third of children in the UK live in poverty (Franklin, 2002). In the 1980s and 1990s, social inequalities and class polarization have become increasingly apparent and absolute poverty has increased within a climate of reduced welfare provision and economic instability (Callinicos, 1999). According to some sociologists, this has resulted in increasing insecurity and risk, not least for children and young people in the transition to adulthood (Beck, 1992; Coles, 1995).

It is within this socio-economic climate of the last two decades that the young people in this study were brought up. The 40 respondents – 20 young men and 20 young women – all came from socio-economic backgrounds that are likely to impinge adversely on their opportunities for stable employment, adequate housing, a legitimate income and social identity. They were, with a few exceptions, involved in offending behaviour whilst still 'children', and the likelihood was that they would all become relatively conventional by the time they reached 'adulthood'. The research gives a group of young people an opportunity to describe and explain how and why they became involved in crime, and will hopefully go some way towards developing a greater understanding of youth offending.

Young people adopt diverse pathways in the transition to adulthood but are equally restricted by structural constraints, notably in relation to their legal status as young adults as well as their opportunities for further education and employment. The importance of social inequalities and social institutions in determining or undermining youth transitions is becoming increasingly apparent. Many young people are excluded from higher education (through a lack of qualifications or financial support), from employment opportunities and from housing. Nevertheless, the fact is that the majority of young people who are marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged within the labour market as elsewhere do not rebel against their predicament. On the contrary:

The response of the unemployed to the aggravation of labour market disadvantage lies not in the development of some highly distinctive subculture, but in the reinforcement of more conventional working-class beliefs (Gallie, 1994: 756, quoted in MacDonald, 1997: 175).

Conventionality, and young people's aspirations towards mainstream goals, are factors often ignored by both academics and policy makers in attempting to understand deviant behaviour in youth (MacDonald, 1997). Matza (1964: 27) has criticised positivist criminology for ignoring 'mundane and commonplace childhood activity' amongst young people (see Chapter 2). Equally, policy, practice and research often focus on the young and visible perpetrators of criminal activity, thus sensationalising the problem, the causes and the solutions. When one ranks crimes in order of seriousness, one could arguably put street crime, prostitution and theft at the bottom of the hierarchy, and terrorism, business fraud and drug smuggling at the top of the hierarchy. Young people tend to be at the bottom of the criminal hierarchy: their offending tends to be small-time and generally unsuccessful, but still gains a disproportionate level of attention from the media, the police and the criminal justice system.

Whilst the number of children and young people in the population has decreased over the last couple of decades (and is not projected to rise over the next couple of decades) and whilst some 97 per cent of crimes go undetected in the UK, the criminal justice system is nevertheless costing the government over £16 billion a year, with most of that money going on ‘chasing and punishing... adolescents armed with nothing more sophisticated than the sawn-off top of a Pepsi bottle’ (Davies, 2003a: 1).

THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

As with public perceptions of youth crime, academic perceptions of the topic can equally fall victim to moral panics and political rhetoric. For example, the 1990s have seen an increased interest by academics in directly influencing policy as well as practice, for example in suggesting ‘what works’ with offenders (McGuire, 1995). However, this partnership approach between academia and policy has often been to the exclusion of an exploration of issues relating to how and why certain interventions work (Maruna, 1998) or how and why indirect interventions may impact on offending behaviour (e.g., poverty, social networks and employment or educational opportunities).

However, whilst not all youth justice research impacts directly on policy developments, such research has been invaluable in raising our academic understanding of the issues surrounding the offending phenomenon, most notably amongst young people. Not only has there been an extensive literature since the 1950s and 1960s on why young people might start offending (see Chapter 2), there is also now a burgeoning literature on why the majority of young people stop offending in their early twenties (see Chapter 3). However, the theories which address young people’s propensity to *start* offending are

rarely compatible with those which address their propensity to *stop* offending, and yet one would expect a certain continuity or logical progression from onset through to desistance. For example, certain theories described in Chapter 2 argue that young people are disaffected by or rebel against middle class values and opportunities, and yet they nevertheless often stop offending without ever having gained such values or opportunities.

Whilst the circumstances surrounding desistance and young people's reasons for stopping or reducing offending have been studied recently in Scotland (Jamieson et al., 1999), no research has been identified which has systematically compared young people's reasons for starting with those given for stopping offending. Research tends to concentrate on one or other phenomenon, onset or desistance, without looking for common themes between the two, and rarely are offenders themselves asked about onset and desistance in tandem. In all the policy debates and developments emanating from the youth justice field currently in the UK, the voices of young offenders themselves are rarely heard. The aim of this thesis is to examine the process of offending from the perspective of young people who have themselves offended in the past and to assess whether there are any parallels to be drawn between reasons given for onset and desistance.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY PHRASES

Offending

'Crime' has been described as 'a fairly wobbly construct' (Heidensohn, 1985), lacking a clear definition, which makes the interpretation of behaviour that results in crime an

equally dubious activity. Various sets of literature include the following definitions of crime and offending: ‘an action defined by the law... which, if detected, will lead to some kind of sanction being employed against the perpetrator’ (Emsley, 1994: 150); and ‘banned or controlled behaviour which is likely to attract punishment or disapproval’ (Downes and Rock, 1988: 28). However, whilst those children below the age of criminal responsibility (namely, those aged 7 or under in Scotland) cannot be prosecuted for committing criminal acts, and those above the age of criminal responsibility who do *not* get caught are beyond the reaches of the judicial system, their behaviour still constitutes ‘offending’ in that such behaviour involves breaking the law. For the purposes of this study, the terms ‘offending’ or ‘offending behaviour’ are taken to mean acts or behaviour which, whether or not detected, warrant *potential* legal proceedings being taken against the individual. However, it should be borne in mind that, as labelling theory (Becker, 1963) suggests, those criminal acts that ‘warrant legal proceedings being taken’ are not readily identifiable because of the discretion given to law enforcers and the ambiguities inherent in the social construction of law itself (McConville et al., 1991).

Persistence

Various authors define persistence in various ways, depending on either official reconviction data or on self-report data. Jamieson et al (1999) define self-reported persistence as pertaining to those who say they have committed at least one serious or several less serious offences in the previous 12 months and these authors also use persistence to differentiate that group from ‘resisters’ and ‘desisters’. Farrington (1995) equates persistence with the level and frequency of offending over time, and suggests

that a 'chronic' persistent label can only be placed on those individuals with six previous convictions by the age of 18. Muncie (1999: 308) avoids being specific by suggesting that persistence means 'the recurring notion that a small group of offenders make up a disproportionate part of the "crime problem"'. Given the likely variations between self-reported and official data, disparities in police practice according to the age and gender of alleged offenders and changes in offending over time, the term 'persistence' is naturally problematic. However, within this study, persistence is seen as having a history of having been convicted of at least three offences at the time of interview (although the young men had a *minimum* of 14 such offences).

Desistance

Crime tends to be sporadic (Matza, 1964) and desistance not necessarily definitive, a fact often underplayed in definitions of desistance such as: '[the] moment that a criminal career ends' (Farrall & Bowling, 1999: 253) or '[the] termination of serious criminal participation' (Shover, 1996: 121). Maruna (2001: 22) criticises the criminological literature on desistance for implying that desistance is 'an abrupt cessation of criminal behaviour', when in fact offending behaviour is sporadic and can follow a zig-zag or cyclical path, cited by one cynic as only truly ending when the life of the individual concerned ends (Farrington, 1997). Maruna (2001: 22) stresses prolonged crime-free behaviour rather than 'spontaneous remission' when he suggests that desistance is 'the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending' (ibid: 26). Various studies (e.g., Graham & Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al., 1999; Maruna, 2001) classify desisters as having been offence-free for a twelve-month period, but one suggests a

timescale of 11 years for definitive desistance to have occurred (Farrington and Hawkins, 1991, cited in Maruna, 2001). However, rarely do criminologists have the resources to monitor a sample's offending behaviour over, say, an 11-year period, which is why they tend to adopt a one or two year period of official desistance. Within this study, although self-report data was corroborated by official reconviction data, the timing of desistance was very much left up to the young people themselves to determine (see Appendix 2, questions 10 and 11).

The phases of offending

Many sociologists talk of 'careers' or 'trajectories', especially in relation to offending behaviour. To Coles (1995), 'career' means 'the sequence of statuses through which young people pass [which] sets in train a series of social processes which has the potentiality to "determine" the likely course of a young person's future status sequence' (ibid: 8). He does not suggest an automatic progression (or digression) from one sequence to another, but that each sequence has the capacity to inform future sequencing. The word 'trajectory', on the other hand, suggests more of an automatic progression (or digression) from one sequence to another: 'the connotation of young people being somehow propelled along awaiting channels towards predetermined destinations' (Bates & Riseborough, 1993, quoted in Coles, 1995: 12). Given the seemingly heavy influence of social structure and the subsequent rigid or permanent nature of any change in both the expression 'career' and 'trajectory', I have decided in

this thesis to adopt the expression ‘offending phase’, as a means of including agency⁵, dynamics, flexibility and the notion of periodic rather than permanent change.

Throughout this thesis, I depart slightly from the usual criminological terminology of onset, persistence and desistance. I have no argument with the terms ‘onset’ and ‘desistance’, although the latter term has its critics within criminology, as mentioned above. However, my use of the word desistance allows for a noticeable or stated reduction or cessation of offending over time, bearing in mind that ‘true’ desistance can rarely be predicted (Farrington, 1997). I choose to replace the word ‘persistence’ with the word ‘maintenance’, since persistence often suggests not only dogged obstinacy or purposefulness, but also increased frequency of offending. Maintenance, on the other hand, suggests the possibility of merely keeping going, with or without purpose, and can denote a reduction as well as an increase in offending behaviour.

Children and young people

The terms ‘children’ and ‘young people’ are used interchangeably in much of the literature on youth offending, as are the terms ‘youth’, ‘juvenile’ and ‘adolescent’. However, as Furlong & Cartmel (1997) point out, ‘adolescent’ refers more to the physiology and psychological circumstances of young people, whereas ‘youth’ has a more sociological focus covering, as it does, a wider socio-political context and a longer age range (from the mid-teens to the mid-twenties⁶), although Jeffs and Smith (1998)

⁵ Agency, in social theory terms, implies free choice and self-determination, albeit within structural constraints. Scott (2001: 3) thus suggests that ‘agents always have the ability to *choose* among alternative courses of action, however constrained these choices may be’ (emphasis in original).

⁶ Jones (1996) and Rutter & Smith (1995), amongst others, have suggested that the age of 25 is currently a more appropriate upper age limit for the youth phase, given extended transitions of young people in the late 20th century.

argue that the term ‘youth’ still focuses on the behaviour of young people, albeit in public places rather than the private sphere. Jones (1996), amongst others, suggests that ‘youth’ ends at 25, based on one’s eligibility in the UK for ‘adult’ state benefits at that age. However, this thesis concentrates on the broader age range of 18-30⁷ in order to cover the upper age at which desistance is said to have occurred for most offenders (Blumstein et al., 1988; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Sampson and Laub, 1993; Shover & Thompson, 1992).

The term ‘young people’ is used extensively by criminologists and other academics in research, policy and legal documents world-wide, although arguably uncritically and without strict definition. For example, whilst in the UK, ‘young people’ refers to those between the ages of 15 and 25 (Jones, 1995), and in Australia between the ages of 13 and 25 (Cunneen & White, 2002), in Finland, individuals up to the age of 29 are legally referred to as ‘young people’ within the Youth Work Act (2002) (Tammi, 2004, pers. comm). The European Youth Forum represents young people up to the age of 35, whilst a youth project in Nepal has an upper age limit for young people of 40 (Geudens, 2004, pers. comm). This lack of clarity over what constitutes a ‘young person’ is a reflection of the constantly changing boundaries between childhood and adulthood, but also partly because the term is seen as generally uncontentious (both by academics, policy makers and young people alike). However, whilst one might arguably be more exact in referring to 18-33 year olds as collectively ‘young adults and adults’, in order to avoid a cumbersome linguistic style I have chosen in this thesis to refer to the respondents *and others of similar age* as ‘young people’.

⁷ Whilst 39 of the total sample of 40 fall into the age range 18-30, one female was aged 33.

LAYOUT OF THE THESIS

The layout of this thesis adheres very much to the chronological order in which the research process took place, in that the early literature reviews (chapters 2-4) informed the analysis of the initial findings (chapters 6-8), which themselves informed a secondary analysis based on a revised interpretation of the data from the primary analysis (chapters 9 and 10). Thus, the primary analysis is informed only by the criminological literature on offending and desistance, and does not allude to the forthcoming secondary analysis. The secondary analysis is influenced and informed by the young people's views and experiences of offending, but also by a wider set of sociological literature on youth transitions and capital accumulation. This may seem a somewhat unorthodox layout for a thesis of this kind, but nevertheless remains true to the process I went through in making sense of the data without pre-empting or undermining the voice of the young people concerned.

This chapter has described the context within which this research study was developed, including the context of research to date, which has informed policy and practice in recent years. Chapter 2 examines some of the major criminological theories relating to the onset of offending or the social construction of crime. This literature is described under four headings: individual, structural, cultural and radical/realist theories of crime. The literature is seen to be wanting in terms of causes versus correlates of crime; its lack of ready transferability based on culture, age and sex; its lack of clarity in relation to why only certain segments of the population commit crimes, to varying degrees, in certain settings and over irregular periods of time; and finally, its lack of emphasis on the wider socio-political context within which offending takes place. However, more

recent studies are explored which address some of these anomalies and thereby highlight the need to broaden the context of academic debate about crime from the individual to the societal. Chapter 3 describes the literature on desistance, under the headings of individual, structural and integrative theories of desistance. Whilst acknowledging that the desistance literature is still in its infancy compared with that on offending, this chapter nevertheless highlights various gaps in the literature, in particular the discrepancy between the expected opportunities that foster desistance and the fact that many young people stop offending having gained none of these opportunities; and the lack of continuity of academic thinking between theories of onset and desistance of offending. Chapter 4 examines a wider set of theoretical literature pertaining to youth transitions which is deemed critical in informing a greater understanding of the prevalence of offending amongst young people. It thus fills a literature gap in criminology, which is seen as important in placing offending in a wider social context of youth transitions. It is argued that offending is a process of change and development, the course of which runs broadly parallel to that of the transition from childhood to adulthood. Chapter 5 describes the methods used in undertaking this research, including the rationale for the study, the fieldwork process and analysis. It also includes a brief breakdown of the characteristics of the sample under study.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 focus on the views and experiences of the respondents, interspersing their narratives with comparators from the literature described in earlier chapters. Chapter 6 explores the young people's views of starting offending, Chapter 7 of maintaining that behaviour over time and Chapter 8 of stopping offending. These three chapters utilise broadly similar parameters in presenting the data: what factors

influenced their propensity or otherwise to offend and the advantages and disadvantages of starting, continuing and stopping offending.

Chapter 9 opens with an additional brief review of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977; 1986), which arose from, and was seen as complementing, the young people's interpretation of events as outlined in Chapters 6 – 8. In particular, this chapter describes and appropriates Bourdieu's concepts of capital. These concepts are combined with those of transition and through the use of case study material, the chapter explores the common threads in the process of onset of offending through to desistance in terms of transitions and accumulated capital. Chapter 10 progresses this secondary analysis further, developing the notion of capital expenditure as well as accumulation. Again it draws on case study material to illustrate these young people's capacity and opportunities to expend their capital through conventional means, namely, responsibility-taking and generativity, thereby increasing the likelihood of desistance through 'social recognition'. It argues that a combination of accumulation to expenditure of capital – and their concurrent reliance on durability and legitimation within the wider society – is unlikely to occur when young people are in transition and often marginalised from mainstream opportunities and status. Finally, Chapter 11 highlights the interplay between theory and data, summarises the main findings from the research and suggests ways forward for future research on the topic of youth offending and youth transitions.

Throughout the thesis, quotations by the young people in the sample which are used to illustrate points made in the text are referenced by a pseudonym followed by the age of the respondent at interview – for example: 'Anna, 21'.

CHAPTER 2: THEORIES OF CRIME

... when you're that age and you're going through puberty and like everything else, I think I was just trying to prove something... Just not grown up enough. Just a kid who thought she was grown up... now I know I wasn't grown up but then I was convinced I was (Bernadette, 23).

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this literature review is to look at past and present criminological theories of why people offend and to explore the various shared concepts that emerge from such literature in order to enable a more informed examination of the issues addressed in the current thesis. Since this study concentrates on the factors which influence the initiation of and desistance from offending behaviour in 18 – 30 year olds, this chapter focuses on theories relating to young people in particular, notably, individual propensities and aspirations, cultural or subcultural association and social bond/control. Also included will be what are described as 'radical and realist' theories of crime (Muncie, 1999: 115).

Most definitions of crime cannot account for different historical, cultural, temporal and political settings. As suggested in Chapter 1, concepts and definitions of crime and criminality are varied and wide-ranging. Criminology, as an area of scientific investigation, invites contributions from a wide range of academic disciplines, each with its own theoretical background and approach. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that criminology's position of trying to understand criminality generally is flawed if it cannot firstly adopt a universal concept of 'crime'. Rarely are the *definitions* of crime emanating from the various academic disciplines compatible with one another, and yet each discipline has an increasing tendency to draw on other disciplines in an

attempt to encompass all causal eventualities, irrespective of the definition of crime that is used:

If we seek the causes of crime before we seek its definition, then the definition of crime is determined by the causes we ascribe to it. Causes are the property of disciplines, and the definition of crime is therefore discipline-specific... To the sociologist, crime is social behaviour. To the psychologist, crime is an individual trait. To the biologist, crime is the manifestation of an inherited characteristic. To the economist, crime is rational behaviour. And the list goes on... (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990: 171).

Within the sociological discourse on criminology, this problem of definition is confounded by the dichotomy between micro- and macro-sociological stances. Farrall and Bowling (1999: 261), for example, have described the literature on desistance as being split between either seeing individuals as 'super-agents' or as 'super-dupes'. The former are free to make decisions as they choose to directly influence what they do, and the latter are restricted by the influences and determinants of external forces. These authors suggest that the dichotomy between micro- and macro-sociology has long been in evidence in all aspects of sociological theory, not just in criminology, and even though certain social theorists have tried to bridge the gap between the two in recent years (for example, Bourdieu, 1986, 1989; Giddens, 1984), the dichotomy within sociology generally is still in evidence.

The literature on why individuals start, as well as stop, offending also reflects this dichotomy. However, what is perhaps distinctive about much of the criminological literature on both onset and desistance is the lack of clarity about what is an individually-derived versus an externally-determined explanation for offending behaviour. As an example, in relation to theories of onset, strain theory (see below)

generally suggests that the individual is somehow propelled into a criminal role based on an incapacity to fulfil personal aspirations because of external constraints. This theory comes under the rubric of sociological positivism, where heterogeneity and choice are underplayed in favour of consensus and determinism. As Muncie (1999: 112) suggests in relation to positivistic criminological theory: ‘... people are propelled into crime by circumstances over which they have no control... crime is *caused* either by individual ‘pathologies’ and/or by precipitative social and economic conditions’ (emphasis in original). However, if one asks individuals involved in crime whether, on the one hand, they are propelled reluctantly into a life of crime or, on the other hand, choose to have aspirations which crime can further meantime, their responses may be ambiguous or contradictory. They may at some times down-play their own control of the situation and at other times blame only themselves (Maruna, 2001). Such behaviour is, nevertheless, often based on quite rational calculation. In relation to theories of desistance, one example of a so-called ‘structural’ (deterministic) explanation for desistance is gaining employment, and yet the ‘agency’ (individual choice) involved in overcoming the hurdles of looking and applying for, as well as being offered and sustaining, such a job should not be underestimated. However much one’s external circumstances may be separate from individual influence, it is still the case that an individual chooses to behave in a certain way – albeit within the confines of external constraints – and is the ultimate decision maker in that behaviour. Therefore, structural versus individual explanations of crime and desistance are not mutually exclusive but highlight both the complementary and dichotomous relationships between structure and agency.

THEORIES OF CRIME

With the above provisos in mind, certain theories of offending are outlined below under four broad headings: individual, structural, radical/realist and cultural theories of crime; however, they are not exhaustive of all criminological theories, only illustrative of the wide variety of explanations of crime. These classifications have been chosen to differentiate those theories which focus primarily on the offender's personality specifically (individual), from those which emphasise his/her interactions with the wider social environment (structural), from those which focus predominantly on the social or political influences of, or impact on, the wider society (radical/realist theories), from those which focus on the criminalization of youth culture. There is often an overlap between individual, structural and cultural explanations in that, as mentioned above and in the introductory chapter, there are many overlapping reasons and rationales relating to why people commit crimes. The individual, structural and cultural theories outlined in this chapter suggest that young people in particular offend for one or more of a wide variety of reasons: because of their age; through rational choice for utilitarian, monetary or hedonistic gain; because of an inability to achieve one's aspirations within society; as a result of a lack of self-control; because of the influence of others; because of enjoyment and cultural 'lifestyles'; or because of a lack of socialization. In addition to these individual, structural and cultural forces, there is a fourth school of thought, namely that offending behaviour is ubiquitous and normal but that it may be socially or politically labelled as a problem so as to justify or ensure social control.

Overall, theories of offending behaviour tend to be based on official data on convictions and reconvictions and do not explicitly differentiate between onset and maintenance. Onset has been described by Farrington (1994) as referring to when people start offending, although he focuses predominantly on the 'when' factor as measured by official conviction data. Nevertheless, official records of onset only highlight the age at which the individual was first caught and convicted. Rarely have studies examined self-reported offending based on the age of 'unofficial' onset (Moffitt, 1997) or on individual perceptions of changes in offending over time.

Individual theories of crime

I know that my aunties and that used to shoplift when they were younger, so maybe it's bred in me, maybe I can't stop offending (Nick, 28).

Biological/psychological theories of crime include genetic make-up and personality factors that predispose individuals to offend and cycles of criminal propensity generated within families. The early North American studies undertaken by Dugdale (1910) and Goddard (1927) identified seemingly inherent and inherited criminal traits in two families, the Jukes and the Kallikaks, and concluded that undesirable or criminal characteristics were passed down from generation to generation (Muncie, 1999). Eysenck (1964/1970) used personality tests of introversion, extroversion and neuroticism to gauge the level of criminality within individuals. He concluded that those who offend tend to have low self-control, low socialization, high impulsivity and low social conscience. Farrington et al. (1996) also suggest that whilst criminality *per se* cannot be genetically transmitted (since crime is, to these authors, a social construct), anti-social behaviour can be genetically transmitted, as can traits such as low

intelligence, impulsivity and aggressiveness, thus concentrating such behaviour within families. Many of these types of theory of crime, coupled with those which suggest personality disorder causes criminal tendencies, argue that the problem behaviour will tend to manifest itself in childhood and adolescent anti-social behaviour. Muncie (1999: 98) suggests that whilst such theories are 'interesting in themselves', they merely demonstrate correlates rather than causes of crime. Equally, they cannot explain why such traits are manifested predominantly in adolescence rather than throughout the life course.

Rational Choice Theory developed from the classical school of thought which suggested that crime was opportunistic, irrespective of whether this opportunism was learnt by others or discovered by experiment. This theory became an attractive solution to the pessimism of the 1970s that 'nothing works' in reducing crime and criminality (Martinson, 1974; Stewart et al., 1994), heralding a new approach to the administration by containment of crime and criminals, through situational crime prevention measures. Cornish and Clarke (1986) suggest that offenders will weigh up the costs and benefits of crime and act accordingly. Many people also refrain from certain types of offending because of a moral, political, social or other motive, thus non-offending is as much a rational choice as is offending. To this extent, external intervention is unlikely to be successful in reducing *criminality* and effort should instead be focused on situational crime prevention, namely, reducing the opportunities for *crime* to be profitable (Clarke, 1980; Stewart et al., 1994). This so-called New Administrative Criminology (Young, 1994), developed by Home Office researchers in the 1980s, therefore abandoned a search for the aetiology of crime, accepted the ubiquitous nature of criminal activity,

stressed the rational choice and opportunistic aspects of criminality and developed a containment or prevention approach as a solution. This school of thought, therefore, combines both rational choice theory and control theories.

Situational crime prevention techniques, as developed by New Administrative criminologists, have been criticised for causing a displacement effect on offending, as structural barriers (locks and bolts) which are constructed in certain areas only serve to 'displace' offenders to other areas, although such displacement has so far been unsubstantiated (Clarke & Felson, 1993). In relation to the concurrent dismissal of the need to explore the aetiological question, Young (1994: 96) argues that: 'it is difficult to prevent crime if one does not know the underlying force behind the commitment of crime by the actors involved'.

Critics of Rational Choice Theory suggest that crime is an intermittent, often fruitless activity, not always a 'choice' free of external constraints (Rutter et al., 1998; Shover, 1996; Wyn & White, 1997). Shover (1996: 164) found that armed robbers, for example, reported 'little or no sophistication' in their decision making, and that for young people 'crime is a risk-taking activity in which the risks are only dimly appreciated or calculated' (ibid: 164). Equally, as Burnett (2003) has pointed out, several studies of offending behaviour suggest that decision making is often clouded by substance misuse, that often offenders commit crimes almost routinely and often they may not engage in the forward-planning suggested by Rational Choice theorists. Rational Choice Theory also masks the reluctance by politicians on both sides of the political spectrum to address wider causes of crime. As Stewart et al. (1994: 6) point out in relation to the

shift in probation policy in the 1970s and 1980s from looking at structural causes to more individualised notions of criminality:

The reasoning criminal, provided by the abandonment of criminological interest in the wider causes of crime, was a convenient figure for a government committed to denying that poverty and unemployment had anything to do with offending rates.

Developmental theories draw on both biological and age-related factors in relation to onset, duration and escalation of crime (Matsueda & Heimer, 1997; Moffitt, 1993; 1997; Thornberry, 1997). Such theories seek to explain different dimensions of criminal behaviour, such as subtypes of offender and the precursors and consequences of offending, and attempt to track patterns of offending alongside changes in development over the life course.

Moffitt (1993: 313, emphasis in original) suggests that adolescence-limited offenders are ‘trapped in a *maturity gap*, chronological hostages of a time warp between biological age and social age’ because of delayed adult status, and may meantime learn and adopt anti-social behaviour from their more persistent delinquent peers through ‘social mimicry’ (ibid: 313). She argues that the age-crime curve: ‘obtains among males and females for most types of crimes, during recent historical periods, and in numerous Western nations’ (Moffitt, 1997: 12) and that the timing and duration of offending behaviour is crucial to an understanding of such behaviour.

Developmental theories suggest that progress along trajectories is age-graded, although some trajectories or transitions may be ‘off-age’, in that they either occur prematurely or are delayed (Thornberry, 1997: 5). However, it is not clear from this literature what

the benchmarks for 'expected' age-graded transitions actually are, from which off-age transitions deviate.

Structural theories

Whilst most individual theories of crime have, by definition, focused on the offender and his/her physiological or psychological make up, due in part to late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century academic criminology being the main preserve of biologists, psychiatrists and psychologists (Muncie, 1999), it was only in the mid-twentieth century that sociologists made an impact on criminology.

The first two of these sociological theories of crime presented here both emanated from the 'Chicago School' in the middle of the last century, developed primarily by sociologists interested in urban planning and community structure, and the effects that these had on specific groups of inhabitants.

Social ecology theories of crime incorporate an urban geographical perspective that explains the prevalence of crime in certain areas over time. The 'zone of transition' between the business and residential sectors within an urban setting was devised by Park and Burgess (1925) as a means of explaining the instability and gradual decline of formerly residential communities that were displaced by a centralising and expanding business sector. These authors suggest that crime would be most prevalent in areas of social disorganization and instability. Later developments of this theory included the cultural transmission (or social learning) of criminal behaviour (see below), but

underplayed structural factors such as poverty, inadequate housing and community disintegration (Muncie, 1999).

Differential association theory (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970) supported subcultural and learning theories by seeing crime as learnt behaviour rather than affected by personality, class or environment. Through association with others, the potential delinquent 'learns definitions favourable to deviant behaviour' (Muncie, 1999: 103). However, Sutherland and Cressey stress offending will only occur when crime is seen by the immediate friendship group as more attractive than conformity, and that such definitions might vary in frequency and intensity for differing individuals over time. Whilst differential association, according to Sutherland and Cressey, tends to result in criminal activity through a group learning process which favours such behaviour, Muncie (1999) argues that the theory cannot explain differential association with groups that do not favour such behaviour. More recent adaptations of differential association (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985) have dismissed the social learning element of the theory by instilling a measure of rational choice, albeit with conscience being a strong deterrent to any anticipated material gain. This focus on conscience is a major emotive factor in the shaming and reintegration of offenders within the community according to Braithwaite:

The larger the ratio of the net rewards of crime to the net rewards of non-crime, the more likely is crime... [but] if rules are consistently enforced by parents whose approval is valued by their children, then the experience of conforming to the rules will itself become pleasurable and the thought of breaking them a source of anxiety (Braithwaite, 1989: 35).

However, Cunneen and White (2002) stress the group approval, and hence subcultural sociability element, of differential association theory. Thus, criminal behaviour is a collective phenomenon based on learning and influence within the 'intimate group'. In this respect, it is both culturally-defined and dynamic, and is one of the few theories of crime that may be able to differentiate between the onset and maintenance phases of offending, in that one's learning and influence changes as one's social networks and the costs and benefits of crime change over time.

Routine Activity Theory draws on geographical and temporal factors that facilitate offending behaviour. Developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), it suggests that for a criminal event (or violation) to occur requires a likely offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian against crime (e.g., neighbours, family, security personnel, etc.). The timing of different activities in different areas is central to this approach, which argues that changes in work patterns (where, for example, more women leave the home during the day to go to work) and the increased availability of portable electronic goods make the temptation and opportunity for crime more likely. Motivation and inclination are played down in favour of structural and temporal windows of opportunity and this theory is, thus, increasingly seen as compatible with, and complementary to, Rational Choice approaches (Clarke & Felson, 1993).

Strain/subcultural theories (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961; Cohen, 1955; Durkheim, 1895/1964; Merton, 1957; Miller, 1958) suggest that people offend because they want power, status, attention or money and the opportunities that money can buy, but they know that they have limited legitimate resources with which to achieve such aspirations. Durkheim (1895/1964) highlighted competitiveness and growing

individualism within societies as causing 'anomie' or normlessness amongst marginalised groups. Cohen (1955) combined anomie with subcultural theory to produce a more collective approach to an understanding of crime, which would also better explain non-utilitarian as well as utilitarian offending⁸. For Cohen, gangs provide an important alternative status in society for those with restricted mainstream opportunities arising mainly from school streaming and subsequent disaffection. He argues that whilst the concept of anomie can account for professional and property crime, subcultural delinquency is more hedonistic and non-utilitarian in nature, resulting from hostility towards, rather than a desire to acquire, middle class status. Cohen suggests that many working class deviant groups consciously form into subcultures as a matter of principle, and actively repudiate and rebel against middle class values. He sees working class boys in a middle class society as always looking for a solution to the problem of adjustment. They can gain status within their own milieu (e.g., through deviant behaviour such as violence) and are uninterested in meeting the criteria of acceptance within the wider, more middle class society (which expects seemingly conventional, conforming behaviour). However, he does not try to explain middle class delinquency, or say how delinquents eventually leave the subcultural milieu.

Merton's development of anomie theory to include 'strain' (1957) attempts to explain all deviant behaviour (not just suicide, which was Durkheim's focus), but whereas Durkheim blamed social disorganization for the presence of anomie, Merton blames

⁸ Throughout this thesis, 'utilitarian' is used in the common criminological sense as being 'useful', usually from a monetary point of view. According to Morrison (1995: 307), it suggests that the individual is 'the centre of a system of calculation... of self-gratification'. Non-utilitarian crimes tend to be 'expressive', such as vandalism.

unrealistically high social and individual expectations as causing strain amongst individuals. Merton (1957: 63) argues that in a deregulated political economy where there is an over-emphasis on the value of money and the 'American Dream', lacking the institutionalised means to attain cultural goals can result in 'status frustration', especially amongst working class youth. Whilst aspirations are not necessarily class-specific, one's class (and, therefore, one's opportunities) may restrict the means of achieving aspirations. Merton describes five modes of adaptation to society: one either accepts both the goals and the means (conformity); accepts the goals but rejects the means (innovation); accepts the means but lowers the expectations in terms of goals (ritualism); relinquishes both goals and means (retreatism); or fights to change both goals and means through political or social action (rebellion). Much youth offending seems to come under the rubric of innovation (e.g., property crime to relieve poverty) and retreatism (e.g., substance misuse to relieve marginalization or boredom). However, Merton's theory of strain cannot readily explain youthful, non-utilitarian and unsuccessful criminal activity or expressive crimes such as vandalism or violence. Nor can it account for the age-crime curve.

Miller (1958) stressed the class differential in subcultural theory by suggesting that working class individuals had different value systems to middle class individuals and that the former tended to be delinquent in quality as an act of rebellion. To Miller, young people, and working class young people in particular, want to adhere to and be recognised for the behaviour and standards applying within their own communities rather than those of middle class communities. Working class youths deliberately violate and are in conflict with middle class values and norms. Belonging to a gang or

group is important to young people, as is the status provided by membership of that group. Crime is but one means of attaining such status.

Whereas 'gangs' tend to be seen as a North American phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly popular within European criminological discourse to describe the tendency of young people to congregate in groups (Joseph, forthcoming; Stewart et al., 1994). Joseph identifies a hierarchy of gang formation (from 'economic' through to 'peer' gangs), where peer gangs are seen as loose collectives of youths who come together through friendship, family or geographical ties. Gangs in the study by Joseph tend to be based on a cost-benefit calculation of the material and social consequences of property and violent offending: conspicuous consumption resulting from theft held symbolic meaning, as did one's ability to be a successful and street-wise offender (Joseph, forthcoming).

Like Cohen and Miller, Cloward and Ohlin (1961) see working class sub-cultures as a collective response to unregulated and unlimited goals, under-achievement and social exclusion in the transition to adulthood. Unlike Miller, however, Cloward and Ohlin argue that it is not middle class values that young people from working class backgrounds rebel against or even aspire to; they suggest instead that working class males only aspire to higher working class values (see also Willis, 1977). Cloward and Ohlin (1961) suggest that because the transition period from childhood to adulthood is prolonged through social, economic and legal restraints within society, this may result in deviance through frustration or boredom. Offending is not seen as a cry for help as such, since covertness is a factor in such activity, but it could be seen as 'a search for solutions to problems of adjustment' (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961: 38). However, Clinard

(1964), and Taylor (1994), amongst others, criticise Cloward and Ohlin's theory for concentrating on a gang culture, disregarding the fact that not all disadvantaged youth commit crime, not all crime is a working class, male or group activity, some societies with crime problems operate laissez-faire economies and recourse to illegitimate means is ubiquitous within all strata in society, not just in working class youth. However, Braithwaite (1989: 39) notes that certain subcultural theories deny overall consensus about crime in society, whilst others suggest that there is 'overwhelming consensus... that most acts which are crimes should be crimes'. Matza (1964, 1969) places a lot of blame on the doorstep of sociological positivism for imagining a subcultural milieu that ties adolescents to a seemingly timeless commitment to deviant behaviour and anti-conventional beliefs. The delinquent is no longer the defective of biological determinism but is a defector. Matza also questions how subcultural theory allows for the fact that such a commitment to crime is suddenly set aside when the young person matures, a common criticism with many theories of criminality which this literature review explores.

In an attempt to address some of the criticisms of strain theory, Agnew (1992) and Greenberg (1977), amongst others, have revised strain theory to include one's negative reaction to the loss of positively valued stimuli and to focus on more immediate goals and expectations rather than merely on blocked aspirations towards future goals. Greenberg (1979: 592) suggests that opportunity theories which equate offending as a *current* alternative to *future* unemployment, such as those propounded by Cloward and Ohlin (1961), are 'farfetched', but that strain theory more generally can be applied to those more immediate aspirations that children and young people themselves identify.

These include their dependence on friendship groups, their exclusion from the world of work as children and young people and their marginalization from leisure activities that require a stable and consistent source of legitimate money.

Agnew (1992: 47) identifies three types of strain in his revised **general strain theory**:

strain as the actual or anticipated failure to achieve positively valued goals...
strain as the actual or anticipated removal of positively valued stimuli, and...
strain as the actual or anticipated presentation of negatively valued stimuli.

Agnew focuses on adolescent and usually male delinquents and suggests that one blames one's adversity on others and that offending may be seen as a corrective measure to regain lost opportunities, albeit through illegal means. In a study of female offending using revised strain theory, Katz (2000) argues that women's particular childhood socialization and victimization experiences and potential for later domestic violence have a significant impact on their propensity to offend and that revised strain theory can help explain such female delinquency.

Social Control theories developed as a response to the seeming over-emphasis on individual factors at the expense of structural or interactional factors. Hirschi (1969) called for an abandonment of strain and subcultural theory after it was found that very few of their variables were influential in explanations of crime as a temporary phenomenon and one that was prevalent within all classes of society. **Social control theory** (Hirschi, 1969) suggests that attachments which are developed through family, friends and school are important deterrents to deviance if those attachments reflect positive moral values and beliefs which may encourage self-control and conformity to

law-abiding behaviour, irrespective of class or opportunities (Hirschi, 1969). However, Hirschi questions the 'gang mentality' or differential association since his research suggests no evidence of delinquency resulting from an attachment to peers. On the contrary, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) stress the positive value of attachment to peers and that a young person's stake in society affects his/her choice of friends rather than as in subcultural theory where friends are seen as affecting one's attitude to society (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Like Cloward and Ohlin, Hirschi (1969) also endorses the view that deviance can occur when the transition period is prolonged between childhood and adulthood. He argues that the attitude and encouragement of parents and teachers is crucial to the young person's motivation to achieve during the preparation towards transition. Equally, one's stake in society is affected by one's motivation to strive for and achieve conventional goals – the lower the levels of motivation and achievement, the less concern is placed on the consequences of deviant behaviour. Therefore, the greater the aspirations an individual has, for example in employment prospects, the less likely s/he is to be involved in deviant behaviour. However, Hirschi drew predominantly on self-administered questionnaires from a cross-section of secondary school pupils who had generally low rates of offending and thus he cannot fully explain more persistent offending over time.

Gottfredson and Hirschi's **self-control theory** (1990) focuses on the absence of self-control within individuals and situations and the concurrent pursuit of immediate gratification. A definition of crime, to Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), should transcend cultural differences, social groupings and legal differences and should be able to incorporate the majority of acts defined as criminal across all societies; they, therefore,

declare their theory as a 'general' theory of crime. These authors (1990: xv) suggest that offenders appear 'to have little control' over their own desires, and that levels of self-control are determined in early childhood (often ingrained by the age of 8 as a result of inappropriate socialization and child-rearing techniques). They see crime as the self-interested maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain, and criminality as 'the tendency of individuals to pursue short-term gratification without consideration of the long-term consequences of their acts' (ibid: 177). Those who engage in criminal behaviour tend to be impulsive, selfish and myopic, according to these authors, and criminal activity tends to flourish in the absence of the control fostered through socialization and positive life circumstances. However, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) do not suggest that criminality *per se* will result in crime but that crime is but one manifestation of a lack of self-control. They argue that crime rates reduce with age, irrespective of criminality, but that criminality and low self-control may manifest themselves in different ways throughout the life course.

Radical and realist theories of crime

In an attempt to shift the focus away from the individual, and a preponderance with his/her genetic make up, age, levels of self-control, aspirations or friendship circles, the following radical criminological theories emphasise the effects of the wider society - social, structural and political - in encouraging or maintaining certain groups and individuals in conflictual or criminal lifestyles. Durkheim (1895/1964) highlighted the fact that definitions of crime and punishment are used as a means of deterring criminals and ensuring obedience to socially-determined rules, and as Muncie (1999: 150) suggests:

Critical criminologies are as much an examination of political economy and state formations as anything we might like to call crime... 'Crime' is not simply law-breaking behaviour, but is something constructed through the processes of interaction, social reaction and power.

One of the first theorists to acknowledge this social construction and labelling of crime as paramount in explaining offending behaviour was Becker (1963). Becker argues that crime only occurs when action is criminalised by social perception and reaction (Muncie, 1999). In other words, **Labelling theory** suggests that behaviour is only defined as criminal by those who create the rules, identify behaviour as criminal and react accordingly to change that behaviour: 'suspicion, accusation, conviction and criminal self-identity are not objective characteristics of "criminals" but are the products of law enforcers as well' (McConville et al., 1991, quoted in Rutter et al., 1998: 51). As Muncie (1999: 119) explains: 'Labelling logically contends that without the enforcement and enactment of criminal law there would be no crime'. Lemert (1967) takes Becker's proposition further by arguing that once behaviour (primary deviance) is labelled as criminal, such stigmatization exacerbates and can even amplify that behaviour (secondary deviance): 'social control is not simply a response to deviant activity but plays an active and propelling role in the creation and promotion of deviance' (Muncie, 1999: 119). West and Farrington (1977) also suggest a similar amplification of crime through labelling.

However, several authors (for example, Box, 1981; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Tittle, 1980) have argued that criminal behaviour tends to precede rather than result from labelling and that individual crime rates do not necessarily escalate as a result of labelling. In support of this latter argument, Braithwaite (1989) suggests that because

individuals are primarily social beings with a need for interaction and dependence, stigmatization within a public arena will be a strong deterrent to crime for most people.

Matza's **theory of drift** (1964) points out that the majority of people are conformist in behaviour and attitude and young people are generally no different in their beliefs and values than their counterparts in the wider society. This at least partial conformity to law-abiding behaviour is evidenced by offenders' frequent demonstrations of guilt or shame resulting from an offence; their approval of significant others who are law abiding; and their ability to distinguish 'appropriate' from 'inappropriate' targets for crime (Sykes & Matza, 1957: 666). Matza (1964) has argued that certain people lack control over their own destiny and tend, therefore, to 'drift' along a continuum from constraint to freedom, because of a tendency to procrastinate in respect of commitment and decision-making. To Matza, young people are 'in a limbo between convention and crime' (1964: 28), and choose through rationalization or neutralization to drift between the two. Crime is thus episodic rather than constant. Young people are not compelled (by their environment) nor coerced (by learnt or encouraged behaviour) but drift in and out of deviant behaviour over a temporary and transient period during adolescence. Sykes and Matza (1957) suggest that much delinquency arises because young people acquire techniques of neutralization, namely, 'justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large' (ibid: 666). Self-determination is present in the form of 'will' – learning that an action (however illegal) can or cannot be undertaken. The belief that infraction increases self-control in an otherwise fatalistic milieu can give one the will to commit new offences, as a means of regaining self-control. Not only do offenders feel guilt and shame and do not readily

accept a criminal culture, but they also, once detected (whether this be informally by the community or formally by the state), tend through ambivalence to drift out of crime. However, Matza (1964) is not explicit in how such desistance occurs when both neutralization and will seem to represent inherent and potentially enduring individual traits.

Marxist theories of crime (Bonger, 1916; Greenberg, 1977; Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Taylor et al., 1973; Willis, 1977) raise awareness of the need to examine the socio-political context of crime, given that crime and criminality are defined primarily by the powerful and that such definitions discriminate against the powerless. As Muncie (1999: 125) asks: ‘whose law and order is being protected?’. Marxist theories of crime suggest that capitalism creates the structural and conflictual framework within which crime flourishes. Deviance is a class-based rebellion by the powerless to cope with exploitation and domination. The greater the inequitable nature of economic relations, the higher the likelihood of crime. Taylor et al. (1973) combine Marxism, labelling theory and interactionism to argue for an analysis of: the political economy of capitalist countries; the meaning given to the criminal act by the offender and society; the act itself; and the process and outcome of any resultant action/reaction. Their approach heralded increased attention on the power and legitimacy of the state and less of a focus on the individual offender.

Marxist interpretations of crime have influenced many of the radical criminological theorists cited in this chapter, in that they impinge on structural inequalities and criminalization processes:

The powerful are seen as designating the laws in their own collective interest... The less powerful in society are seen as propelled to commit crime through economic need and social alienation. They are also the main targets of law enforcement and wider criminal-justice agencies (Cunneen & White, 2002: 50).

Again, however, such theories cannot explain an individual's decision to desist from crime when the socio-economic climate remains unchanged.

Feminist criminology developed in the late 1960s (Heidensohn, 1968; Smart, 1976) and drew on various theories, such as Hirschi's control theory (1969) and Marxism to address the lack of concern in traditional criminology about the fact that 'sex differences in criminality are... the most significant feature of recorded crime' (Heidensohn, 1985: 11). Conviction data highlight the marked gender ratio between the sexes, and Heidensohn suggests that this prompted an examination by feminists of why women tend to conform rather than to offend: 'the most striking thing about female behaviour... is how notably conformist to social mores women are' (ibid: 11). Yet, the fact that women commit fewer crimes than men, and crimes of less seriousness, and their lesser likelihood of victimization generally, has had little impact on criminological thought until recently.

Whilst approximately 75 per cent of *known* offenders are male (Muncie, 1999), and only one in six *young* offenders is a woman, self-reported crime figures put women more on a par with their male counterparts in relation to minor offending (Jamieson et al., 1999). This suggests that whilst crime is also an issue for women, they are less likely to be actively targeted by, and more likely to heed early warnings from, the police and criminal justice system (Cavadino & Dignan, 1997). However, when women do come to the attention of the police and courts, they may be 'doubly damned' because of

having broken not only the criminal law, but also the law of feminine conformity (Brown, 1998).

Women's tendency or otherwise towards crime and criminality has largely been ignored until recently within the wider criminological literature. Although undertaken less often, women's offending tends not to differ significantly from men's and it is argued that it is a myth to suggest that women offenders are mainly involved in shoplifting and prostitution as a result of poverty or economic marginality (Brown, 1998; Heidensohn, 1994; Morris, 1987). An analysis of why women offend less, why their offending rate is rising faster than men's for certain offences and why the law treats them differently, would arguably enable a greater understanding of not only women's offending but that of men as well (Heidensohn, 1985; 1994). Three major strands of feminist theory in criminology have been identified by Muncie (1999):

- liberal feminists (Oakley, 1972) - women tend to be socialized into caring, domesticated and subordinate roles and this socialization often serves as an informal social control mechanism against crime; however, such theorists do not explain how or why such differentiated roles emerged originally nor why many women *do* commit crime;
- radical feminists (Millett, 1970) – men within a predominantly patriarchal society hold power over women, resulting in the greater victimisation of women through domestic violence or sexual assault. However, Connell (1987) suggests that there are 'multiple masculinities', and that society is not dominated only by violent, patriarchal men;

- socialist feminists (Rowbotham, 1973) – taking a predominantly Marxist approach, such theories examine the interface between class, capitalism and patriarchy, arguing that women’s criminality results from an unequal distribution of power in the market place as well as in the home. Nevertheless, most utilitarian crimes are committed by girls rather than, for example, unemployed mothers, and such theories underplay the heterogeneity of women’s crime (by race, class, age) and factors such as rational choice or cultural preference in one’s decision to offend.

Since Smart’s first feminist analysis of crime in 1976, feminist criminologists have since argued that women’s offending has been ignored, pathologised or given tokenistic coverage by predominantly male academics in the field. Little empirical work has latterly been undertaken on female crime (Brown, 1998), not least that relating to girls and young women. Indeed, Pollock-Byrne (1990: 25, quoted in Heidensohn, 1994: 1029) has argued that: ‘feminist criminology has not offered any comprehensive theory to supplement those it has criticized’. In highlighting this lack of research and theorising into female offending, Cain (1996) argues that gender comparisons deny women’s individuality, and that feminist criminology requires women-only studies. She also fears that male offending tends to be the yardstick against which all offending is measured. As a result, there has been, since the first wave of feminist criminological theory in the 1960s, an increasing concern about the capacity of criminology and feminism to co-exist as academic disciplines (Hahn Rafter & Heidensohn, 1995), partly because of this seeming inability to develop adequate theories to account for female offending.

However, Carrington (2002) argues that feminism is a vital part of critical criminology and should not be seen as an afterthought. She also suggests (ibid: 118) that historically: ‘criminology not only ignored or misrepresented half of humanity, it mistakenly took the other half for the whole of humanity’. Indeed, the crucial issue in much feminist criminology is the question of women’s relative powerlessness compared to men in terms of men dominating the key arenas of criminal justice and criminological theory.

Right realism emerged in the 1970s at the time of Rational Choice Theory and Martinson’s (1974) claim that ‘nothing works’ in addressing crime and criminality. The aetiological crisis (Young, 1994) – namely that crime causation is fraught with contradictions and anomalies and devoid of any effective solution – resulted in the political Right suggesting ‘technical fix’ approaches (Young, 1994: 96) to combat rising crime rates. One of these was the theory propounded by James Q. Wilson (1975), the American criminologist and policy adviser to the Reagan administration. He argues that if offenders do indeed make rational choices about crime, then the state should respond in kind, by becoming more authoritarian and punitive. He also suggests that improving social conditions does not resolve the issue of rising crime and that trying to rehabilitate offenders is a fruitless exercise. Encouraging social conditioning through effective socialization and developing more realistic social control mechanisms rather than addressing the root causes of crime were the only effective means of increasing social order and containing social disorder (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985: 253-4):

... we are seeking, at best, marginal improvements that can only be discovered through patient trial-and-error... Above all, we can try to learn more about what works and, in the process, abandon our ideological preconceptions about what ought to work.

According to Young (1994), Wilson's right realism focuses on order rather than justice, through policing which targets order on the streets rather than crime *per se*, through interventions which target the 'rescuable' rather than those 'past reclaiming' and through incapacitation policies which target repeat offenders (ibid: 102). However, Muncie (1999) notes that right realism does not differentiate between various types of crime, since not all crimes are based on rational choice, and does not critically examine its own presumption that coercion and deterrence will necessarily work.

Left realism, although ideologically opposed to right realism, shares certain commonalities: both accept crime as a growing problem and public anxiety as rational; and both discount utopian solutions or 'throwing money' at the problem. The 'left idealism' of earlier critical criminology tended, according to left realists, to romanticise working class youth crime and to see agents of social control as merely a direct expression of ruling class paranoia (Muncie, 1999).

Lea and Young (1984; 1993) adopt a more holistic approach that combines the offender, the victim, public reaction and the criminal act itself to produce an all-encompassing theory of crime. These authors agree with the right realist thinking propounded by James Q. Wilson that formal and informal social control mechanisms need to be tightened. However, left realism prioritizes the importance of addressing the causes of crime over the need to react to its consequences:

For those on the right, order takes priority over justice: an orderly society will be one that is more just, however imperfect. And such a programme justifies unjust interventions such as selective incapacitation, a dual-track system of penalty ... Left realists argue that it is wrong to suggest that crime control will be achieved by prioritizing order over justice (Young, 1994: 116).

Left realists, in particular Lea and Young (1984), argue that crime is not endemic, not merely a simple response to poverty and not solely a working class phenomenon. The predicament of poverty often fails to undermine individuals' honesty and respect for the law. What theorists must acknowledge is 'the cultural trajectory of a group, how their material circumstances change (or remain constant) and how their understandings of their situation fluctuate (or have an air of consistency)' (ibid: 81). They argue that political discontent is a product of relative, rather than absolute deprivation. Relative deprivation is very much a subjective phenomenon – how individuals and groups experience and make sense of their circumstances:

A social group may be economically and politically marginalised, yet if it has no desire to participate in the structure of opportunities and social rights from which it is excluded, frustration need not occur (Lea and Young, 1984: 140).

Runciman (1972: 10) equates the relativity of deprivation to an individual's reference group: '... that people's attitudes, aspirations and grievances largely depend on the frame of reference within which they are conceived'. In other words, higher aspirations and expectations, if not met in comparison to others, can cause greater frustration and an increased feeling of deprivation. To Runciman, this can apply to individuals, groups, classes and nations alike.

Lea and Young (1984) argue that discontent leads to crime 'where there is no political solution.... The equation is simple: relative deprivation equals discontent; discontent plus lack of political solution equals crime' (ibid: 88). To these authors, crime is not a revolt against mainstream values, since most crime is directed against equally deprived people and 'the values of most working-class criminals are overwhelmingly

conventional' (ibid: 137). They argue that throughout this century, expectations and opportunities have become increasingly polarised between the more affluent and the more deprived, exacerbating relative deprivation. In the second edition of *What is to be done about law and order?*, Lea and Young (1993: xxii) argue that: '...marginality combined with relative deprivation is one of the key causes of crime in poor communities'. Lea and Young (1993) see crime resulting not only from material deprivation, which they see as the predominant reason for female offending, but also from status deprivation, which results in offending amongst young men. In relation to young offenders, therefore, relative deprivation could equally apply within one's peer group as well as between classes and, more importantly for this thesis, between the age- and status-related phases of transition. However, proponents of the concept of relative deprivation cannot, seemingly, explain eventual desistance when this is not combined with improved material circumstances. Equally, relative deprivation is a subjective, socially constructed concept and consequently is not without its shortcomings (see, for example, Runciman, 1972: 382-399). Indeed, one of the authors of *What is to be done about law and order?* has recently suggested that the concept of relative deprivation, in being 'a comparison of any sort, [is] undertheorised' (Young, 2004, pers. comm).

The criminalization of youth culture

Perceived links between youth culture, crime and criminalization developed in the 1970s through the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) based at Birmingham University. Studies by sociologists such as Hall and Jefferson (1976) and Willis (1977), however, tended to focus on the homogeneity of youth and its spectacular manifestations (e.g., Mods, Rockers, Punk), notably in relation to working

class youth. Indeed, youth cultural studies, along with the media, have tended more generally to focus on, and set apart, working class youth as the template for all cultural trends (Bynner, 2001; Jeffs and Smith, 1998). Stratton (1985: 204, quoted in Miles, 2000: 5) suggests that the CCCS literature is misguided in seeing youth culture as 'rituals acted out within a class structure'. According to Thornton (1995: 201), such work 'has both over-politicized youthful leisure and at the same time ignored the subtle relations of power at play within it'. A further criticism of the CCCS work was its gender-blindness. Female youth were seen either as part of male subcultures, by dint of being 'girlfriends', or as forming and fostering their own cultural identities within the privacy of their own bedrooms (McRobbie & Garber, 1976).

To Brake (1985), subcultures arise from dominant or 'parent' cultures which tend to be class-based. Subculture is 'an active ingredient in a dialectical relation between structure and actor... Subcultures negotiate between the interpersonal world of the actor and the dynamics of the larger elements of social interaction' (Brake, 1985: 8-9). They not only offer a source of secondary socialization, but also enable a social- and self-identity to form based on an apparent, or 'magical' (P. Cohen, 1997) solution to structural problems. Phil Cohen (1997) nevertheless suggests that, whilst not all young people form into subcultures, or ones which are necessarily deviant or spectacular, subcultures 'express and resolve, albeit 'magically', the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture... [Subcultures are] an attempt to retrieve some of the socially cohesive elements destroyed in their parent culture' (ibid: 57). He argues that the 'storm and dress' approach to youth culture (where rebellion to the

dominant culture is manifest in ritualistic and idiosyncratic clothes, styles and music) denies young people a voice and an identity within mainstream society:

... by making clothes, music and the other body languages do all the talking, not only are young people themselves reduced to silence, but there are not even the most basic controls on interpretation (ibid: 195).

Willis (1990), however, suggests that young people have the choice to consume creatively. Youth cultures are not chaotic or meaningless but are a complex, fluid and creative response to the social world based on meaningful interpretation. Miles (2000) tempers the emphasis on choice, however, by noting that disadvantaged young people are more constrained than affluent young people in their access to consumer goods, since much cultural identity requires money. He argues that youth lifestyles - defined as 'the material expression of an individual's identity' (ibid: 28) - are becoming impartial to age, that many older people are also adopting the trappings of 'youth', and that young people themselves are choosing to adopt certain dispositions at the expense of others, irrespective of wider social constraints (see also Jeffs and Smith, 1998). Thornton (1995) argues that, rather than being class- and gender-based, subcultures are becoming increasingly classless and consumption-oriented (see also Miles, 2000). MacRae (2002: 79) also argues that the current status and consumption preferences of young people are less easily attributable to class-based subcultures as they are to lifestyles, particularly in an era 'where class may be becoming more obscure, youth collectivities less bounded, and where young people's transitions may be individualized and prolonged'.

Several commentators highlighted so far in this chapter have implied that this individualization and prolongation of youth transitions may be a key factor in some

young people's propensity to offend. Equally, youth culture – where practiced by young people as opposed to their older counterparts – is increasingly seen as a criminal or 'criminalizing' phenomenon, an approach developed by so-called cultural criminologists, based on Katz's (1988) pioneering work to combine individual motivation, excitement and culture in a broader examination of crime.

Seductions of crime (Katz, 1988) moves away from pathologising offenders and the external constraints of class and social structure in suggesting that there are 'moral and sensual attractions of doing evil' (Hayward, 2002: 81). Katz focuses on the 'sneaky thrills' gained from shoplifting, robbery and other forms of crime, describing the excitement of crime in three phases: first, an individual is seduced into committing a crime; secondly, s/he reconquers emotions to produce normal appearances in committing the crime; and thirdly, the individual subsequently appreciates the success of the crime in a euphoric thrill. Katz argues that 'sentimental materialism' (the suggestion that offending results from blocked opportunities) ignores the heightened experience and pleasure of infraction. On the contrary, he suggests that: 'Appreciated from within, a sneaky property crime by an amateur is not a failure of social control but a personal esthetic triumph' (Katz, 1988: 73). Katz supports Matza's theory of drift (1964) in suggesting that crime is an existential pursuit of excitement to relieve boredom, and is thus expressive rather than utilitarian. However, Katz's sample of shoplifters, for example, tended to come from affluent backgrounds and may therefore have had less need to commit such crime for utilitarian reasons.

Although Katz does not systematically investigate desistance, he suggests that diversification may result from 'familiarity breeding contempt', where persistence in

one crime may reduce the thrill, thus encouraging the individual to transfer their skill and 'daring' to another type of crime. Nevertheless, this is an underdeveloped aspect of his theory, namely why the excitement wears off and conventional behaviour becomes the norm: in other words, like other theoreticians before him, Katz cannot fully explain the age-crime curve.

Developing Katz's emphasis on crime as excitement, **cultural criminology** explored the need for excitement and other emotional stimuli as an extension of cultural consumption in postmodernity (Fenwick & Hayward, 2000; Ferrell & Sanders, 1995; Presdee, 2000). Presdee (2000) notes that in late modernity, excitement has become increasingly important to young people whose everyday lives are restricted by poverty, boredom and limited legitimate opportunities. Fenwick and Hayward (2000) go further in suggesting that Katz's theory of crime fails to explore the wider social context of contemporary life that makes excitement through transgression so appealing. Whilst Katz suggests that excitement and other emotions transcend class, Fenwick and Hayward argue that such emotions (e.g., boredom, humiliation, control, anger and 'sneaky thrills') are closely correlated with socio-structural inequalities. Much youth crime, to these authors, is about 'youth expression and exerting control in neighbourhoods where, more often than not, traditional avenues of youthful stimulation and endeavour have long since evaporated' (Hayward, 2002: 82).

Ferrell and Sanders (1995) define cultural criminology as the common ground between practices defined as criminal by legal and political authorities and the 'collective behaviour organised around imagery, style, and symbolic meaning' (ibid: 3). For example, Presdee (2000: 62) describes bungee jumping, joyriding and manipulating the

stock market as ‘the thrills and spills of edge-work’⁹. Cultural criminology thus focuses on the diversities of cultural styles as well as the dynamics of mass media and political structures; it combines symbolic interactionism (notably, labelling theory), critical social theory and postmodernism. In postmodernity, there has been a shift in emphasis from ‘high culture’ and essentialist, structural categories such as class and gender to the ‘lived experience’ of consumption rather than production (Slater, 1997).

Postmodernism, to Slater, is:

... the disaggregation of social structures into lifestyles, the general priority of consumption over production in everyday life and the constitution of identities and interests (ibid: 193).

However, it is the media attention given to youth culture, and the resulting over-reaction by the state, that is the mainstay of cultural criminology. Presdee (2000) describes cultural criminology as combining the experiences of the ‘offender’, the role of the police, the fuelling of the event by the media and the reaction by the public. In relation to youth culture and crime in particular, Presdee notes that:

If young people don’t steal cars there can be no chase. If the police don’t chase there is no event. If the event is not filmed there can be no product. If the product is not communicated there can be no distribution. If we don’t watch there is no consumption (Presdee, 2000: 65).

Edge-work participants actively court media attention and thus bring youth culture from backstage to frontstage (Ferrell et al., 2001). According to Ferrell and Sanders (1995: 14):

⁹ ‘Edgework’ is a term devised by Lyng (1990) to describe the voluntary risk-taking (to the point of courting death) which is involved in certain leisure pursuits such as sky-diving, rock climbing, car racing, etc. Whilst Lyng focuses on law-abiding leisure activities usually pursued by middle class young men, Hayward (2002) argues that edgework could also describe the illegal activities of disadvantaged young people, such as joyriding.

Criminal subcultures reinvent mediated images as situated styles, but are at the same time themselves reinvented time and again as they are displayed within the daily swarm of mediated presentations.

Nevertheless, the association between youth culture (where it is visible) and youth crime has been engineered through so-called ‘moral panics’ (Cohen, 1972) which, McRobbie (2000: 180-181) suggests:

[whilst] once the unintended outcome of journalistic practice, seem to have become a goal... [u]sed by politicians to orchestrate consent, by business to promote sales... and by media to make home and social affairs newsworthy.

Ferrell and Sanders (1995), amongst others, often use historically specific, group-oriented and ‘spectacular’ cultural activities as a basis for theory-building, for example, zoot suiters in the 1940s, Hells Angels and Mods and Rockers in the 1960s, punk followers in the 1970s, and graffiti artists in the 1990s. Other criminal or cultural activities of interest to cultural criminologists include: serial killing, drug violence, neo-nazi skinheads and gangs. However, rarely are such cultural or criminal activities practiced by the ‘average’ persistent young offender who is the everyday target of the criminal justice system in the UK. There is a possible tendency within cultural criminology to overstate the importance of youth culture – or more particularly, spectacular youth subculture – and to assume that all young people involved in certain youth cultures are criminalised in the same way and to the same extent. This is not the case, but issues of gender, race and class are not fully explored in these early speculative developments of this sub-discipline, as Ferrell and Sanders (1995) themselves point out. As with other theoretical explanations for crime and criminality, cultural criminology is unable to account for crime trends throughout history (its reliance on postmodernism and the dynamics of mass media must surely limit its

generaliseability to the latter third of the twentieth century) and within different societies. For example, Japan has a highly developed youth culture but a very low crime rate (Leonardsen, 2003).

Likewise, the focus on wilful transgression and purposeful disaffection implicit in much cultural criminology – what Presdee (2000: 7) calls ‘playing at the margins of social life... the realm of resentment and irrationality’ - may be an appropriate way of describing the onset phase of offending. Indeed, it is admitted by young people themselves (see, for example, Chapter 6) that crime in the onset phase is undertaken as much for excitement to relieve boredom or disaffection as it is for material gain. However, it can neither describe the often grinding routine of the maintenance phase, nor one’s enthusiasm or capacity for eventual desistance when no alternatives to offending are in place. One of the key proponents of cultural criminology suggests that it is more a descriptive than an explanatory tool, raising more questions than it answers, in that:

... simply drawing attention to the various ways in which the vilification and pleasures of youthful transgression are inextricably linked provides little practical assistance to criminologists engaged in the fundamental task of reducing youth crime. Likewise, the recognition of the centrality of culture in the social production of crime also militates against any obvious solutions (Hayward, 2002: 91).

DISCUSSION

Much of the earlier literature on offending focuses on the idiosyncracies of individuals who offend, in terms of their personalities, aspirations and overall behaviour. Biological factors relating to age and the developmental needs of individuals have resulted in a

focus on children and young people in much of the literature, for example in forming an individual and social identity; however, this literature tends to place responsibility largely on the young person for his/her offending behaviour. Despite this, there is some acknowledgment in the early literature that external constraints (such as power relations, the legal system and structural opportunities) can exacerbate such behaviour. However, more recent theories have attempted to highlight the need to take into account the specific political and legal contexts in which individual offenders find themselves within society, although Jefferson (2002) argues that such critical criminology has marginalised the offender and deflected attention away from causes *per se*.

Theories of offending largely ignore the fact crime is a minority and temporary activity. What are deemed the causes and correlates of crime are rarely resolved or addressed in the process of desistance, not least given offending's short-term and usually non-profitable nature. The consequences of offending are also not taken lightly by offenders themselves, as evidenced by their attempts to avoid such consequences either in the initial stages of an offending career (by avoiding detection) or in the latter stages (by changing their lifestyles to avoid further offending). What is often ignored in some criminological literature is the fact that offending does not happen in a social, temporal, cultural, political and personal vacuum, divorced from the wider society of which young people are, and want to be, a part. This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature.

In common with the literature on desistance outlined in the following chapter, the literature on onset of offending is sparse in its coverage of certain key issues. First, there are anomalies in the understanding of what constitutes offending behaviour between and within cultures and how that should be measured. Secondly, female

offending has largely been ignored in the criminological literature because of its unspectacular and infrequent nature. Thirdly, people from working class backgrounds, male offenders and young people in particular have dominated criminological thinking at the expense of more generic theories of crime. Fourthly, the political implications of youth transitions and youth as a distinctive but nevertheless temporary phenomenon have not featured largely in the literature on offending behaviour. Finally, the literature on offending tends not to differentiate between the offending phases distinguished in this study as 'onset' and 'maintenance', the importance of which will become apparent in Chapters 6 and 7.

However, theories of crime and criminality are, to a large extent, dependent on the processes of governance of crime. Walters (2001) has argued that criminological research has been bound up in political rhetoric since at least the turn of the twentieth century:

Criminology's origins reveal that it has been an intellectual project largely dominated by scientific empiricism to explain the causes of state-defined crime for the purposes of developing a more efficient crime control apparatus (ibid: 215-216).

The critical criminologies of the Labelling and Left Realist schools have gone some way towards acknowledging criminology's reliance on political dogma as well as funding, but this dependence on the state for much of criminology's livelihood has meant that such theories are often not neutral. For criminology to survive financially and to influence policy, it is perhaps inevitable that an emphasis is placed on problematising the individual rather than on problematising the social infrastructure, although such an emphasis has resulted in many stones being left unturned.

Carrington (2002) argues that critical criminology still underplays the feminist perspective on crime: for example, labelling theory ignores the issue of male violence against women and victimology more generally. Feminist criminologists also take issue with postmodern theories of crime which ignore the fact that feminism has not yet moved into a postmodern era: increasing sexual diversity and fragmentation has yet to obscure the still stark gender inequalities in society (Carrington, 2002).

Youth cultural studies have tended to assume a homogeneity of youth which ignores class, race, age, gender and individual preference. They also ignore the overall conventionality of most young people (Williamson, 1997; Wyn and White, 1997). Equally, 'youth culture' is no longer the sole preserve of youth. Jeffs and Smith (1998) suggest that young people are no more likely than their older counterparts to adopt distinctive cultures; culture, lifestyles and consumption have become a 'pick and mix' of various styles and behaviour across the life course:

the notion of 'adulthood' needs to be viewed as being as enigmatic as 'youth' ... Adulthood is no longer an identifiable destination. Many struggle to hold onto what they see as the positive characteristics of youth into middle and old age – to retain 'youthful' appearance, hobbies and activities (Jeffs and Smith, 1998: 52).

Fenwick and Hayward (2000) have argued that crime is about the 'new' and the 'now' in postmodernity. 'Having' has replaced 'being' in terms of building identity. As Cunneen and White (2002: 140) observe: 'who you are is, in essence, a reflection of what you wear and where you shop'. However, an emphasis on personal consumption may detract from the interactive nature of *social-* rather than the hedonistic nature of *self-*identity in youth. As Wyn and White (1997: 82) suggest:

The sense of belonging is integral to social identity... Identity is first and foremost about social connection... Social connection is produced through a combination of pre-defined settings and situations... and the relationships forged under these institutionalised circumstances.

It seems that cultural criminology is misplaced in attempting to combine postmodernism with the type of collective cultures inherent in rave, Harley Davidsons and wall painting. These cultures stress a political group solidarity and symbolism that is an anathema to the postmodern ethos of self-actualization and 'heightened individualism' (Young, 2002: 264). To Henry and Milovanovich (1996: 180), there is no 'sense of connectedness to others' in postmodern consumption culture, only a concern for the self, and yet much youth culture today is still very much a group-oriented and socially embedded set of activities and beliefs.

Equally, although cultural criminologists emphasise postmodern representations of culture and crime, McRobbie (2000: 196) argues that there are no 'hard and fast' boundaries between normal and deviant behaviour in postmodern society. Moral panics are increasingly being dissected and contested, suggesting there is no longer a consensual social morality, even amongst the mass media (McRobbie and Thornton, 1995). Just as the moral panic is a hegemonic tool – 'an envoy for dominant ideology' (McRobbie, 2000: 184) – so, too, the media are a crucial stakeholder in the production and reproduction of social reality and culture – 'social meanings and social differences are inextricably tied up with representation' (ibid: 193). Cultural criminology will need to take on board this diversification of media networks and the fragmenting and restructuring of audiences in postmodern society (McRobbie, 2000) if it is to maintain its focus on postmodern interpretations of crime.

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst acknowledging that many of the key theoretical underpinnings of the criminological literature, especially in relation to onset, were based on youthful and male deviance over forty years ago, it seems that such thinking is still relevant in the current socio-economic climate (Braithwaite, 1989). Nevertheless, their omissions must be acknowledged.

First, there is confusion in the literature about causes versus correlates of offending. Causes suggest that a negation of the phenomenon under study would come about from an absence of those causes (e.g., gaining employment or a family of one's own). Correlates, on the other hand, suggest only potential association, and thus are unable to measure cause and effect. Equally, the lack of a common definition of crime causes further confusion (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

Secondly, various issues have been played down, or alternatively played up, in the criminological literature to date. Subcultural theory, for example, may have been a likely explanation for the prevalent gang mentality of the 1950s and 60s in the USA, especially amongst black Americans (MacDonald, 1997), but was found not to translate easily into a British context (Downes, 1966). Cultural criminology equally highlights the 'group' as the focus for criminality or criminalization, whereas much youthful offending is often an individual phenomenon and is not culturally-specific nor 'spectacular' enough to attract the attention of the media. Few theories of crime to date are applicable to women's offending or to the fact that law enforcement is predominantly a male preserve.

Thirdly, many theories of offending (for example, cultural criminological studies) cannot readily explain changes in rates, seriousness and frequency, nor can they explain why many offenders do *not* - as well as do - stop offending in adulthood. Offenders are as likely to be influenced by significant others and events in deciding to *continue* offending as they are in deciding to stop offending. For example, differential association theory might support the fact that offenders can be encouraged by offending peers/partners to continue offending or may change their offending locations or habits because of the introduction of CCTV cameras or changes in police targeting. Equally, the majority of the population are not labelled as criminal, whether this be through not becoming involved in offending behaviour in the first place, through not being labelled as such (bearing in mind that such discrimination or categorization can be offence-specific as well as age-specific), or through not being detected. Much youth culture is also unspectacular, from a media perspective, requires little commitment, is not labelled as problematic, and is therefore not criminalised. Watching [a licenced] television is a case in point. Hebdige (1979: 122, quoted in Wyn and White, 1997: 83) has suggested that youth culture can either be 'a major dimension' or 'a slight distraction' in young people's lives, depending on their commitment and their varying need for escapism or integration. In this respect, culture has as similar a meaning to many young people as has offending behaviour (Matza, 1964).

Finally, the developmental and life-course perspectives have possibly deflected attention away from the social and political construction of age. Whilst the individual implications of age are important in understanding offending, there are external, power-related and political implications (such as human rights and citizenship) which have

largely been ignored in criminological research. For example, a focus on the need for young people to find work in order to reduce their offending overshadows the need to reassess the discriminatory nature of an adult-oriented labour market.

As the above literature review suggests, theories of offending have much to commend them in answering some of the questions raised about why people offend, and why young people in particular offend. But rarely are different theorists talking about the same population of offenders, the same offence types or the same circumstances in which offending behaviour takes place (Farrall, 2000). Equally, none of the criminological literature, to my knowledge, adequately or explicitly differentiates between the phases of ‘onset’ and ‘maintenance’ of offending, phases which I would argue hold distinctive clues as to the *process* of offending, rather than its incidence *per se*. This anomaly will be explored in greater depth both in the two findings chapters pertaining to the phases of onset and maintenance of offending (Chapters 6 and 7 respectively) and in Chapters 9 and 10.

The criminological theories presented here span over half a century of academic thinking, socio-political change and government funding of research. They have commonalities (in terms of examining the onset and maintenance phases of crime) that are useful for the development and refinement of an understanding of criminological thinking. For example, many focus on people’s blocked aspirations towards mainstream values and goals. These blockages may arise because of inherent traits in individuals resulting from bio-social deficits in childhood (e.g., low self-control, inadequate socialization or overly-hedonistic values). They may also arise because of misguided moral reasoning, because of one’s class or because of a lack of status and employment

in adulthood. More recent and more critical theories of crime have also suggested that the criminal justice system itself exacerbates crime, that the labelling of individuals or certain youth cultures as 'criminal' may lead to an escalation of crime or marginalization, and that relative poverty and inequality within communities may result in differential access to limited opportunities. In relation to young people, the lack of adequate parenting or socialization as children, the influence of peers, the vagaries of the labour market or a delayed transition to adulthood may result in a tendency to 'drift' between mainstream conventionality and subcultural delinquency. Many theories of crime, however, have their roots in individual aspirations towards, on the whole, mainstream goals without specifically addressing the structural constraints and power imbalances inherent in society as a whole.

As will be seen from Chapter 5, the sample of young people drawn on in this study were typical of the average young offender (Scottish Executive, 2002). Whilst the majority of them were high-tariff offenders (having received intensive probation in the past), their offending overall was not serious but predominantly involved theft, drug taking and assault. Their early offending behaviour was often an interactive and group activity, but their later offending tended to be a monetary and solitary activity. Whilst their experiences of offending may mirror those of the majority of young offenders in the UK, their experiences do not necessarily mirror the criminological theories designed to explain them. For example, cultural criminology suggests that certain youth cultural 'cliques' are criminalised and fuelled by misleading media representations, and yet in contemporary Britain culture and consumption are no longer essentialist but are becoming increasingly diverse and diffuse. Whilst subcultural theory may be relevant to

the onset of offending, in that young people tend to congregate in groups and gain identity through that interaction, it cannot readily account for the solitary nature of the maintenance phase of offending. Equally labelling theory may prove relevant to much offending in the maintenance phase, but cannot easily account for onset. Feminist theories are better able to explain the different treatment of young women in the criminal justice system but are less able to explain the similarities in frequency and seriousness of self-reported offending behaviour between young men and young women.

Nevertheless, many of these theories have elements which, when combined with other perspectives, have proved useful in informing the analysis within this thesis. The interactive emphasis of subcultural theory, coupled with the structural inequalities implied by strain theory, are helpful in explaining why young people tend to start offending in late childhood, in the company of their peers, and why they tend to offend for monetary or sociability reasons, as described in Chapters 6 and 7. Matza's theory of drift (1964) and differential association (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970; 1978) are a useful framework for understanding the temporary and intermittent nature of youth offending throughout the process from onset to desistance, although they have shortcomings in terms of being able to explain the fact that many young people make an active decision to desist from offending through a conscious breaking away from peer group association (see Chapter 8). This decision to desist and the processes one goes through in stopping offending are exemplified in the theories of desistance described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THEORIES OF DESISTANCE

... it's not worth it. In the end, it's not worth it. It's gonna ruin like the rest of my life that I've got left ahead of me... It was just alienating me from everyone, you know (Pete, 19).

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, much of the criminological theory generated in the 1950s, 60s and 70s could be criticised for not being able to account for why many people are not involved in crime in the first place or why the majority of offenders stop offending. Equally, however, as will be seen in the following literature review, much of the desistance literature cannot account for why people *start* offending, focusing only on the factors inhibiting or fostering desistance, irrespective of the antecedents to such behaviour.

Shover (1996: 121) defines desistance as 'the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation'¹⁰ and the process has been likened to a zigzag path (Glaser, 1964, quoted in Maruna, 2001) and drifting in and out (Matza, 1964). Maruna (2001) defines desistance as 'the maintenance of crime-free behaviour... the study of *continuity* rather than change' (ibid: 26-27, emphasis in original). This latter definition highlights the concept of desistance as *process* (gauged predominantly by qualitative data) rather than *outcome* (measured predominantly by reconviction data) (see Chapter 8). Desistance as outcome (as measured by an absence of further recorded convictions) infers a complete cessation of all offending behaviour but is problematic, as suggested in Chapter 1, in

¹⁰ Shover, 1996: 121) suggests, with his use of the word 'serious' in the above quotation, that low-level offending is perhaps ubiquitous throughout the life course and that its presence does not necessarily negate the process of desistance. This is a moot point.

not allowing for the ‘hidden’ incidence of criminal behaviour which, whilst illegal, is not labelled if not detected.

THEORIES OF DESISTANCE

Until the 1980s and 1990s, there had been few theoretical explanations offered within the history of criminology for desistance (Glaser, 1980), although there is currently increasing interest in this aspect of the discipline (e.g., Farrall, 2000; 2002; Graham & Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al., 1999; Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Shover & Thompson, 1992). The theories of desistance outlined below, although not exhaustive of desistance theories, nevertheless illustrate the types of theory that have emerged in recent years. These theories of desistance are described under three broadly similar headings to those of the theories of crime, albeit without the overtly ‘political’ or ‘cultural’ elements: namely, individual, structural and integrative. ‘Individual’ theories of desistance are offender-focused and include their age and personality as paramount influences; ‘structural’ theories include those associated with circumstances external to the individual (although these include individuals’ reaction to, and interaction with, those circumstances); and finally, ‘integrative’ theories include those which combine age and individual rationality with external circumstances.

Individual theories

Research suggests that young people tend to stop offending in their twenties, if not before, implying that it is primarily an age-related phenomenon. Blumstein & Cohen (1987) calculate that 85 per cent of offenders stop offending by the time they are 28 years old, and Gottfredson & Hirschi (1990) argue, albeit inconclusively (see Maruna,

2001), that the 'age-crime curve' has remained virtually unchanged for at least 150 years. These 'ontogenetic' or 'maturational reform' theories all conclude that over time and with age, young people tend to naturally 'grow out of' crime (Rutherford, 1986). One of the largest longitudinal studies of crime and desistance was undertaken by the Gluecks in the 1930s (Glueck and Glueck, 1940). In their theory of **maturational reform**, they argued that 'Aging is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reformatory process' (Glueck and Glueck, 1940: 105, quoted in Maruna, 2001: 28). Farrall & Bowling (1999: 253, emphasis in original) note that in 1983, Hirschi and Gottfredson caused controversy by suggesting that the age-crime curve 'is invariant across social, temporal and geographical conditions and that this relationship cannot be explained by reference to *any* variable or combinations of variables currently available to criminology'. It is assumed in such age-delimited theories that biological change slows down the individual, thereby reducing the will and capacity to offend. However, Maruna (2001) has shown that two key factors in male crime at least – testosterone levels and physical strength – do not follow the same peaking pattern as does crime. Testosterone levels decrease less rapidly in adulthood than does the propensity to offend; and physical strength actually increases at the same time as the offending curve decreases. Maruna argues that whilst age is one influencing factor in the desistance process, social and institutional factors such as life experiences, changing circumstances and attitudinal change are equally important (see section below on Integrative theories) and can cut across the age factor.

It is commonly inferred that the age-related maturation process from childhood to adulthood, which tends overall to happen earlier in females than males (Graham &

Bowling, 1995), is a major factor in one's propensity to stop offending. Like Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983), Rutherford (1986) suggests that young people will naturally 'grow out of' a propensity to criminal behaviour and that interventions from formal institutions should therefore be kept to a minimum. With the ageing process (as in the passing of years rather than maturation *per se*), however, come confounding variables such as intellectual and sexual maturity, employment and training opportunities and adult status (i.e., eligibility to drive a car or to drink alcohol, for example, both of which are in themselves possible precursors to crime). It is therefore very difficult to solely invoke biological age as a key variable in reducing or stopping offending, given that with age come further opportunities for criminal activity. As Sampson and Laub (1993: 253) point out, research is needed that 'better "unpacks" the meaning of age'.

The age-crime curve has been criticised by several criminologists since it reflects only aggregate rates rather than individual frequency of offending. Blumstein et al. (1988: 9) argue that participation and frequency are not the same:

... it is critical to distinguish whether the decline in aggregate rates is due to a decrease in participation (i.e., a decline in the number of active offenders with age) or to a decrease in the frequency of offending by each active offender. These are substantively different ...

However, most ontogenetic theoreticians seem to be at a loss to explain *why* and *how* ageing reduces crime. Nevertheless, they state somewhat dogmatically that, irrespective of what the individual does, experiences or feels, spontaneous desistance will occur in time. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) are critical of this inability to address one of the most fundamental issues in the onset and desistance literature, namely:

... at the moment the offender is fully created, at the moment he is complete, he begins to do what he does less and less frequently and the theory that created him cannot explain why he no longer does what he was designed to do (ibid: 134).

Critics of maturational reform argue that such a commitment to the power of age – and the power of dogma – ignores not only external (structural) factors such as relationships and transitional events but also internal (agency) factors such as motivation and attitudinal change (Sampson & Laub, 1993). It was in order to allay these criticisms that social control theories and integrative theories were developed in relation to desistance (see below).

Nevertheless, the age-crime correlation has resulted in explanations for crime being concentrated on youth transitions, for example in terms of employment; access to a stable income; social networks; housing status; and family relationships. However, the backbone of the desistance literature, namely the age-crime correlation, has emphasised the natural ageing and maturation of individuals at which point they tend to relinquish an offending career.

Rational Choice Theory, developed by Cornish and Clarke (1985) to explain both onset and desistance, is an attempt to imbue meaning and agency in desistance literature which had previously focused predominantly on quantitative, structural influences such as employment and marriage to the exclusion of individual choice. Cornish and Clarke argue that whilst structural forces can be influential, they supplement rather than replace the individual decision making capacities of offenders in desisting from crime. Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986) analysed qualitative data from ex-robbers which suggested that these individuals chose to stop offending for various reasons, including shock, growing

tired of being incarcerated and a reassessment of their future opportunities (Farrall and Bowling, 1999). More recently, Shover and Thompson (1992) support the rational choice element from the perspective of the offenders themselves. They suggest that as offenders age, they increasingly become aware of the pitfalls:

... crime brings only penury, interspersed with modest, quickly depleted criminal gains and repeated imprisonment... they eventually lose confidence in prospects for achieving success by committing street crimes... the allure of crime diminishes substantially as offenders get older' (Shover & Thompson, 1992: 91).

However, whilst Cornish and Clarke coined the phrase 'rational choice' in relation to criminological research, several criminologists had already found in qualitative studies (for example, Knight and West, 1975; Meisenhelder, 1977; Shover, 1983) that offenders made active decisions to give up a criminal lifestyle, whether this be for positive or negative reasons. This qualitative data or 'narrative story' (Maruna, 2001) not only highlights the need to *ask* individuals why they think they did what they did, but also begs the question of what is meant by the words 'rational' or 'agency'. A dictionary definition of rational is 'using reason or logic in thinking out a problem' and that of agency is using 'action or power' to achieve something. All behaviour, by definition, must incorporate an element of rationality and agency, however erroneous or misguided that behaviour may be. To talk of 'structural determinants' in relation to offending *behaviour* must, therefore, be seen as only one side of the coin. However, it is acknowledged that often individuals' choices are *constrained* or *influenced* by structural forces, and that their decisions often, therefore, reflect an 'epistemological fallacy' (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997: 114). In other words, people may experience and address such constraints from an individual perspective 'even though these constraints may

result from wider socioeconomic processes beyond each individual' (Green et al., 2000: 112).

Structural theories

Whereas in the literature on onset, structural factors were seen as *constraining*, in the desistance literature, however, they are seen as *enabling*. To the extent that these factors such as employment and social bonds to institutions or significant others are common to both the process of starting and stopping offending, they are also crucial in understanding offending as a process of change.

Many theorists suggest that not only ties to institutions (e.g., employment, marriage or parenthood) but also one's more personal ties to significant others will affect one's propensity or otherwise to desist from crime. Matza (1964), for example, suggested that individuals are free to 'drift' in and out of criminal activity depending partly on their **social bonds**. Hirschi (1969) identified four aspects of social bonds: attachment (emotional connection to others); commitment (investment in relationships and conformity); involvement (participation in legitimate activities) and belief (acceptance of the rule of law).

In terms of moving away from the family home, the findings from Graham and Bowling (1995) suggest a gender difference. These authors found that males were more likely to desist from offending if they remained within the parental home into their twenties, whereas female offenders, on the other hand, were much more likely to stop offending on leaving home, leaving school and forming their own family units:

The prevalence of offending by females in their early twenties is five times lower than among female juveniles, but amongst males (and against expectations) the prevalence of offending actually increases from about 1 in 4 to nearly 1 in 3 (Graham & Bowling, 1995: 94).

These authors conclude that whilst young women do indeed grow out of crime for whatever reason, some young men actually grow into it. Whilst they found young women to be more successful at making the transition from childhood to adulthood on leaving school (in terms of leaving home, forming stable relationships and becoming more economically and socially independent), young men are less likely to successfully make that transition until well into their twenties, partly because of greater peer pressure for the men in their sample (Graham & Bowling, 1995). For the young men in Graham and Bowling's study, the social control inferred by continuing to live at home was a crucial predictor of desistance.

The longitudinal data collected by the Gluecks (Glueck & Glueck, 1940) suggested that employment and family relationships offered young people a stake in conformity, thereby encouraging desistance from crime. These two factors – employment and family relationships – have been cited in numerous studies since then as being crucial 'social control' factors in maintaining a crime-free lifestyle (amongst others, Farrington et al., 1996; Graham & Bowling, 1995; Hirschi, 1969; Leibrich, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Social control theories (Hirschi, 1969; Sampson & Laub, 1993) argue that deviance results from weak social bonds and that desistance is more likely to be achieved if such

bonds to *conventional*¹¹ individuals and society more generally are strengthened. Rutter et al. (1998: 190) describe the notion that social ties ‘foster the development of commitment to shared values and of concern for others’. Sampson and Laub (1993) emphasise that informal social controls (through reciprocal relationships and wider social institutions such as school, work and family) are equally if not more important deterrents to offending than formal agencies of social repression and sanctioning. Hirschi (1986) has attempted to integrate social control theory with Rational Choice Theory, with the former addressing the motivational aspects of criminality as predominantly social and the latter addressing specific criminal activity as hedonistic.

Most social control theorists in the desistance literature suggest that key life events such as marriage or employment are likely to be correlated with, although not necessarily causal of, desistance from crime. Shover (1996) places greatest emphasis on opportunities for ‘legitimate’ activities, such as employment and conventional relationships, in the process of desisting from crime, although it should be borne in mind that his samples consisted only of men. He argues that ‘[The] conditions under which men and women earn their living are one of the most important sources of how they are regarded by others and how they regard themselves’ (ibid: 31). Shover (1996) sees the attainment of conventional social bonds as being one of the key contingencies in the desistance process: ‘Successful creation of bonds with conventional others and lines of legitimate activity indisputably is the most important contingency that causes men to alter or terminate their criminal careers’ (ibid: 129).

¹¹ It could be argued (McIntosh, 2002, pers. comm), however, that the very institutions that are meant to foster social control - such as the family, the school, the workplace and marriage – are also potential areas for further offending and are not necessarily sites of conventionality *per se*.

Graham and Bowling (1995), however, suggest that such opportunities for informal social controls are more available for young women than for young men and therefore more likely to encourage desistance. Whereas young women are more likely to have gained adult status and opportunities by their early twenties, young men find it more difficult to acquire independence, responsibility and maturity. They tend to be drawn more towards substance misuse and the social influence of offending peers than being dissuaded by stable relationships and family responsibilities. Graham and Bowling nevertheless suggest that social bonds or social development variables, such as marriage or employment, are not of themselves sufficient to predict desistance and 'only provide *opportunities* for change to occur' (1995: 65, emphasis in original).

Thus, by broadening the meaning of 'social bonds', perhaps in keeping with changes in social and economic factors associated with the late twentieth century, more recent theoreticians have included meaningful relationships, responsibilities and 'stakes in conformity' *per se*, rather than merely employment or marriage opportunities. Hirschi (cited in Cornish and Clarke, 1986) has upgraded his concept of social control theory to mean a costs and benefits analysis by individuals of their actions, to establish those which maximise pleasure, such as attachments, commitments and moral beliefs. Such a redefining of the goal posts of social control theory suggests a move away from structural determinism towards 'rational choice' (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). To this end, some authors stress the 'informality' of social control and the quality of social bonds, rather than the mere existence of them (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

In terms of relationships and marriage, the Gluecks (1940) found that 'attachment to spouse' was a key modifier of offending behaviour, whereas Knight et al. (1977) and

Rand (1987), for example, found the opposite. Rutter et al. (1998) found that motherhood may facilitate desistance in women, through encouraging responsibility by caring for one's child. Cain (1996) suggests that working class women are tied to the need for a stable relationship with a wage earner and that such conventional living will be a dissuasive factor in terms of their propensity to commit crime. Jamieson et al. (1999), however, found that for women in particular, having a partner might be more likely to encourage persistence in offending than desistance, if that partner is also an offender. Equally, if one's attachment to one's spouse is based on threat or compulsion rather than reciprocity, as in an abusive relationship, then the likelihood of desistance is lessened (Katz, 2000). It has been documented that young women (as girlfriends or partners) seem to have one of the most calming and controlling effects on young males who offend (Coffield et al., 1986) but not necessarily vice-versa. Sommers et al. (1994) argue that female offenders in particular have to make active and often difficult decisions to stop offending, not least because the majority of their social bonds (with friends or partners) have been formed in the course of their offending careers, and are conducive to continued offending rather than desistance.

Several authors have identified the lack of employment for young people as being an increasingly likely source of frustration and disaffection. Graham and Bowling (1995) suggest that without employment, young people are denied a major source of security, identity and status, and Bright (1996: 26) also stresses the importance of employment and marriage in giving young people, in particular young men, an incentive to stop offending:

...the decline of unskilled and semi-skilled work has resulted in unemployed young men growing up to feel that they have no stake in society. This has obvious

implications for offending. Criminal activity declines with age when young men acquire a personal stake in conformity (through marriage and employment).

Farrington et al. (1986) found that individual offending rates fluctuated depending on whether the person was in or out of employment. However, rather than this reduced offending during periods of employment being a result of an increased stake in conformity or a stable income, it could be no more than the fact that one has less time to offend if one is working¹². However, some of the literature points to an inverse relationship between employment and desistance. Shover (1996) suggests that the older the individual, the more likely they are to appreciate the benefits of employment. Opportunities for employment at a younger age may be squandered, through lack of motivation, an aversion to authority or a lack of commitment to longer-term employment. Equally, authors such as Hirschi (1969) and West and Farrington (1977) found that employment may exacerbate rather than relieve patterns of offending because of the opportunities therein for theft from the workplace (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Nevertheless, employment opportunities *may* reduce the likelihood of reoffending, but a lack of employment does not necessarily correlate with an increase in offending: women have always been disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunities and yet are much less likely to offend compared to men (Graham & Bowling, 1995).

Social bonds can be highly tenuous, temporary and volatile. They are also highly influenced by one's reference group, which in turn affects one's aspirations and expectations (Runciman, 1972). As one moves from a peer group milieu in youth to a wider social context in adulthood, one's status *relative to* other people also changes (see

¹² Likewise, in the case of marriage, Warr (1998) suggests that marriage *per se* may not reduce offending, but having a spouse reduces the amount of time one can spend with delinquent peers.

discussion of Left Realism in Chapter 2), thus affecting the impact of social bonds. However, the dynamic nature of social bonds over time and place is not fully explored in much of the desistance literature, not least given people's ability to engage with different reference groups at different times and in varying settings. As Runciman (1972: 17) suggests: 'Any one person will have a multiplicity of reference groups... These may vary not only from topic to topic... but from one moment to the next'.

Nevertheless, Braithwaite (1989) suggests, whilst avoiding unpicking the meaning and possible ambiguity of social bonds over time, that the informal sanctions of relatives and friends are more of a deterrent than formal sanctions administered by the state¹³. In his theory of **reintegrative shaming**, Braithwaite (1989: 55) argues that the notions of conscience and morality are strong factors in explaining why the majority of people do *not* offend (see also Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Community-wide processes of shaming help to socialise and mature the child and educate people about the range of potential crimes and the risks of criminality. Direct forms of shaming are a crucial tool for reintegration when the conscience is compromised and social approval threatened, but it has to be positive not negative shaming:

The crucial distinction is between shaming that is reintegrative and shaming that is disintegrative (stigmatization)... Disintegrative shaming... divides the community by creating a class of outcasts. Much effort is directed at labeling deviance, while little attention is paid to de-labeling, to signifying forgiveness and reintegration, to ensuring that the deviance label is applied to the behavior rather than the person.

¹³ As will be seen in Chapter 7, the informal sanctions of family and partners in particular seemed to be a strong influence on the women in this sample who were affected by drugs: the disapproval of their families seemed to be a stronger incentive to stop. Arguably, one's family is also often more accessible than formal rehabilitation programmes.

Whilst integrative shaming techniques have developed rapidly in recent years, the concept itself is mainly practice-driven, resulting in the lack of a theoretical overview (McEvoy et al., 2002). Likewise, Braithwaite's conceptual framework is more concerned with how to intervene to lessen re-offending rather than being a theory of desistance *per se*.

Integrative theories

Integrative theories of desistance which combine individual and structural factors are receiving increasing attention in criminological research, since such studies recognise the limitations of approaches that single out personality factors or structural factors alone. What is also increasingly recognised by academics in the field is the need to ground such theories in the lived experiences and narratives of offenders themselves. Within the desistance literature in particular, this is becoming of paramount importance (Farrall & Bowling, 1997; 1999; Maruna, 2001).

Various factors associated with age are put forward by offenders as well as by academics as reasons for desistance: intellectual maturity and greater awareness of the risks (e.g., Shover & Thompson, 1992); moving away from the influences of childhood friends (e.g., Knight & West, 1975); relationships with partners (Graham & Bowling, 1995; Hirschi, 1969); and having children and increased responsibilities associated with having one's own family (e.g., Parker, 1976). It is, therefore, acknowledged generally within the literature that it is difficult to separate out age from other influencing variables. This approach has been termed the 'life-course perspective' (Farrall & Bowling, 1999).

Sampson and Laub (1993: 8) quote Elder (1985: 17) in describing the **life-course perspective** as:

pathways through the age differentiated life span... manifested in expectations and options that impinge on decision processes and the course of events that give shape to life stages, transitions and turning points.

In their theory of age-graded informal social control, Sampson and Laub (1993) highlight the fact that anti-social behaviour in childhood does not necessarily result in anti-social behaviour in adulthood. Only in extreme cases do salient life events in adulthood fail to have a positive impact on behavioural change (Sampson & Laub, 1993). As Sampson and Laub (1993: 15) caution: ‘... childhood variables are quite modest prognostic devices’. They argue that institutions of informal social control are stronger influences than anti-social behaviour *per se*. However, as Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) suggest, it is the criminal *behaviour* rather than the criminal *propensity* to offend that is the manifestation of such socialization mechanisms. Weak or broken social bonds in the transition to adulthood may result in deviance, although Sampson and Laub do not expand on when such deviance may or may not result, other than to stress that it is the quality of such ties that reduce the likelihood of offending.

Shover (1996) identifies two main influences upon desistance – conventional social bonds and strengthened resolve/determination. He argues that society needs to offer young people greater legitimate opportunities in order for them to desist from criminal activity, and emphasises the importance of ‘career contingencies’ (1995: 124) – changes in attitude or circumstances that affect future behaviour. He stresses the importance of employment and ‘interpersonal respect’ in helping offenders to desist from crime (1995:

106). Shover (1996: 129) also suggests that social bonds and legitimate activity within mainstream society are ‘the most important contingency’ in enabling men to desist from crime and yet Graham and Bowling (1995) suggest that men are *less* likely to desist than women once such conventional bonds and activities are created.

Farrall and Bowling (1999) draw on Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984) and life-course perspectives (namely, Sampson & Laub, 1993) to propose a **developmental theory** of desistance. The life-course perspective aims to combine, in ways similar to Giddens¹⁴, personal histories and experiences within a structural setting: ‘structural influences which are beyond the control, or perhaps even awareness, of individual respondents’ (Farrall & Bowling, 1999: 258). Using Giddens’ work in criminology is relatively new (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992; Farrall and Bowling, 1999), but Farrall and Bowling have shown that the concepts of ‘duality of structure’, power, social identities and position-practices are useful empirical tools in exploring young people’s experiences of desistance. Farrall and Bowling’s contention is that power differentials *within* individuals over the life course will influence the ‘timing and pace’ of desistance (1999: 265). In two case studies drawn from a wider qualitative sample, they illustrate the influences of significant others and events in individual decisions to stop offending. However, it could be argued that offenders are equally influenced by significant others and events in deciding to *continue* offending, as will be exemplified by the findings contained in later chapters of this thesis.

¹⁴ Giddens (1984) argues against the separation of agency from structure, since both are mutually dependent. He explores the concept of ‘duality of structure’ where structure is both the means and outcome of individual conduct. Structures constantly evolve and are modified depending on agents’ actions.

Maruna (1997) criticises ontogenetic¹⁵ and sociogenic¹⁶ theories for failing to take into account not only young people's own perceptions of why they stop offending, but also their ability to take control over their own lives – what Maruna describes as 'the wholeness and agentic subjectivity of the individual' (ibid: 11). Maruna (2001) acknowledges that social factors and age, for example, are positively correlated with desistance, but points out that 'phenomenological'¹⁷ factors are equally important and can supplement other explanations of crime. He thus stresses the role of **narrative theory** – using personal autobiographies in social enquiry – in addressing these phenomenological factors. Narrative theory is both a methodological tool and a theoretical framework and within the desistance literature it incorporates aspects of human behaviour and perception not necessarily covered by maturational or social control theories. Maruna (2001) suggests that little empirical research has explored the changes in individuals' subjective perceptions between the processes of persistence and desistance. Although he describes subjective perceptions as 'rather messy' (ibid: 38), he stresses the importance of such narratives in guiding behavioural change and identity construction on an ongoing basis. He refers to Sykes and Matza's (1957) theory of neutralization as an early but nevertheless well-developed example of narrative theory which could account for both offending and desistance. Such 'common sense' interpretations by individuals of their actions (both *a priori* and *a posteriori*) (Maruna, 2001: 40) are illustrated in many of the qualitative studies cited in both this and the preceding chapter (for example, Clarke and Cornish, 1985; Maruna, 2001; Matza, 1964;

¹⁵ 'Ontogenetic' theories of crime focus on the individual's personality or propensity to commit crime.

¹⁶ 'Sociogenic' theories of crime focus on social processes in the life course, where trajectories change according to social bonds with institutions of social control (Matsueda and Heimer, 1997; Sampson and Laub, 1993).

¹⁷ Maruna (2001: 33) describes phenomenological criminology as 'an attempt to understand criminal decision making through an examination of the offender's self-project – the self-image they are hoping to uphold (Toch, 1969), the ends they aim to achieve (Shover, 1996), and their strategies for creating meaning in their lives (Irwin, 1970; Shoham & Seis, 1993)'.

Shover, 1996). They are particularly pertinent to studies which view desistance as a 'hardening' of resolve over time and place. The emphasis of narrative theory is the agentic and holistic nature of the individual's narrative (Giddens, 1991; Maruna, 1997; 2001). What Giddens and Maruna, amongst others, argue is that the narrative story informs and shapes a person's identity and subsequent actions. Such first-hand knowledge is thus crucial to an understanding of their social world.

Leibrich (1993) interviewed 50 official 'desisters' in New Zealand, only to find that many had not stopped offending. She therefore reclassified them according to their own perceptions, into 'straight' (desisters), 'curved' (committed offences less frequently) and 'crooked' (persisters). Whilst all had been free of convictions for the previous three years:

...almost a quarter were still committing the offence for which they received supervision and a third of the others admitted to still occasionally committing some less serious offence. The point was that most of the offenders thought that what they were doing now was not morally wrong. It is important not to lose sight of this framework in trying to understand the nature of change. Conviction is about consequence. Offending is about behaviour. Going straight is about values (Leibrich, 1993: 236).

Leibrich (1993: 240) suggests that deviance results from deprivation, financial or social: 'People who have nothing of value have nothing to lose. People who have no sense of belonging have no social status to risk'. And yet she found that people reduced their offending behaviour not through improved financial circumstances so much as through **revised personal values**, having something of value in life (material or social), developing self-respect and settling down. She identifies three main motives for people

stopping offending: a sense of shame; a fear of worse penalties; and an increased sense of self-respect.

Offenders themselves have often insisted that the only factor conducive to reducing offending behaviour is self-motivation (Barry, 2000; Meisenhelder, 1977). Leibrich (1993) suggests that external factors had less of an obvious influence on her sample's propensity to desist from offending, since both current and ex-offenders in her sample were as likely as each other to be in employment or stable relationships. She maintained that it was 'cognitive changes' rather than material or physical changes in the immediate environment that produced a propensity to desist from offending behaviour. Leibrich identifies two categories of meaning for offenders trying to desist: 'matters of value' (both personal values and valued life assets such as a partner or children) and 'matters of discomfort' (the fear/anxiety/disenchantment resulting from crime and criminalization). The former she terms 'persuaders' and the latter 'dissuaders' (ibid, 1993: 53).

Although Revised Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992 – see Chapter 2), for example, argues that one often blames others for one's propensity to start offending, it also suggests that the positively valued stimuli of significant others are a motivating factor in the process of desistance. However, as will be seen from Chapter 8, many young people blame only themselves for their past offending and current predicament and thus draw on only their own determination and personal commitment to desist.

Such a phenomenological understanding of offending incorporates socialization and internalization mechanisms, including empathy, ‘maturity’¹⁸, rationalization and conformity. Shover (1996: 141) suggests that a ‘growing disenchantment with a criminal life causes offenders to lower their expectations for achieving success via criminal means’. They acquire an altered perspective, a growing awareness of time, revised aspirations and a changed identity (Maruna, 2001). As they get older, many offenders develop a greater awareness of their *social* rather than their *personal* identities (Gove, 1985) and become more inclined towards *generativity* (Maruna, 2001) and away from self-absorption.

DISCUSSION

As with the commonalities in the literature on offending, those relating to desistance are broadly similar in range, stressing what are seen to be the achievement of individual aspirations towards what are seen to be generally available mainstream goals. Whilst the desistance literature increasingly seeks the views of offenders and ex-offenders themselves, thus combining micro-level structural factors (such as access to employment or family relationships) with individual narratives, it tends to avoid the need to address the macro-level structural constraints and imbalances within society (poverty, responsibility, human rights, etc.). Nor does it fully address the fact that not all offenders actually desist for the reasons generally advocated in the literature.

¹⁸ However, Maruna (2001) cautions against the use of the word ‘maturity’ or ‘maturation’, originally propounded by the Gluecks in the 1940s, since it is vague, undefined and tautological with the concept of age.

Farrall (2000) identified several key issues that have proved problematic for academics in the desistance field. First, desistance is not an easily measurable phenomenon because of the difficulty of identifying *when* desistance has been successful. Authors use a range of methods of data collection and differing lengths of time in measuring periods of non-offending. Shover (1996: 124) also suggests that 'the desistance phenomenon has been approached inferentially', not least because it is difficult to gauge when one actually desists from offending. Desistance is often said not to be conclusive evidence of stopped offending until 7-10 years of an offence-free lifestyle (Farrington, 1986). Relapses are common and the path to desistance crooked (Leibrich, 1993), resulting in possible drift (Matza, 1964) between conforming and deviant behaviours. Equally, the method of gaining information on desistance and offending patterns varies between qualitative and quantitative studies and between retrospective and prospective studies. For example, asking current offenders for their reasons for wanting to desist may produce different responses to those who gave up offending a year ago, or even thirty years ago.

Secondly, most of the studies of desistance to date have been based in North America or the UK (notable exceptions being Leibrich (1993) in New Zealand and Mischkowitz (1994) in Germany), and there is concern that the existing literature may not be readily applicable to other societies and cultures.

Thirdly, relatively few studies have looked at desistance from a feminist criminological perspective; equally, few studies have included the experiences of female offenders. Although Jamieson et al. (1999) suggest that females report similar types of offending as their male counterparts, they also suggest that young women find it easier to desist

from offending than young men. Carlen and Worrall (1987) suggest that gender issues have invariably been ignored in traditional theories of criminology, and yet, according to Heidensohn (1987): 'Gender appears to be the most crucial variable associated with criminality' (quoted in Carlen and Worrall, 1987: 22). Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990: 2) describe criminological perspectives as 'disparate and sometimes conflicting', and from a feminist perspective they are 'impoverished... and man-made' (ibid: 2-3). They are also adult-led and neglect an understanding of the powerless nature of youth in transition (see Chapter 4).

Finally, studies of desistance have not readily differentiated between what has been termed 'life-course persistent' and 'adolescent-limited' offending (Moffitt, 1993), where there may be a diverse range of factors differentiating the two types of offender. Sampson and Laub (1993) suggest that the maturational reform approach to offending has focused on adolescents in a vacuum, divorced from their origins as children and from their ultimate destination as adults. Thus, they stress the need for a life-course perspective. However, desistance, like onset, is seen in the literature as being primarily a social and interactional process which is tempered both by age and circumstance. The process of ageing itself arguably brings increased experience and rationality, a new perspective on the self and one's aspirations, and a different perspective of time and space. It could also be argued that with age comes a greater awareness of risk factors as well as the concomitant fear of having something to lose by offending; however, as Leibrich (1993) points out, unless one has something of value in the first place (which it could be argued only comes with the rights, status and responsibilities of adulthood), then one is unlikely to be aware of having something to lose. From a socio-legal

viewpoint, young people are more likely to come to the attention of the police as being potential 'trouble', whereas adults are less likely to be the target of police attention. As Shover (1996) argues, therefore, the resolve to stop becomes stronger with age, one's assessment of risk becomes more acute and the deterrent effect of the criminal justice system (or 'criminal justice system fatigue') becomes increasingly pronounced. Thus, age, structure and agency are intertwined.

CONCLUSIONS

Most of the literature on desistance offers few parallels with that of onset of offending, thus ignoring the possibility of offending as a process of change over time and space. However, some of the theorists cited in the previous chapter on onset of offending have suggested potential commonalities with desistance. In particular, Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of self-control offers the potential to explain both onset and desistance, as does Rational Choice Theory and Matza's theory of drift. However, desistance in these theories is seen more as a negation or absence of the original problems that caused offending to start, rather than being seen as a proactive process of change in itself. In addition, these particular theories are not strong in explaining how that change might take place, only that it may. However, two particular studies of offending and desistance (Blumstein et al., 1988; Leibrich, 1993) have suggested that the correlates associated with starting offending need not match or correspond with those associated with stopping offending:

Theories regarding the causes of crime will very likely have to distinguish the factors stimulating individuals to become involved in crime from the factors... inhibiting termination of criminal careers... In the criminal career approach, by contrast, the different criminal career features can each have different correlates

and predictors and they are not necessarily interrelated (Blumstein et al., 1988: 4-5).

Assumptions about why and how people go straight tend to be based on the related but not necessarily pertinent question of why and how they get into trouble (Leibrich, 1993: 17).

Such a diagnosis of the problem, which basically sees onset and desistance as two discrete topics of academic interest, is perhaps unhelpful in understanding offending *and* desistance in parallel. If one can find a common denominator between the two phenomena, one can perhaps better understand offending as a *process* of change for the individual. As criminological theory currently stands, there seems to be a lack of congruence and continuity between those factors influencing onset and those influencing desistance. On the one hand, socio-cultural determinants tend to be seen as most influential in young people's propensity to start offending, and, on the other hand, individual determinants tend to be seen as most influential in young people's desistance from offending. Whilst political correlates (if not causes) are associated with onset, regrettably no such political 'solutions' are offered in the desistance literature, placing the emphasis more on the individual to reduce or stop offending. This anomaly – that marginalization is associated with onset but is not necessarily addressed in desistance – requires further attention. This thesis suggests that the socio-cultural determinants associated with starting offending are closely related to the individual determinants associated with stopping offending, and should not be kept separate.

Most of the theories examined in this and the preceding literature reviews support the proposition that social integration, whether this be by individual, structural or socio-political means, is an important factor influencing the behaviour and attitudes of young

people in transition today. Most theorists agree that young people tend to be keen to adjust within society, to strive to achieve their aspirations and to be recognised by society as a whole for their efforts (see, for example, Roberts & Sachdev, 1996; Wallace, 1987). Subcultural and other criminological theories on their own, whilst allowing a description and analysis of why young people may choose peer group support or deviant means to conventional ends, do not take full cognisance of young people's expectations, aspirations and opportunities *in relation to other people* during the transition to adulthood. In order to assess the extent of congruity and continuity between starting and stopping offending and to examine offending as a process of change for young people, it seems imperative firstly to explore the position of young people in society more generally, their transitional experiences from childhood, through youth to adulthood and their relative lack of power and status during that transitional phase. The following chapter, therefore, reviews the literature on youth transitions.

CHAPTER 4: THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT: THE LIMINAL STATUS OF YOUTH IN TRANSITION

I think I've learnt... I was just a wee laddie then. I'm now a young man. More the man I want to be (Derek, 21).

INTRODUCTION

As was suggested in Chapter 2, there are no criminological theories that are successful in fully understanding offending as a *process* of change for the individual in the transition to adulthood. By 'process' I mean that offending constitutes a series of interrelated actions through time and space to achieve a desired outcome. Offending in this context is seen as a means, however misguided, of achieving economic, social or personal ends. The end result, for many of the young people in this study at least, was interaction and integration with others in the transition to so-called 'adulthood'. Offending tends to be a short-term process of experimentation in childhood and youth and is not, generally speaking, a lifelong phenomenon, since the vast majority of people who start offending also stop offending after a relatively short period in youth. This thesis attempts to rectify the shortfall in criminological theory by drawing also on wider sociological discourses, namely those of youth transitions (including Coles, 1995; Jones, 1996; Wyn and White, 1997). It is argued that combining criminological and transitions theory enables linkages and consistencies to be identified between the phases of starting and stopping offending and those of the transition to adulthood. Whilst theories of youth transitions cannot explain offending behaviour *per se*, they can help understand the unequal distribution of power for young people in transition, which offending may help to rectify in the short term.

Given the emphasis within the desistance literature outlined in Chapter 3 on employment and relationships as a stimulus to stopping offending, a parallel investigation of transitions (where employment and relationships are two key components) would also seem pertinent. Likewise, the widening debate over the need to combine agency and structure in the criminological literature (Farrall & Bowling, 1999) has commonalities with more recent youth transitions research (Stephen & Squires, 2003; Evans, 2002). Whilst young people in transition fall, socio-legally, between the two stools of protection as children and independence as adults, they can exercise choice to a certain extent in how they negotiate that restricted transition.

THE LIMINAL STATUS OF 'YOUTH'

The terms 'youth' and 'youth transitions' are concepts which have attracted increasing sociological interest since the 1980s in understanding the extended and fragmented period that young people may go through before attaining full 'adult' status (Chisholm, 1993; Coles, 1995). The term 'youth' has become an additional stage between childhood and adulthood to exemplify this protracted transition (see, for example, Bynner et al., 1997). However, prior to this increasing sociological interest in youth transitions, anthropologists had been examining the experiences of adolescents in small-scale societies and the 'rites of passage' that they progress through in preparation for adulthood. Whilst the term 'youth' was not seen as a middle phase between childhood and adulthood in such anthropological studies, Van Gennep (1960, cited in Turner, 1967) nevertheless identified three elements in the transition from childhood to adulthood in terms of 'rites of passage'. These are:

separation – ‘symbolic behaviour signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions;

margin – ‘during the intervening “liminal” period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state;

aggregation – ‘the passage is consummated. The ritual subject... is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and “structural” type’ (Turner, 1967: 94-95).

Such anthropologists tended to play down the rites of passage of girls and young women in different cultures, although the liminal period itself was often described in terms of stereotypical feminine traits such as weakness and passivity.

Turner (1969) describes individuals within the liminal phase as: ‘persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs’ (ibid: 125). He defines ‘social structure’ as ‘an arrangement of positions or statuses. Most involve the institutionalization and perdurance of groups and relationships’ (ibid: 126).

Cloward and Ohlin (1961: 55) also see adolescence as a crucial marginalising phase in the transition to adulthood: ‘... male adolescents are cut off from adult roles and relegated to a prolonged preparatory status in which they are no longer children but are not yet adults’. Whilst these authors were speaking some forty years ago, the situation for young people generally has changed little in the interim. The term ‘youth’ has offered a sociological bridge between the widening poles of childhood and adulthood in the Western world. Youth is, however, more than the ‘liminal’ phase described in the

rites of passage literature. As James and Prout (1997) suggest, growing up nowadays involves several transitional processes rather than a one-off initiation process: youth transitions extend ‘over considerable periods of time rather than being concentrated into ritual moments’ (ibid: 248). Roberts (2003: 6) goes further in suggesting that: ‘Most sociologists have abandoned trying to define youth in terms of chronological age. Nowadays we say that we study youth transitions which may occur at age 12, 16, 20, 30 or even when individuals are older than this’. He goes on to argue that ‘Some people never establish themselves in jobs which will support an adult lifestyle. Some remain unmarried and childless, and continue to live in their parents’ homes until the latter’s death’ (ibid: 8). Nevertheless, it is in the late teens and twenties that many people experience discrimination, socially, legally and economically, as a direct result of their age, and hence their status as ‘liminal beings’.

Because of the nebulous nature of youth transitions, such research still tends to adhere to a differentiation of the various phases by chronological age, namely, ‘childhood’ (0-14), ‘youth’ (15-24) and ‘adulthood’ (25+) (see, for example, Jones, 1996). However, the concepts of childhood, youth and adulthood are heuristic devices and with no alternative frameworks currently available to sociological researchers of youth, these phases in the transition are often used as markers of change or distinction. It is acknowledged that these transitional phases, like those of onset, maintenance and desistance used in this thesis, are zigzagging, overlapping and contentious (see Discussion section below).

Childhood

Childhood as a distinct and separate phase in the lifecycle was seen to emerge in the 17th century to distinguish children from their older counterparts (Aries, 1962). Aries's seminal work on childhood, although based on minimal empirical data and using modern (and masculine) conceptions of childhood (Archard, 1993; Wiltshire, 2003, pers. comm), was nevertheless influential in its time in suggesting that children needed to be protected for moral as well as educational reasons. Aries (1962: 412) described children as being 'subjected to a special treatment, a sort of quarantine', and even though recent Children's Acts and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have attempted to diffuse the 'quarantine' effect that the term 'childhood' has on children and young people, the term 'childhood' still differentiates children from adults in terms of risk, protection and rights and emphasises the 'otherness' of children (Brown, 1998; Franklin, 2002). The addition of the term 'youth' or 'adolescence' (Griffin, 1993) has further muddied the waters between childhood and adulthood, in terms of when and why one ends and the other begins. There is, as far as much sociological literature is concerned, therefore, a general tendency not to be specific about the chronological boundary between these two phases of transition, childhood and youth, not least because of the zigzagging or cyclical nature of many such transitions which became apparent towards the end of the twentieth century (Wyn & White, 1997; Jones, 1996).

Children are increasingly given legal and protected status which separates them out from their older counterparts and which both enables and restricts their access to rights and responsibilities as citizens (Barry, 2001a). Children are almost totally dependent in a legal sense on adults, in particular on their families or carers, but once they reach

school age, this dependence on families dissipates (albeit often temporarily) as the school milieu takes over, not only in terms of education and daytime supervision but also for leisure and social interaction.

For many children from disadvantaged communities, 'childhood' does not offer the same type of protection that it offers young people from more affluent communities. It is likely that middle class children may gain a greater amount of protection against, for example, marginalization or poverty through the income and associated benefits accruing from their families. Children deprived of such opportunities, however, may suffer more from denial than from a lack of protection *per se* (denial of rights to an adequate standard of living and to developmental and other opportunities). Working class children may also experience greater degrees of responsibility, for example, in having to care for themselves or others within the family (Barry, 2001a) or in helping out in family businesses (Morrow, 1999), thus questioning the traditional image of childhood as being a time of innocence and positive dependence.

It is within the school environment that children increasingly relate to other children rather than family members for leisure activities, identity and friendship. Nevertheless, since all children, by dint of their age as well as their size, live in a relatively powerless and protected environment, not least in educational institutions, much of their collective activity involves pushing the boundaries of that environment in ways that may be considered anti-social (Morrow, 2001), leading in many cases to a breaking of societal norms as well as laws. As will be seen in Chapter 6 on young people's views and experiences of starting offending, not only can starting to offend allow certain children a degree of *social* autonomy, prestige and power, it can also offer them added *personal*

and *practical* benefits, such as extra money for consumer goods, an ability to relieve boredom or a greater feeling of self- or social-identity and worth. For working class children, many of the norms and values of mainstream society often elude them through conventional means, thus they may resort to unorthodox means of gaining success, money, power or social identity.

Youth

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the term ‘youth’ is a relatively new sociological concept, and indeed it was only in the 18th century that changing social conventions and tighter social legislation ‘*made* the adolescent’ (Musgrove, 1964: 34, emphasis in original). The term ‘youth’ has now come to exemplify the extended transition from childhood to adulthood as a result of predominantly increased labour market restrictions on school leavers as well as the commodification of this element of the population by consumer and other markets (Roberts, 2003). According to Coles (1995: 4), youth is ‘an interstitial phase’ between childhood and adulthood, during which young people are treated ‘neither as children nor as adults’ (ibid: 6). Musgrove (1964) is more specific in suggesting that youth are an oppressed group, rejected by adults, and that their exclusion from ‘adulthood’ has been engineered for adverse rather than benign reasons.

As Cohen and Ainley (2000) imply, this has more recently had as much to do with political expedience as with economic downturn:

‘The enlargement of adolescence, its encroachment on childhood, and prolongation into what used to be adulthood is... both culturally driven and required by the economic collapse of earlier strategies’ (ibid: 90).

The youth phase, taken to be the age range 15-24 (Jones, 1996), is the phase during which most but not all of the age-related rights and responsibilities that young people have in terms of legal and social status as emerging adults come to fruition¹⁹. However, youth could be described as a time of distancing from, initially, the family environment and subsequently, the school environment and a time of experimentation with identities and attitudes as well as offering increasing levels of autonomy. The main milieu within which young people congregate is the friendship group, both within and outwith the school environment. However, it is acknowledged that not all cultures or ethnic groups easily fit this mainly white, Western European image of youth, and even within white, Western European cultures, young people may still retain strong links with their families and the wider community during the youth phase.

Peer groups have a long-established link with one's propensity to offend (Reiss, 1988). Many authors acknowledge this link but suggest there is a lack of evidence of a causal, as opposed to correlational, relationship between peers and offending (Warr and Stafford, 1991; Rutter et al., 1998). Rutter et al. (1998) state that negative peer influences in adolescence are most likely when individuals spend a lot of time in close proximity to other young people and where the group overtly approves of and encourages deviant activity. Thus, 'differential association' with deviant peers increases the likelihood of offending occurring (Sutherland & Cressey, 1970).

¹⁹ There are only two obvious exemptions: the age of criminal responsibility (8 in Scotland) and the age at which part-time work is allowed (13 in Scotland).

Adulthood

All individuals aged 25 and over are deemed to come under the rubric of 'full adulthood', irrespective of their competence, since from the age of 25, all legal rights to full 'adulthood' are in place, culminating in eligibility for full state benefits (Jones, 1996). At the age of 25, individuals have full responsibilities as citizens, they are expected to support themselves through paid employment or other income, although they are also eligible for state benefits, and they are charged taxes towards services for themselves and others.

Thomson & Holland (2002) drew on young people's views in identifying two models of adulthood. These are: an individualised model (feeling mature and autonomous) and a relational model (stressing responsibility and caring for others). Many young people have experience of both models of adulthood, some possibly at an earlier age than is usually considered appropriate for children (Barry, 2001a). The key factors which young people equate with adulthood also mirror those identified by Coles (1995). These are parenthood, a home of one's own and stable employment, but these vary in importance for young people depending on social class and gender (Thomson & Holland, 2002). However, as mentioned above (Roberts, 2003), many so-called 'adults' have not achieved stable employment, a stable relationship, a home of their own or a family of their own, but, nevertheless, their age identifies them as 'adult'.

Adults are likely to have changed their circle of friends since leaving school, although given that just under half of the 16-44 year olds in Britain in 1999 continued to live in the district in which they had been brought up (Roberts, 2003), moving from the school

milieu does not necessarily mean losing contact with childhood friends. Adults are more likely to interact with a wider social network, however, not least because of a wider range of contacts and commitments relating to employment, housing or child-rearing. Bearing in mind the structural influences and constraints associated with desistance outlined in Chapter 3, it could be argued that offending becomes less of a necessity for many adults if they gain income, social networks and employment. Adults also have a greater power/influence over their own destiny because of increased equality and rights within the wider society and may also be less 'visible' to criminal justice agencies, which are increasingly liable to focus on young people. However, adulthood is not an 'end point' when specific rights and privileges are bestowed, but is a social construct dependent on the social, legal, historical, cultural and personal context. From a policy context, adulthood is also seen to be attained more as a result of personal rather than public endeavour. Gilligan (1982) argues that the concept of adulthood is misleading in that it focuses on separateness of the individual over connectedness to others. It is perhaps, therefore, worth considering a re-wording of the phases of transition from childhood, youth and adulthood to dependence, independence and interdependence.

TRANSITIONS RESEARCH

The advent in the UK of Thatcherism in the late 1970s marked a turning point not only for young people who became increasingly marginalised within a contracted youth labour market, but also for sociologists of youth who had hitherto concentrated their attention on youth subcultures at the expense of structural constraints on youth transitions (MacDonald et al., 2001). In an attempt to focus more on the socio-economic climate in which youth transitions took place, early transitions research in the 1980s and

early 1990s focused more on structural constraints than on individual choice. However, such research has more recently been criticised for being overly deterministic and throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water in analysing the structure-agency debate. As Miles (2000) argues:

The tendency ... to adopt a structural perspective on transitions has been counter-productive, primarily because of its failure to prioritize the actual views, experiences, interests and perspectives of young people as they see them, in favour of bland discussions, most commonly of trends in employment and education patterns (ibid: 10, quoted in MacDonald et al., 2001: 4).

Traditionally, therefore, transitions research has portrayed a linear, psychosocial movement towards conventional goals. The main transitional pathways or 'careers' identified by such sociologists in the 1980s and early 1990s have been summarised by Coles (1995: 8) as follows:

- the transition from full-time education and training to a full-time job in the labour market (the school-to-work transition)
- the transition from family of origin (mainly the biological family) to family of destination (the domestic transition)
- the transition from residence with parents (or surrogate parents) to living away from them (the housing transition).

Cohen and Ainley (2000: 81) suggest that the above categories of transition are no longer applicable to young people's position in society: 'education no longer relates necessarily to work, nor home-making to marriage or marriage to child-rearing'. Indeed,

transitions are no longer a youth phenomenon nor necessarily linear and uni-directional, but apply to all people of all ages at different times. However, whilst for Turner's (1967; 1969) small-scale traditional societies referred to earlier, liminality was a planned-for stage pending a 'new beginning', for many disadvantaged young people in Britain this phase in the life cycle holds no status and there are few supportive structures to guide their transition to adulthood. This lack of support in the liminal phase leaves young people between the two stools of protected children and autonomous adults (Barry, 2002).

The elements of transition described by, amongst others, van Gennep and Coles are predominantly structurally defined and determined, whereas one further element less often cited in the youth transition literature is that of the transition from dependence to independence (Jones, 1996). This more individualised description of the transition phase allows young people's own narratives to come to the fore, and it is these narratives that have recently made academics question the linear approach to transitions which had hitherto been the norm. Stephen and Squires (2003), for example, argue that young people's transitions in late modernity are neither linear nor predictable but are fragmented, prolonged and cyclical. Equally, young people are increasingly seen as being proactive in defining, negotiating and making sense of their own transitions. Many recent accounts of young people's experience of youth transitions (amongst others, Holland et al., 1999; Barry, 2001a and 2001b) suggest that their narratives and transitional experiences are guided as much by personal agency and responsibility as they are by structural factors²⁰.

²⁰ On reflection, it could be argued that where structural explanations for people's behaviour do not stand the test of time (in terms of changed and adverse socio-economic factors creating barriers to smooth

According to Beck (1992), the certainties associated with industrial society have been eroded by a new age of modernity consisting of uncertain risks and opportunities, resulting in what he terms 'individualization'. This suggests that young people now have to resolve their own problems, overcome structural constraints and 'individualize' their own life projects (Cote, 2002). This fragmentation of past stability has resulted, in the last decade or so, in the transition research pendulum swinging away from structuralism and back towards a 'new freedom' of individualised lifestyles and reflexive construction of one's own biography (Holland et al., 1999). Whilst the concept of individualization describes both structure and agency, the individual is nevertheless at the centre (albeit structurally defined), and factors such as class, gender and social networks are peripheral. Furlong and Cartmel (1997), however, warn against an over-emphasis on individualization at the expense of social and structural change, suggesting it would be an epistemological fallacy to focus on individual responsibility and self-determination without taking into account the powerful impact of existing social structures.

If, as Beck (1992) suggests, agency has superseded structure in youth transitions through the 'individualization' of young people, then it would seem reasonable to assume that the timing of such transitions would vary greatly between individuals, depending on their capacity to progress their life projects. However, as was seen above and in Chapter 2, there tends to be a continuity in the overall timing of transitions, not least in terms of the age-crime curve, although this still begs the question of *towards what* one is making the transition. However, this general continuity suggests that

transitions – or even to law-abiding behaviour), then the academic literature introduces the 'agency' perspective as a defining feature of that failed explanation.

structural factors are more constraining than individual factors are enabling. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are having to increasingly use agency in the transition to adulthood but only in so far as this is necessitated by structural barriers. For example, MacDonald (2001: 3.5) argues that transitions research needs to explore the 'alternative careers' adopted by many disadvantaged young people, such as criminal careers and parenting (Craine, 1997) or 'fiddly work' (MacDonald, 2001: 3.5). Given there are structural and institutional barriers to overcome, young people's transitions are increasingly 'messy, complicated and circuitous' (MacDonald, 2001: 5.3).

Until recently, there has been a bifurcation of youth transitions research and youth cultures research (Hollands, 2002; MacDonald, 2001). Transitions research has tended to ignore young people's *cultural* identities, which are argued to be possibly more important to them given the increasing lack of youth employment opportunities (employment being one of the key factors denoting a successful transition) (Hollands, 2002; Cohen & Ainley, 2000). Miles (2000) supports the view that transitions research tends to ignore young people's concerns and identities in relation to growing up. He argues that youth is a life *style* rather than a chronological phase and that young people's biographies are too diverse and individualistic to be determined by current concepts available within the transitions literature.

DISCUSSION

Youth transitions in late modernity are becoming more fragmented, and the boundary between youth and adulthood less pronounced and more contentious. This blurring of boundaries is particularly apparent in relation to young offenders, who are being swept

into a more punishment- and adult-oriented criminal justice system whilst still being defined as ‘youth’²¹

The concept of ‘youth’ has been criticised for segregating and problematising young people to the exclusion of the wider social and political environment of which they are a part. Jeffs and Smith (1998: 45) argue: ‘that ‘youth’ has limited use as a social category and that it characteristically involves viewing those so named as being in deficit and in need of training and control’. It is also a predominantly masculine concept. Equally, the earlier theories of youth transitions have been criticised for being overly-deterministic and ignoring the cyclical and agency-led nature of such transitions in late modernity (Wyn & White, 1997; Cohen & Ainley, 2000; Hollands, 2002). Not only are such models ‘somewhat mechanical and structurally biased, but rather dull and positivistic in their orientation’ (Hollands, 2002: 153). Jeffs and Smith (1998: 53) are critical of the ‘constant revision’ of concepts of youth transitions, where each concept still shares ‘a desperation to hold fast to notions of an imagined mainstream in which the majority of young people neatly go forward in a uni-directional way towards some magical moment when adulthood is conferred’. They suggest that transitions transcend the notions of ‘childhood’, ‘youth’ and ‘adulthood’ in that all ages are prone to ‘[B]acktracking, re-visiting, revising and... reversing’ earlier life decisions (ibid: 54).

Such developmental theories of transition also tend to legitimate the marginalization of young people by the state through the creation of an ethos of individualization (Wyn & White, 1997). These authors argue that age is ‘socially constructed, institutionalised and

²¹ In Scotland, for example, a youth court is currently being piloted which may reduce the potential of the existing welfare-oriented Children’s Hearing system to deal with 15-17 year old offenders, thus upgrading such young people into a predominantly adult justice system.

controlled in historically and culturally specific ways' (ibid: 11). This social construction of age, and the impact of postmodern thinking regarding individualization, has lessened the impact of class inequalities and resulted in young people generally viewing failure in the transition to adulthood as a personal problem rather than a public issue (Bates and Riseborough, 1993). Postmodernism has not been directly related to theories of youth transitions to date, but would suggest that linear models of youth transition are unhelpful in explaining the seemingly diverse range of opportunities available to young people currently. Youth culture is changing rapidly and no longer necessarily relates to 'youth' *per se* nor to different factions (by age, class, gender, race) within the population. Likewise, transitions are often now cyclical and reversible and postmodernism would suggest that agency is more of an influence than structure in young people's transition to greater independence.

However, the developmental approach to both youth transitions, 'at risk' youth and offending behaviour by young people may have been usurped by the state to mask or legitimate structural inequalities. Such an approach places emphasis on the process of adolescent development which is seen as divorced from structural factors. Wyn and White (1997) conclude that the marginalization and criminalization of young people in particular is deliberate and sustained, a means of 'deflecting attention away from the structural reasons for poverty and unemployment' (ibid: 135). Wyn and White (1997: 92) also argue that disadvantaged young people should not be seen as any different from other age groups, having the same conventional goals as most people in society: '... in many cases the 'resistance' exerted by 'disadvantaged' young people is not necessarily

against mainstream institutions but constitutes struggles for a place *within* them’ (emphases in original).

Holland et al. (1999: 1) support the view of Jones and Wallace (1992) that such arbitrary and linear distinctions between the various phases of the lifecycle produce ‘a one dimensional, abstracted view of young people, giving little sense of their integrated social roles and relationships, or of their location within wider society’. Wyn and White (1997) illustrate a dichotomy in youth transitions, in that the term ‘transition’ denotes a fluid and changing *process*, whereas the categories used in the literature to depict this process are static and predictable (namely, childhood, adulthood, school, employment, marriage, etc.). These authors point out (1997: 96) that transitions are in fact a series of socially mediated and multiple processes involving various dimensions:

The term ‘transition to adulthood’ draws on the idea that young people make one transition to adulthood, and that adulthood is a clearly defined status – a destination at which one ‘arrives’... these ‘transitions’ are often signalled by events such as leaving school, leaving home, getting married, having children or getting a job... the complexity in using them categorically is that their meaning is not necessarily consistent across all groups, they do not necessarily mark a significant change, and finally, they do not remain fixed... many of the above ‘markers’ of adult life are transitory, reversible and impermanent.

Wyn and White (ibid: 96) talk of ‘boomerang children’, who leave and return to the home base with often alarming frequency. They argue that the concept of transition as well as that of ‘life course’ suggests that not only is the process linear but also apolitical. Such an understanding of the concept of transition places the burden on young people to follow existing structural pathways and places the blame on those young people if they do not complete the transition according to these defined pathways. Wyn and White conclude that a uni-dimensional focus on youth transitions

ignores the immediate circumstances and dispositions of young people in favour of a relatively unknown future, where citizenship rights and participation in society are delayed until a young person has met the full criteria of 'adulthood'.

I would argue that transitions research seems to have become preoccupied with the structure/agency dichotomy within an extended and increasingly adverse socio-economic environment. Thus, this preoccupation seems to be at the expense of the notion of citizenship and rights. The political and social power imbalances operating within our society, not least in the transition phase between childhood and adulthood, tend to be played down in favour of identifying localised structural constraints and individual choice at the expense of the macro-level issues of young people's rights within a developmental framework of transitions. Indeed, Callinicos (1999) suggests that Giddens' theory of structuration²², for example, supports New Labour's Third Way programme which stresses duties rather than rights, social inclusion rather than social equality and individualised risk rather than collective responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been suggested in both this and the previous chapter that the criminological literature outlined in Chapter 2 *on its own* cannot offer a comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to the mainly temporary nature of offending amongst a mainly transient section of the population (namely, youth). A broader, more dynamic approach is felt to be needed that depicts offending behaviour as a process of change and

²² Giddens (1984) suggests that structures (rules and resources) are not only constraining but also enabling, albeit within limitations. Social actions tend to be routinised within the confines of structure but also reflexive.

development amongst young people. This chapter has deployed the concept of youth transitions to enable this more comprehensive and all-encompassing approach to be utilised.

The concluding remarks to Chapter 2 suggested that the criminological literature had hitherto emphasised blocked aspirations, subcultural association or the labelling and prejudice of the wider society, but had not specifically focused on the socio-legal constraints of disparities of power, participation and opportunities of young people in transition. By drawing in this chapter on youth transitions, however, subcultural affiliations, for example, can be viewed as perhaps more political than individual, more transient than durable, and more interdependent than rebellious. Youth subcultural affiliations can offer a temporary reprieve in the transition to more sustainable and durable sources of power and reciprocity in adulthood. Equally, participation through consumerism often acts as a source of power where no other sources of power may exist in youth (Jones & Wallace, 1992). Given the importance of power relationships in youth transitions, the socio-legal constraints inherent in the phases of transition which may impact significantly on youth offending, need to be examined in greater depth.

Whilst research on youth transitions has been used relatively sparsely in the field of criminology, it is argued that such literature can provide a better understanding of youth offending as perceived and experienced by young people. Not only are the phases of transition important markers to young people, but they should also be important markers to criminologists keen to understand the usually temporary and youthful nature of offending. Studying youth transitions in parallel with youth offending enables an

exploration of the dynamics of age, power, interdependence and integration in the transition to full citizenship in adulthood.

Matza suggests that powerlessness is a key factor in producing drift and therefore delinquency: 'Being pushed around puts the delinquent in a mood of fatalism... In that condition he is rendered irresponsible' (Matza, 1964: 89). Such powerlessness, it could be argued, manifests itself in the transition phase of youth when young people fall between the two stools of relative protection as children and interdependence as adults. Whilst offending is not just a problem for young people but is also concentrated in communities and cultures more generally that are disempowered through increasing unemployment and poverty, powerlessness is perhaps most acutely felt by young people in transition, and offending is often an escape from such disempowerment (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995).

Minority or marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable to police attention, by dint of their class, their ethnicity and their employment status (Braithwaite, 1989). I would argue that their age also makes young people in particular an equally marginalised group. Jeffs and Smith (1998: 47) also contend that: 'There can be no acceptable reason for controlling people on the grounds of their age any more than on the basis of their race or gender'. These authors conclude, in their assessment of the problematization of 'youth', that ageism is denying young people the rights and opportunities more readily available to adults.

Wyn and White (1997) suggest that the concept of transition to adulthood, as it presently stands, ignores the present situation of young people, their low position within

an age- and status-oriented social hierarchy and their need for interdependence rather than independence as they grow older. They argue that youth should instead be seen as a relational ‘social process’:

social processes places the emphasis on the *relationship* between specific groups of young people and institutions, rather than simply describing the *effects* of these processes such as crime, deviance, antisocial behaviour, homelessness and suicide. This type of perspective offers an understanding of the politics of youth (Wyn & White, 1997: 147, emphases in original).

In late- or even post-modernity, youth transitions often involve multiple routes, have no obvious point of arrival (Wyn & White, 1997) or lead nowhere (Cohen & Ainley, 2000). Contemporary youth transitions do not accord with post-modernist theorizing, since they are still structured according to class and gender. Postmodernism tends to ignore class in favour of plurality and to ignore inequality in favour of difference and individualization (Skeggs, 1997). Whilst academics such as Wyn and White are attempting to combine structure and agency in contemporary youth transitions debates, ‘the concept of youth transition has tended to remain locked into a linear and relational uni-dimensional notion of growing up’ (ibid: 118). The concept is also, Wyn and White argue, gender-blind and ignores the connectedness of women to society and the importance of social relations more generally. This emphasis on connectedness and social integration, coupled with the fact that the young people in this sample were constantly constrained by structural inequalities pertaining not only to their class but also to their age, are dominant themes of this thesis, as will be seen from the data in the ensuing analyses.

CHAPTER 5: METHODS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

INTRODUCTION

Much youth research until recent years has focused on the problems rather than the potential of young people (Barry, forthcoming; Miles, 2000). Such theories tended to focus on young men rather than young women (Gelsthorpe & Morris, 1990) and to stress subcultural idiosyncracies rather than mainstream norms. Young people had become passive victims of structural imbalances within society, rather than active negotiators within their social worlds, or alternatively, they had become manipulative actors rationally circumventing structural forces. Sociologists of youth tended to position themselves on either the structure side or the agency side, but not to straddle both. More recently, there has been a greater awareness of the two-way relationship between, on the one hand, structural opportunities and constraints and, on the other hand, young people's ability to construct their own identities (Miles, 2000). Miles argues that 'this divide has served to undermine the development of an effective sociology of youth which will only emerge when cultural aspects of young people's lives are considered in the situated context of structural constraints and vice versa' (ibid: 35). Not only have young people been set apart in terms of their behaviour, but also in terms of their views. According to Miles (2000: 6), the sociology of subculture and the sociology of youth transitions failed until recently 'to accommodate actors' own accounts or experiences', although, amongst others, Becker (1963), Hall and Jefferson (1976) and Willis (1977) in the 1960s and 1970s argued for actors' narratives to be taken into account.

These developments are part of a general social scientific dilemma over whether people should be studied as ‘subjects’ or as ‘objects’. The latter approach is exemplified by the positivist school, which suggests that people could be studied as the object of enquiry, and that only observable facts are valid. However, there is an increasing importance being placed on ‘listening’ – whether this be to the consumer in the market place, to the patient in health care or to the client in social work: even when exposed to the same structural constraints, people will react differently, thus suggesting that a sociogenic approach does not allow for individual narratives (Bryman, 1988; Leibrich, 1993). For these narratives to be incorporated, a phenomenological approach is required in conjunction with a sociogenic one (Maruna, 2001).

THE RATIONALE FOR THE METHODS USED

Before discussing the specific methods used in operationalising this study, the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are reiterated as follows:

- What are young people’s experiences and views of starting, continuing and stopping offending?
- Is there a relationship between young people’s reasons for starting, continuing and stopping offending?
- Are there gender differences in the reasons young people give for starting, continuing and stopping offending?

Given children's and young people's relatively marginalised status in matters which affect them (Franklin, 2002), it is important to include their voice in research related to their welfare. Butters (1976: 259) suggests that a flexible approach is important in fieldwork, one that allows modifications based on respondents' views: 'the focus and strategy of the fieldwork must be evolved through... attentiveness to hosts' accounts of what in their situations is problematic to them'. As I was interested in young people's perceptions of their social networks, support networks and attitudes to offending and conformity, I decided that this type of subjective information was better obtained through in-depth interviews rather than, for example, closed or multiple-choice questions within a questionnaire format. In order to examine the research questions more fully, I was particularly keen to speak to those young people who had stopped offending but who had been persistent offenders in the past, the persistency element allowing for a starker contrast to be established between onset/maintenance of offending and desistance. Because I was interested in any possible continuity between the three phases of offending – onset, maintenance and desistance – I decided that there should also be continuity in the sample, thus asking the *same* respondents to talk about the three phases in parallel. I also wanted to speak to individuals aged 18 to 30, since at the lower end (18), persisters would be more likely to be included, and at the upper end (30), not only would memory recall possibly be more accurate than for people over 30 but also desistance and the 'transition to adulthood' are more likely to have occurred. The section below on 'Accessing the sample' gives the context in which the sample was chosen.

As described in the preceding literature reviews, research with young people has in the last forty years increasingly adopted a qualitative approach to identifying their views and experiences of various topics. It is likely that this increased attention to the primary knowledge of the respondent has run in parallel with the increasing attention given to children's rights (Franklin, 2002) and the growing demand for 'user' participation in matters affecting their lives (Beresford & Wilson, 1998). However, it is a relatively new phenomenon, emanating from the 1980s, that service users, and in particular offenders, have been asked their views about the service they receive (Barry, 2000). It is rarer still, as the literature in Chapter 2 makes clear, for persistent young offenders to be asked by researchers what their views specifically are, not just about the 'service' they receive, but more importantly, about why they think they became involved in offending in the first place, what they thought about their behaviour and how, if at all, they managed to stop offending.

This study aimed to confront these issues by engaging in direct discussion with young people who had offended in the past and to seek their views and advice about the nature of their offending and its advantages and disadvantages. This chapter explores how I identified and engaged with those young people, and how I made sense of those discussions. The chapter ends with a brief overview of the characteristics of the forty young people who were involved in the research process.

Undertaking research involves asking people for their help and advice, whether this be in accessing a sample, entering the field or talking to respondents. People ought to be reassured about the researcher's integrity, the value of the research, the input required of the respondents, what benefits accrue to them from the research and the expected

outcomes. When researching sensitive topics with vulnerable people, these reassurances are all the more necessary.

This chapter explores the issues emerging both from the planned (ideal) and the actual (pragmatic) methods considered, including accessing the sample, means of gaining the views and experiences of respondents, ethical considerations and the types of data collected.

THE FIELDWORK

Accessing the sample

In an age of increasing demands on groups and individuals for their views regarding products, policies and practice, and a concurrent ethos of protection of human rights to privacy and anonymity, accessing a sample for research purposes is becoming increasingly difficult. Naturally, the larger the sampling population, the more likely it is that one can fulfil sample criteria and match individuals according to the aims of the research. In a study of this kind, where I wanted to explore and compare young people's views of starting and stopping offending, I required two sub-samples – persisters and desisters, who were old enough to have a relatively well-established criminal record but young enough to fit the potential criterion of 'adolescent-limited' offender rather than being a 'lifecourse-persistent' offender (Moffitt, 1993).

Therefore, I initially considered the ideal sample to have been a random selection of past and current persistent young offenders accessed through police records, given that the police keep extensive records of offenders or alleged offenders that come to their

notice. Such records would have given age, frequency and type of offending and previous disposals, and could also have been broken down by local authority. However, this was not subsequently possible because of the requirements of the Data Protection Act: according to a Deputy Chief Constable in one of the larger police forces in Scotland: 'It would be illegal to provide the data to another party, or for the Force to use this data for any other purpose' (Wood, 1998, pers. comm). It would also have been inappropriate for the police to contact such individuals by letter on my behalf. When I then approached the Crown Office and social work departments, I received a similar response, with the additional reason of their being inundated with similar research requests and not having the time or the staff to deal with them.

I decided, therefore, to use a purposive sampling method to gain 40 respondents, and to augment this with snowballing techniques if necessary. Sommers et al. (1994) point out that sampling female desisters in particular tends to require purposive sampling and snowballing since female offenders constitute a small percentage of all offenders and they are also less accessible or visible within official records. As will be seen below, snowballing was necessary in respect of gaining one of the sub-sample of young women for this study.

Given the inherent difficulties in accessing young offenders, a sample of 40 was deemed to be large enough to enable the collection of enough quantitative data to make basic numerical comparison feasible, whilst also offering a wide enough but manageable range of experiences and views within a qualitative framework. This sample size is also broadly consistent with the widely-held convention in social research that more than 20 qualitative interviews within a sub-sample is likely to be subject to

the 'law of diminishing returns', i.e., few new insights are revealed from additional cases. This generally proved to be the case with this sample.

Having made the decision to use purposive sampling methods, I approached colleagues in a national voluntary organisation that ran intensive probation projects in various areas of Scotland, all of which had come into operation between 1990 and 1995. This organisation agreed to my accessing a sample through several of their projects, on the condition that I added an additional question in the interview schedule about the effectiveness or otherwise of intensive probation and undertook to provide feedback to the organisation about the overall research findings. It appeared feasible, given the numbers of clients being referred to this organisation throughout its projects in Scotland, that I would be able to gain access to the desired total of 40 previously persistent offenders, although not necessarily an equal gender mix, since the numbers of women referred were very low (see below).

Initial contact was made in 1999 through project staff to former clients of the four intensive probation projects identified by the voluntary organisation. Lists were drawn up by project staff of all young people who had been given a court order on or before 30th June, 1997, with intensive probation as a condition. This date was at least two years before starting access negotiations, so as to allow a potential two-year period to have elapsed between being an 'active' client and being interviewed for this study. However, it is acknowledged that I could not expect such clients to have necessarily stopped offending during that two-year period.

Project staff were asked to contact ex-clients by letter requesting the young people to complete a reply slip indicating whether or not they would be willing to participate in the study. However, I suggested to project staff that this letter should stipulate that if an individual did *not* respond to the letter, it would be assumed that their contact details could be forwarded to the researcher. It was at this point that a legal technicality arose which, albeit understandable, created problems in accessing the desired sample from one source. Two of the four projects adopted this preferred ‘opt-out’ clause in their letter (which stated that if the recipient did not return the reply slip and did not contact project staff to say otherwise, then their name and address would be forwarded to the researcher). However, the other two projects chose to adopt an ‘opt-in’ clause in their letter (stating that if the recipient did not return the reply slip, then their details would *not* be passed on to the researcher). The reason for the inconsistency between projects in their use of opt-in or opt-out clauses in their letters was due to differing practices in relation to the recent Data Protection Act (1998) which had come into force at around the same time as my access request. This revised Act was more rigorous in its protection of sensitive data sources than its predecessor of 1984 (Lloyd, 1998) and stipulated that certain categories of sensitive data cannot legally be disclosed unless under specific conditions. In respect of research access for this study, the relevant categories of data are the commission or alleged commission of any offence and the proceedings, disposal and sentencing relating to such offences. The specific conditions under which offences or the individuals alleged to have committed such offences can be disclosed are if ‘the data subject has given his explicit consent to the processing of those data’ (Schedule 3, para. 1 of the Act), or if the processing of such data is required for, *inter alia*, employment, legal, medical or welfare reasons.

Whilst only two of the four intensive probation projects acted strictly in accordance with the Act, this is not to say that the remaining two were acting illegally or inappropriately. There tends to be scope for discretion and ambiguity in this Act (Lloyd, 1998) and in addition, given the timescale of the study, the new Act was not at that time fully in force. Nevertheless, bodies which have responsibility for the data collection of information pertaining to members of the public, for whatever reason, are justifiably conscientious about protecting both their own interests and those of the individuals on their records.

However, given the transient and somewhat chaotic lifestyle of many known offenders, an 'opt out' approach is often the most preferable means for researchers of contacting potential respondents, leaving the onus on the researcher to contact the client rather than vice versa, not least if the client has not been in touch with the referring organisation for some years, as was the case with some of this sample. Nevertheless, an 'opt out' approach can put the client in a potentially compromising position, especially if s/he does not fully understand the requirements of the letter itself. Equally, for safety reasons, allowing a researcher access to an address without the possible prior knowledge of the occupants can have its drawbacks. For ethical reasons also, approaching a potential respondent solely *because of* that person's criminal background may cause him or her unnecessary embarrassment.

Potential respondents were then approached by myself, following an agreed cut-off date for returns of opt-out forms, and given further information about the research prior to choosing whether or not to participate in the study. Of the 23 ex-clients contacted via the means of an opt-in letter, only five replied, and these five were subsequently

interviewed (two men and three women). The opt-out letter was sent to approximately 85 ex-clients (only four of whom were women). All four women were interviewed, and 19 men were interviewed from this latter source (one of whom was subsequently withdrawn because he was a one-off offender). Through this voluntary organisation, therefore, I had gained interviews with 20 young men and seven young women. Snowballing was used to boost this female sample in one instance, where one young woman's friend had not returned the reply slip to the voluntary organisation, but subsequently agreed to participate in the research.

I wanted an equal number of male to female respondents so as to be able to draw comparisons between the two sexes, and so as to avoid the criticism that young women tend to have 'occasional walk on parts' in criminological studies of this kind (Scruton, 1990: 18). I managed to boost the female sample, again purposively, via additional approaches to several social work departments and other organisations working in the offender field or in related fields (e.g., housing). These contacts were informally arranged and led to social workers identifying young women who met the criteria (in terms of age and probation experience, so as to at least partly match the men in the sample in terms of previous disposals). It was thus possible to gain a sample of 20 male and 20 female respondents, aged between 18 and 33, all of whom had previous experience of probation, but could not otherwise be matched in terms of level and seriousness of offending over time. However, as will be seen from Appendix 1 and the characteristics of the sample outlined in the final section of this chapter, there was deemed to be an adequate matching of criteria in terms of accessing both current and previous, as well as high-tariff and persistent offenders.

The difficulties faced in attempting to access a sample of 40 young offenders, with an equal sex ratio, should not be underestimated, not least with the increasing constraints placed on researchers by data protection legislation. It requires diplomacy with gatekeepers, a keen awareness of the ethical considerations, and perhaps most importantly, a level of persistence in tracking down young people whose movements tend to be both uncertain and covert. In addition, young female offenders are less accessible through intensive probation projects, partly because they are less persistent overall in their offending compared to young men, partly because such projects cannot offer a 'women-only' service²³ and partly because women's persistence in offending is often related to drug problems which are better dealt with by alternative disposals (Sommers et al., 1994; McLennan, 2003, pers. comm).

The advantages of accessing a sample through an intensive probation agency are a) that one can be sure that they were *either* persistent offenders *or* had committed at least one serious offence, since intensive probation is a 'high-tariff' disposal; and b) the intensive probation project can act as 'gatekeeper' in terms of identifying suitable candidates from their records and making the initial contact on behalf of the researcher. The disadvantages of this method of accessing a sample are a) that the researcher is, to a greater or lesser degree, dependent on the said gatekeepers for access (hence the problem of gaining a sample of 40 via this means); b) there is no way of gauging whether clients have actually desisted until contact has been made (although I was fortunate in gaining a relatively evenly balanced sample of persisters and desisters); and

²³ Cameron and Telfer (2004) note that most group-work programmes are male-oriented but that young women have specific problems in relation to their offending behaviour which require customised programmes. Covington (1998) also suggests that women offenders require women-only programmes in order to address their particular criminogenic needs.

c) I could not get an even number of male and female respondents (the projects catered almost exclusively for men) or young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (all bar one of the sample were white European, with one Afro-Caribbean young woman). However, in respect of this sample, the attrition rate was fortunately very low: I was unsuccessful in tracing only eight young people, whilst a further three declined to be interviewed, mainly because of other commitments.

In all, the time period from starting negotiations with various agencies for access to a sample, and completing the fieldwork, was approximately 19 months, on a part-time basis. The fieldwork began in February 2000 and was completed in April 2001. Interviews were transcribed throughout the fieldwork period.

Issues of sample representativeness

Much criminological research uses incarcerated individuals as sample respondents, partly because such offenders are readily accessible. However, given that to be incarcerated one has to be detected, that only one in three crimes are reported to the police, that only one in 10 crimes result in prosecution and that under 14 per cent of all persons with a charge proved in Scotland in 2001 received a custodial sentence, it is doubtful whether many of these criminological research studies can claim representativeness in their sampling methods. Interviewing young people in prison would have been a more convenient way of accessing a sample, but that would not have allowed me to sample desisters as well as persisters, nor to interview young people in a neutral and 'safe' setting that might ensure confidentiality, openness and trust: crucial factors when undertaking sensitive qualitative research with young offenders.

Some critics of traditional criminological studies have suggested that the samples identified in such studies (for example, male, teenage, less serious and less persistent offenders) do not depict the 'average' offender – another reason, perhaps, why some studies try to deflect such criticism by interviewing older, incarcerated respondents. I have addressed this potential criticism by accessing the majority of individuals in this study through an intensive probation project. Such projects have strict guidelines on who is appropriate for an Intensive Probation Order, in terms of persistence and seriousness of offending; as a result, referring agencies, sheriffs and project staff alike have rigorous mechanisms in place for ensuring that no young person is 'up-tariffed' as a result of being given such an Order.

From the list of offences mentioned by the young people in this research (see Appendix 1), it can be seen that the majority of the sample's offences, whilst more serious and persistent than the national picture for offending in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2002), were generally unsophisticated in nature, for example breach of the peace, shoplifting and possession of drugs. It is mainly the petty crimes of young disadvantaged people that attract the most attention in terms of legal definition and intervention: the large-scale, professional crimes of the powerful tend to go unacknowledged, if not undetected. Equally, many criminologists stress that much youth offending is not serious or necessarily persistent over time (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Lea and Young, 1994; Matza, 1964; Wyn & White, 1997). Figures for Scotland suggest that under four per cent of all crimes and offences committed by 16-30 year olds in 2001 were for serious offences (e.g., homicide, robbery and serious assault). Certainly, the type and frequency of offences for my sample of young people cited in Appendix 1 seem to be well above

the national average for current young offenders in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2002), given that their offences include attempted murder, serious assault, police assault and robbery.

The interview process

Silverman (1993) suggests that the interaction within interviews is crucial for eliciting personal constructs within social worlds and Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 117) state that the active dialogue of an in-depth interview enables interviewees to be ‘engaged in the production of knowledge’ rather than to be mere repositories of such knowledge. However, others argue that the interview is devoid of true meaning, since both parties to the discussion (the interviewer and interviewee) place their own, often contradictory, interpretations on events. Thus ‘[interviews] are context-specific... and representative of nothing’ (Miller and Glassner, 1997: 99).

Miller & Glassner also stress, however, that such interaction should not lessen the objectivity of the exchange and that cultural and social differences between interviewer and interviewee should not detract from the usefulness of that exchange. Whilst Collins (1990) suggests that interviewers need to have experienced the interviewee’s social world in order to study it meaningfully, Miller and Glassner (1997) argue that the lack of such experience need not preclude useful information being gathered if the interviewer has the skills to enable the interviewee to identify and elaborate on his/her own perceptions. My previous experience of the criminal justice field, and of working directly with young people for over twenty years, has hopefully put me in good stead in interviewing young offenders.

The interview schedule (see Appendix 2) developed as a result of my interest not only in compiling demographic and offending histories, but also in developing a dialogue with respondents regarding the processes they went through in starting, continuing and stopping offending. Both the vulnerabilities (in age, background and behaviour) of the group under study and the complexities inherent in making sense of crime and criminality suggested that a discursive, informal interview was the best medium through which to engage with this sample. A qualitative interview of this nature can also be a cathartic experience. Talking about certain aspects of one's life in detail is something that many young people have rarely had the opportunity to do (Barry, 2001a). As one young woman in the current study stated at the end of the interview: 'It's good to talk about it. It helps talking about things, you know ... Cos you're not bottling it up inside' (Anna, 21). This view was matched by a young man in a previous study I undertook of children's experiences of growing up: 'nobody's ever done that, sat down and just talked... about my life' (Barry, 2001a). Equally, young offenders, in particular, rarely have the opportunity to analyse their experiences of offending with anyone other than a social worker for reasons pertaining to punishment or rehabilitation, and in this respect, talking to a neutral third party may have motivated them to be perhaps more enthusiastic and frank than usual.

A total of 43 interviews were undertaken, although three of these were subsequently not used because they did not fully fit the criteria (two of these respondents were first-time offenders and the third had only offended marginally in adolescence). Two pilot interviews, which were subsequently incorporated into the total number of 40 interviews, enabled me to 'test out' my line of questioning, to iron out any stylistic or

linguistic problems and to monitor the flow and general logic of the schedule. At the start of the interview, I asked these two respondents to give me the additional help and feedback on how to make the interview a meaningful, clear and ‘user-friendly’ experience for research participants. Their help in this was invaluable whilst not detracting from the overall integrity of the research, since they were asked the same questions as the other respondents, with only slight changes to wording being made as a result of their suggestions.

Three quarters of the interviews were conducted in respondents’ own homes, with four respondents being interviewed in either the project’s offices or other agency premises and six being interviewed in prison. In the vast majority of cases, the interview was conducted in a quiet room (even within some of the prisons), usually with no other people present or within earshot, thus limiting the likelihood of interview site bias on the data obtained. However, on some occasions, babies or young children were present during the interview. My only reservation about this was where I was concerned that the child might understand some of what was being said – in terms of offending or drug-taking, for example, by the mother - but I either took the lead from the respondent on this or we ‘veiled’ our conversation where necessary.

The interview lasted on average one and a half hours, and was tape-recorded with the respondent’s agreement²⁴. It should be pointed out that although dialects varied considerably between the geographical areas under study, and although the transcripts adopted the vernacular language of the respondents, it was nevertheless decided to

²⁴ All bar one man, in prison at the time of the interview, agreed to the interview being taped. However, permission to tape a second interview was refused by prison staff for a further young man in custody at the time of the interview.

‘anglicize’ the quotations where necessary, partly for ease of understanding by the reader and partly because of the difficulties inherent in phonetically transcribing differing modes of speech.

It was deemed important in my initial negotiation with potential interviewees and in the introduction to these particular interviews to be clear and honest about my intentions for the research and to say what help I wanted from them and why. The first part of the interview was to seek predominantly factual information rather than opinion and to give the respondents time to familiarise themselves with the interviewer and to adjust to the interview environment. This first phase of the interview elicited information such as living arrangements, family status and experiences and perceptions of education and employment.

The subsequent phase of the interview was more in-depth and semi-structured in nature, during which their perceptions were sought about the following issues:

- definitions of offending;
- type and frequency of offending since onset;
- reasons and circumstances surrounding starting, continuing and stopping offending;
- the advantages and disadvantages of starting, continuing and stopping offending;
- factors which helped or hindered the process of starting, continuing and stopping offending;
- future aspirations;

- the effects of outside factors, such as family or significant events on their pattern of offending.

In order to make the interview process as interesting and engaging as possible for the respondents, four exercises were used (written exercises, graphs and statement cards to illustrate points during the interview), which helped stimulate memory recall, avoid monotony and encourage dialogue. The first of these was a timeline of the type and number of offences committed since childhood and the broadly estimated proportion of times that these offences were detected by the police. The second was grouping their offences on cards, in a way that made sense to them (i.e., ‘for money/for fun’, ‘serious/not serious’, etc), thus eliciting their categorisations of offences and possible rationale for committing them. The third exercise was a graph of levels of involvement in offending (low, medium and high) from the age they started to the present day, which mirrored the first exercise in terms of frequency. The final exercise was another timeline of people and events since childhood that the respondents thought had an impact on their behaviour or attitudes over the years, notably in relation to offending.

The vast majority of these interviews consisted of full and frank discussions about respondents’ offending, their childhood experiences and their future aspirations. Interviewing young people in their own homes, where they are in familiar surroundings, helps to break down any barriers between the interviewer and the interviewee. Many had made the effort, in advance of our meeting, to prepare either themselves (for example, by getting up and dressed for a morning appointment) or their homes (for example, by tidying up or preparing tea and biscuits). I stressed at the outset of the interview that I wanted their advice rather than to ‘interview’ them as such, and that

they should feel free to 'show me the door' at any point in time during our discussion, should they so wish. Although I was more interested in their views than they were in mine, I was nevertheless as open and honest when asked for my own opinion as I hope they were with me. This mutual respect and rapport seemed, sadly, to be rare for them in their dealings with 'older' 'professionals'. During the interview, I often helped make tea, or played with a child, so as to ease the pressure on the respondent or to demonstrate my gratitude for their time and hospitality²⁵. I am sure that this interactive and relaxed approach greatly enhanced the quality of the interviews overall.

ETHICS

It is becoming increasingly difficult for researchers to retain freedom of access within the research process because of, in particular, the Data Protection Act (1998), which has rightly curtailed the activities of researchers in choosing who, where and why to interview. For these reasons, most research organisations follow a certain code of ethics in social science research and in this study various codes of ethics were consulted, in particular, the codes of research ethics from the University of Stirling and the British Sociological Association (1996). Such codes of ethics tend to be subsumed under the following three headings: informed consent, minimization of harm and confidentiality/anonymity.

²⁵ It should be pointed out that I did not offer, and none requested, payment for their time during the course of this research. Not only did they give of their time without expectation of payment, they were also all happy for me to contact them again should I require any further information at a later date.

Informed consent

Informed consent refers not only to the need to give respondents an honest and full account of the aims of the research but also the need to ensure that they do not feel pressurised into participating. If respondents feel they are a part of and fully informed about the research aims, they are more likely to be honest and constructive in their comments. Therefore, at the start of the interview I informed the young people about the reasons for, and methods used in, undertaking the research and what was requested of them as respondents. This included why I wanted to speak with them, how I had identified them, that I wanted to tape our conversation, how I would use quotations and what I intended to do with the final report. We both signed a written agreement, or ‘contract’ at the start of the interview (see Appendix 3) and each respondent was given the right to withdraw from the process at any time during the interview, although none did.

Minimization of harm

In any research study, it is always important to ensure that nobody is personally harmed by the research process or its findings. However, where research is studying former or current offenders, it is even more important to respect and protect respondents’ rights to anonymity and control over the use of the data. One controversial exception to this rule may be in situations where information is divulged to the researcher that may harm the respondent or other people, i.e., disclosure of abuse.

In this study, each respondent was initially told that it was their prerogative whether to divulge information or not, and that if I were to ask them something which they would rather not answer, then to tell me so. I attempted to reassure them that I would not press them for information that might either incriminate or upset them. In expanding on this issue, I stressed that they should not divulge any planned offence or any undetected but identifiable previous offence, as this would put both me and the respondent in an awkward position. I took my lead in this respect from Leibrich's research study (1992), and informed participants that they could tell me in confidence that they robbed a bank yesterday, but not to tell me *which* bank. However, they should not tell me if they planned to rob the Bank of Scotland in the High Street tomorrow, as I would feel morally compelled to warn those potentially affected. Taking this approach leaves the ball firmly in the court of the respondent and it is therefore difficult to gauge if information was withheld from me as a result.

Wary of the potential harm to participants of talking about upsetting events in the past, I was prepared to offer advice to the young people involved, after the interview was completed, in relation to relevant help or advice from other agencies or individuals (most notably in relation to employment opportunities). However, none of the respondents seemed, or suggested that they were, upset by the interview itself. However, I always purposefully ended the interview by talking about their past achievements and future aspirations, which was generally seen as very much a positive conclusion to the interview process.

Confidentiality/anonymity

Respondents were informed that any law-breaking activity they had done in the past and which they shared with me would remain confidential (albeit with the proviso discussed in the ‘Minimising harm’ section above). The respondents were also assured that, like it or not, they were ‘a number’ rather than a name and their identity would be withheld in the final report. Both myself and the respondent each signed the above-mentioned contract to this effect.

Lists of the potential sample population and subsequent transcripts and other identifying information were kept in a locked cupboard. The typist who transcribed the interviews was known to, and trusted by, me and all names and places were deleted from the transcripts prior to inputting the data onto Nud.ist and SPSS. The interviews were numbered 1 – 43²⁶ and where young people are quoted directly in this report, each quotation is identified only by a pseudonym and the age of the speaker.

RECONVICTION DATA

Accessing reconviction data was intended to complement the respondents’ own memories of offence types and frequency. Self-report data on offending *on their own* can often be unreliable for several reasons. Such data can be affected by poor respondent recall, are dependent upon an open and honest perspective by the respondent and may be influenced by the respondent’s rapport with the researcher. Farrall and Bowling suggest that personal narratives may be biased, however inadvertently:

²⁶ As mentioned earlier, interviews 6, 32 and 33 were not used for the purposes of this research study, because the respondents did not meet the criteria for eligibility.

‘respondents may attempt to imbue their previous lives with rationality and intent’ (Farrall & Bowling, 1997: 13).

So as to minimise the impact of bias in a researcher/respondent interaction, supplementing the data with official reconviction data can, to a certain extent, act as a triangulation²⁷ method of ensuring more accurate data collection. To this end, reconviction data were sought towards the end of the fieldwork period with the permission of respondents and via the auspices of the various social work departments involved. At the end of the interview, each respondent signed a consent form agreeing to my accessing their previous convictions data (see Appendix 4). No one refused permission for access to this information. In accessing these data, it was necessary to firstly approach social work departments for Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) numbers (unique reference numbers pertaining to each client). Relevant social work departments were given a copy of the respondents’ consent forms with client details and once the SCRO numbers were collected, these were sent in an anonymised form to the Criminal Justice Statistics Branch of the Scottish Executive to access the reconviction data. These data covered all criminal convictions from the age of 16 (and often those offences dealt with by the Children’s Hearings system prior to the age of 16) until September, 2002, 17-31 months following interview.

This study did not set out, however, to specifically examine rates, frequency and type of offending, but where reconviction data are relevant to the arguments contained in this thesis, they are drawn on as a comparator.

²⁷ ‘Triangulation’ (Denzin, 1970) to a certain extent resolves the issue of competing perceptions or realities from different empirical sources, in that the researcher can gain the same information from two or more different sources in order to estimate its accuracy.

ANALYTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Theories... are thoughts which... have resulted from the synthesis of non-rational leaps from particulars towards generals, and rational steps back to the taken-for-granted particulars... The process of thinking cannot be formalized either, but the results of thinking should be chains of reasonable judgements (Ford, 1975: 140-1).

Whilst the size of this sample and the exploratory nature of the study make questionable any elaborate attempts at synthesising from particulars to generals and back again, as the above quotation suggests, this section goes some way to describe the process involved in deciding how to analyse the data and how to overcome the problem of understanding, dissecting and describing the phenomenon of offending. I wished to avoid 'losing touch' with the respondents' narratives in analysing these data, but I was, nevertheless, torn between the voice of the young people, my own thoughts on crime and criminality and the intellectual creativity required of a doctoral thesis. In order to adopt a mid-way position, therefore, between being either overly deductive and overly inductive, I decided to complete the fieldwork before identifying themes from responses at interview which could then be compared with existing literature. Bryman (1988: 81) suggests that:

[T]he prior specification of a theory tends to be disfavoured because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated, as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the views of participants.

Thus, the analysis was conducted after all 40 respondents had been interviewed, using the same series of questions, and after those interviews had been transcribed and coded. My approach enabled the development and refinement of categories *after* rather than *concurrently with* the fieldwork. Nevertheless, during the course of the study, I kept a

‘journal’ (Wright Mills, 1959) within which I summarised the key literature, raised potentially relevant points emerging from that literature, undertook manual analysis of data, highlighted key propositions or findings and summarised the process of my analysis over time.

Just as becoming deviant is a ‘transformational process’ (Rock, 1991: 237), so too is the analysis of data. Robson (1993) has suggested that qualitative research needs a certain degree of structure in an otherwise unstructured environment in order to be meaningful, and such analysis seeks ‘to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally “messy” situation’ (ibid: 3). Equally, Rock (1973: 18) argues that:

... description cannot proceed very far if it is couched solely in the constructs employed by the inhabitants of a deviant world. Some necessary abstraction and elaboration must be undertaken so that the world’s contours are more fully understood.

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) argues for an initial identification, consolidation and general definition of categories that can then act as a guide to stimulating further reflection and theorising. This approach, taken literally, argues that theories should not only be derived from the data but also be constantly refined and elaborated by testing them on subsequent sample respondents during the course of the same study. A grounded theory approach is concerned with the world of the research participants as they see it, where the results would be ‘grounded’ in the concepts and understanding of the people being researched.

Grounded theory is a seductive tool in criminological qualitative research, given the multiplicity of factors associated with crime and the myriad of criminological theories, often bereft of empiricism. As Clarke (1999: 59) points out:

It is not difficult to appreciate the attraction [grounded theory] holds for the naturalistically inclined evaluator, especially when given the fact that the unstructured complexity of multiple realities renders a priori theorizing impractical.

Ford (1975: 209) argues that grounded theory ignores the fact that ‘data do not exist *in* reality but are constructed by human minds in their attempts to grasp reality’ and Bryman (1988) notes that there are few instances of research that utilise grounded theory as anticipated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), its original proponents.

In undertaking this study, I wanted to explore further the anomaly between, on the one hand, what the literature suggests are the opportunities that promote desistance and, on the other hand, the fact that many offenders desist from crime without having acquired any of these opportunities. Equally, what are the differences in young people’s explanations for why they start and stop offending? As mentioned in Chapter 1, I was also interested to see whether acquiring responsibilities or a ‘different’ persona in adulthood was in any way connected to the process of desistance. Whilst these issues were not specifically explored at interview, the wording of the interview schedule was such as to enable these issues to emerge if and when appropriate.

As stated in Chapter 1, the secondary analysis for this study took place *as a result of* the findings from the primary analysis of the respondents’ experiences of starting and stopping offending. The fact that many respondents suggested that their propensity to

offend or not offend was very much based on their need for integration within society and a semblance of control within their own lives. These findings led me to the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, namely his concepts of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital. I should explain why I found Bourdieu's concepts more useful in my analytical framework than, for example, those of Giddens (1976; 1984; 1991), even though Giddens' work has attracted more attention than that of Bourdieu in criminological circles (see, for example, Smith, 1986; Bottoms, 1993; Bottoms & Wiles, 1992; Farrall & Bowling, 1999).

Giddens (1984) sees equality as being resolved by social inclusion of individuals into the status quo, tending thus to ignore class-based inequalities. Giddens promotes the ethos of active citizenship where rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. He suggests that individualised inequalities can be overcome given that power is an attainable asset to every individual, not just a few. In other words, power need not be 'zero sum'²⁸ (Haugaard, 2002: 150); thus, 'nobody is completely powerless' (Craib, 1992: 115). Bourdieu, on the other hand, is concerned with structural insecurity rather than with individual risk. He argues that power is indeed a restricted, zero sum resource and that inequalities are collective issues that are class-based rather than personal issues (Callinicos, 1999).

Whilst both Giddens and Bourdieu argue for a 'middle ground' approach to the dichotomy between structure and agency, Giddens' theory of structuration is less

²⁸ 'Zero sum', according to Scott (2001) means that 'power relations are seen as asymmetrical, hierarchical relations... in which one agent can gain only at the expense of another... there is a given distribution of power... [involving] both winners and losers. 'Non-zero sum', on the other hand, suggests that there is an infinite quantity of power, in which there are only winners.

concerned about the uneven distribution of power and agency and tends to play down the capacity of individuals over the lifecourse both '*to structure and avoid being structured*' (Farrall & Bowling, 1999: 256, emphasis in original). Bourdieu, on the other hand, emphasises the fluid and contextual nature of social action, notably in the constant accumulation and reciprocal appropriation of capital and in the interplay of time and space with the habitus and fields of power (see below). Coupled with Bourdieu's emphasis on structural inequalities, his concepts of capital were also innovative in the criminological field and helped me to compare offending with youth transitions, both of which, I will argue, are dynamic processes of continuity and change within a changing socio-structural environment. This secondary interpretation of the data is described and analysed in Chapters 9 and 10.

Categorising and interpreting the data

Categorising unstructured qualitative data can often undermine the very reason why such a data collection approach was adopted in the first place (Jones, 1985), in that the researcher's categorization can pre-determine the resultant interpretation of the text. However, to do otherwise would be to leave the data in too unstructured and diverse a form to allow any subsequent meaningful interpretation and explanation.

With the help of the data analysis package, Nud.ist, I started analysis by categorising the data by the questions asked in the interview schedule, resulting in broad headings such as demographic details; starting, continuing and stopping offending; and perceptions of change, the future, offending generally and the criminal justice system. Further categories arose from these findings: for example, drugs and alcohol,

maturation, realization and supportive factors. Because the sample number was relatively manageable and because I wanted to familiarise myself as much as possible with each transcription as an entity in its own right, I did not use Nud.ist to its full capacity. Equally, whilst I entered much of the quantitative data onto SPSS, this data package only served to calculate aggregate numbers and was not used in a more sophisticated fashion.

From the data on reasons for, influences in and advantages and disadvantages of starting, continuing and stopping offending, four key organisational categories emerged that were common to each phase of offending. These were: practical, personal, relational and monetary, and are explained in the following chapter. It was through these categories that Bourdieu's concepts of capital (1977; 1986) emerged as a useful theoretical framework for making further sense of the data. It was felt that his four types of capital – social, economic, cultural and symbolic – matched the four organisational categories that were used to make sense of the original data, and also offered a bridge between both the offending phases and the phases of transition. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, I was concerned not to pre-empt the findings from the discussions with young people since this was primarily an exploratory study; however, their views and experiences led me to a secondary analysis of the data using Bourdieu's concepts of capital.

The use of case studies

Case study material is often used in qualitative research to allow for a retrospective analysis which demonstrates the unfolding course of events over time – 'in order to

show how present behaviour is part of a continuing sequence of events' (Bastin, 1985: 100). Such material can be used for theory building as well as theory testing, but is often criticised for not being statistically generalizable (Bryman, 1988). However, in this study, several case studies – or perhaps more accurately, 'case histories' – are drawn upon in Chapter 9 to demonstrate changes in respondents' experiences and perceptions over time. They do not purport to be representative of all 40 respondents, but demonstrate those instances where a respondent's narrative exemplifies the theoretical reasoning being made in the analysis through a more thorough investigation of a respondent's subjective understanding (Bryman, 1988).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The following characteristics of the sample are basic indicators of the range of circumstances of each respondent at interview. Where those circumstances impinge on the findings described in the following chapters, they will be expanded on in that specific context and are not analysed at length here.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the 20 male and 20 female respondents were aged between 18 and 33, with the breakdown of age given in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1: Age of respondents

	18-21	22-25	26-29	30-33
Male	10	7	3	-
Female	7	5	7	1
Total	17	12	10	1

As can be seen from the above table, the women tended to be older than the men, with eight of the women being 26 or over compared with only three of the men. This may account for the fact that more women than men said at the time of interview that they had stopped offending.

Table 5.2 gives the housing situation of the respondents at the time of interview, from which it can be seen that equal proportions of men and women were living with parents or partners, whilst twice as many women as men were living alone.

Table 5.2: Housing situation of respondents

	Living with parent(s)	Living with partner	Living alone	Living in a hostel	Homeless
Male	7	7	4	-	2
Female	5	5	8	1	1
Total	12	12	12	1	3

Seven of the men and 16 of the women had children, and whilst all these women were living with one or more of their children, only those men still with their partners were living with their children. The vast majority of the sample were unemployed at the time of interview, although three men and two women were currently working, with the remaining 17 men and 18 women claiming unemployment or sickness benefits.

Table 5.3 gives the self-reported age of onset for this sample. The responses to the question of when these young people started offending are tentative, based solely on their memories of not only when they first did something that they thought was ‘wrong’, morally or legally, but also based on their definition of what constituted an offence which varied from person to person depending on their attitudes, beliefs and

circumstances. Just over a quarter of the sample, with similar numbers of male to female respondents, had started offending before the age of 12, but there is a greater divergence of the sexes thereafter with 12 of the young men compared with nine of the young women starting offending between the ages of 12 and 15. Only two young men started after the age of 16, compared with six young women.

Table 5.3: Age of onset

Age of onset	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
8-11	6	5	11
12-15	12	9	21
16-19	2	4	6
20-23	0	2	2

According to the self-report data, 10 men and two women said they were still offending at the time of interview. The 40 individuals in this sample, whilst not representative of all offenders in Scotland, were above average in terms of type of offence committed and level of persistence. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of criminal histories in terms of the age at which each respondent started and (where applicable) stopped offending, as well as types of offences committed. The five most commonly committed offences were shoplifting, drug possession, breach of the peace, simple assault and theft. This equates with the national picture for Scotland: within the same age range (16-30), breach of the peace, simple assault, theft and shoplifting were amongst the seven most common offences for which a charge was proved in 2001 (Scottish Executive, 2002).

As can be seen from Table 5.4, the men had a much higher number of previous offences (calculated from SCRO data) than the women (a total of 755 accruing throughout the

men's offending histories up until September 2002, compared with 411 for the women). For those contacted via the voluntary organisation providing intensive probation supervision, the average number of previous offences was 38 for the 20 men and 20 for the seven women. For the remaining 13 young women contacted via social work departments (all of whom had been on probation, albeit not intensive probation) the average number of previous offences was 17. The fact that the men had, on average, twice as many previous offences as the women does not necessarily suggest that they were more persistent offenders than the women. It could equally suggest that the women were less visible in their offending or were treated more leniently by the police and the courts (Heidensohn, 1994). Nevertheless, the sample overall had more previous offences than those cited in other studies of offending behaviour (for example, Graham & Bowling, 1995; Leibrich, 1993; Stewart et al., 1994).

Table 5.4: Average number of previous offences (SCRO data)

	Number of previous offences				
	3-9	10-20	21-40	41-60	61+
Male	-	3	10	4	3
Female	7	6	4	2	1
Total	7	9	14	6	4

Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 give the most common previous disposals according to SCRO and self-report data respectively. These detail the number of respondents given the various disposals, according to official or self-report data, rather than the number of times each respondent received those disposals.

Table 5.5: Most common previous disposals (SCRO data)

	Type of previous disposal				
	Custody	Community Service Orders	Probation (inc. intensive probation ²⁹)	Fines	Admonition
Male	18	15	20	19	17
Female	4	2	20	15	15
Total	22	17	40	34	32

Table 5.6: Most common previous disposals (self-report data)

	Type of previous disposal				
	Custody (inc. remand ³⁰)	Community Service Orders	Intensive probation	Probation (straight)	Fines
Male	20	13	20	14	16
Female	10	5	7	17	14
Total	30	18	27	31	30

Whilst the self-report data on previous disposals only apply up until the time of interview, whereas the SCRO data include disposals given during the two years following the fieldwork, there is much congruity between the two sets of data. Both sets of data illustrate a sample of higher tariff, more persistent offenders than the national average for Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2002). The majority of the men had received custodial sentences and community service orders in the past. The majority of the women had been subject to probation orders in the past and half of the female respondents suggested they had been in custody, either on remand or following sentence.

²⁹ SCRO data do not allow a distinction to be drawn between straight probation and intensive probation.

³⁰ Many respondents did not distinguish between custody as a disposal and custody as a period of remand.

CONCLUSIONS

Many of the criminological studies cited in Chapters 2 and 3 may have been confined by funding, time and access constraints, resulting in research methods that limit the range of respondents and the circumstances in which they are studied. This study had similar problems but was, nevertheless, able to engage in an exploratory and qualitative study with an equal gender mix of 40 young people who had been former persistent offenders, with the majority of respondents being interviewed within their own homes.

The main aim of the research was to elicit the views and experiences of these young people in relation to the causes and correlates of offending and desistance. Although it would have been more rigorous and systematic to have identified a random sample from a large sampling population such as police records of all offenders in Scotland, this was barred by data protection legislation. Recourse to a national voluntary organisation for a sample population proved beneficial in that those selected through this intensive probation project (20 young men and seven young women) were 'high-tariff' offenders with above-average previous convictions. Likewise, the remaining 13 women accessed through social work departments had only marginally fewer previous convictions than those women on intensive probation. This sample was certainly unusual in that it comprised 40 young people who had been heavily involved in offending in the past and included an equal gender mix as well as a combination of persisters and desisters.

This was predominantly an exploratory exercise to ascertain the extent to which offending could be seen as a process of change from onset through to desistance and to explore any links between youth transitions and the age-crime curve. In separating out

the middle maintenance phase from that of onset, the study was able to highlight the shortcomings of previous criminological research which did not differentiate between these two phases. Interviewing the same people for each of the three phases of offending also allowed for a consistency and continuity of experience and views, although it could be argued that this approach lessened the ‘immediacy’ of children and young people’s experiences of offending at each particular stage. However, what one might have gained in breadth of experience via this latter means, one would certainly have lost in the value of exploring the three phases of offending in parallel.

This thesis departs from the conventional layout of such reports by portraying and interpreting the findings in the order in which they were explored during fieldwork and analysis. This allowed not only for primacy to be given to the young people’s narratives but also enabled those narratives to fully inform the subsequent analysis utilising, systematically for the first time in criminology, Bourdieu’s concepts of capital (1977; 1986). Without having firstly explored the young people’s narratives in detail, this secondary analysis would not have emerged as a further means of making sense of the data.

CHAPTER 6:THE ONSET OF OFFENDING

No one cared. That's what I thought. There wasn't very much for me at that time. It was just me and me alone. And then I started getting in with the wrong crowd, older lassies... I was acting big... it was an ego boost (Yvonne, 25).

INTRODUCTION

Farrington defines a criminal career as having a beginning, a career length and an end – ‘the longitudinal sequence of offences committed by an individual offender’ (1997: 361). As mentioned in Chapter 2, I take issue with the criminological literature on offending for implying that *starting* and *maintaining* offending are, in effect, two sides of the same coin. I purposefully asked the same respondents to try to differentiate between their experiences and perceptions of starting, continuing and stopping offending, albeit retrospectively, in order to unpick the process of change that occurs during their own offending histories. The differences described in the following three findings chapters hopefully suggest that drawing such a distinction - between, most importantly, starting and maintaining offending – has highlighted that process of change.

This chapter describes the onset phase of that process, and is explored here from the perspective of the 40 young people, all of whom had been persistent offenders in the past. Their reasons and explanations for offending, both at onset and in the phases of maintenance (Chapter 7) and desistance (Chapter 8), were subsumed under four different categories, which illustrate the young people's interpretation of their offending behaviour. These categories are: practical, personal, relational and monetary. Practical

reasons pertain to structural or external factors, such as the 'hassle factors' resulting from offending and its detection, health reasons and the employment and education implications of procuring a criminal record. Personal reasons relate to the individual's own needs and feelings. Relational reasons include interactions with others whether such interactions are positive or negative. Monetary reasons include the need for money for general or specific purposes, e.g., survival, consumables or drugs.

In a study of probation officers in England and Wales in the early 1990s regarding their clients' motivations and reasons for offending, Stewart et al. (1994) developed a typology which utilised six similar categories to the ones listed above. These were:

1. Self-expression (frustration, stress, anti-authority attitudes)
2. Social activity (the influence of peers)
3. Life-style (drug use, homelessness)
4. Professionalism (earning a living from crime)
5. Coping (property offending in order to survive)
6. Social norm (adopting behaviour condoned by one's family or community).

These authors found an overlap between the various categories, stating, for example, that 'offending as self-expression can lead to offending as part of a 'life-style', when substance use becomes dependence' (ibid: 17). They also found that women were more likely to offend for reasons of self-expression, whereas men were more likely to be seen as offending for social activity reasons. Their findings are supported by the views and experiences of the young people in this sample.

THE IMPETUS TO STARTING OFFENDING

The criminological literature acknowledges that offending tends to start in early adolescence, with a peak age of onset of offending for both sexes at 14 or 15 (Farrington, 1995; Rutter et al., 1998). However, the literature is less specific in its differentiation between onset and maintenance and what reasons young people give for *becoming* as opposed to *being* an offender. This chapter concentrates predominantly on the former, and the following chapter on the latter, a rationale which seems justified given the different reasons young people invoke for these two different phases of the offending process.

The level of decisiveness in starting offending

These young people suggested that starting offending was something that ‘just happened’ with only seven young men and five young women considering that they had made an active decision to do so. These latter 12 respondents put this down almost unanimously to financial need (e.g., for drugs or money generally) rather than personal or relational need (e.g., to relieve boredom or impress friends) and they tended to start offending at a later age³¹. Monetary reasons were cited by all five of the women and six of the seven men as an influencing factor in making an active decision to start offending: ‘I said to myself, I’m going to need to have to go out and shoplift to support my habit’ (Vicky, 27, started offending aged 22).

It was pretty much my decision, yeah... Well it was because I’d left my job, I was put in a situation that I was back in [town], I wasn’t going to get a job outwith

³¹ Although three of the women and three of the men who made an active decision to start offending were aged 15 and over at the time that they started, there did not seem to be a marked association between age or gender and one’s level of decision making in starting offending.

[town]. My brother, he always had money and he was always, had some form of drugs on him and he was always getting drunk and the only way that he could get money was like from crime, so I came to the conclusion that I'm not going to get the job I want... so I need money and I had a lot of time on my hands so I needed to do something with myself and the only way I could get money was by breaking the law (Martin, 24, started offending aged 18).

Personal/relational need, on the other hand, was the predominant reason for drifting into offending, with the influence of friends and immaturity being cited as precursors to starting offending: 'It was just, there was a few of us about... I think it was just I was young, know what I mean... friends have got something to do with it... if you're on your own, you wouldn't' (Tom, 19, started offending aged 11).

... we used to go into town every weekend and, I mean a good few of my friends were doing it before, I was always 'no, no, no, no'... I was getting called chicken and this and that... and then eventually I just thought, I'm not taking this any more, and just went ahead and done it (Bernadette, 23, started offending aged 14).

Brown (1998) implies that women have greater difficulty than men in committing crime because of their greater surveillance and control within the family and their greater socialization into submissive and caring roles. As will be seen later in this chapter, Sutherland and Cressey's (1970) theory of differential association seemed to apply more readily to the women in the onset phase, when they suggested that they 'learnt' to offend through the tutelage of their (often older) peers or boyfriends.

Type of initial offence

Several authors have noted that the age of onset of offending differs with different offence types (LeBlanc and Frechette, 1989, Jamieson et al., 1999). However, it is unclear from this literature whether one actively chooses an offence type or is driven

more by circumstances, irrespective of age. Farrington, (1997) has suggested that the age of onset for shoplifting and vandalism, for example, tends to be younger, on average at age 11, whereas the age of onset for burglary and car theft is more likely to be 14-15, and for sex offences and drug offences later still at age 16-17.

Table 6.1 lists the initial offence type for the respondents. Rutter et al (1998) suggest that theft (including shoplifting) is the most common offence committed by adolescents and Cunneen and White (2002) also suggest that shoplifting is one of the largest categories of offences for which children and young people are apprehended. Certainly in this study, shoplifting was the most prevalent *initial* offence committed by both young men (10/20) and women (15/20). Theft (breaking into cars, houses or shops) was an equal second in popularity as an initial offence, although predominantly for men (5/20) than for women (1/20), alongside assault (3/20 men and 3/20 women). Given that many of the respondents suggested that they started offending in the company of friends as a means of gaining attention or consolidating those friendships, many also suggested that shoplifting was a convenient offence to commit in this respect. Not only were shops readily accessible (often being passed on the way to or from school), but also they offered immediate gratification, in terms of visibility by friends and access to free consumables. Whilst traditionally shoplifting has been seen as the preserve of female offenders, men are proportionally twice as likely as women to shoplift (Buckle and Farrington, 1984). However, this could be in relation to convictions rather than self-report data, since men are more likely to be the focus of attention by security staff in shops, given the traditionally accepted role of women as the main buyers of consumables.

Table 6.1: Type of initial offence

Initial offence	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
Shoplifting	10	15	25
Theft (other than shoplifting)	5	1	6
Assault	3	3	6
Possession of drugs	2	-	2
Road Traffic offences	-	1	1

Theft other than shoplifting tended to be the first offence for those who started at a younger age (three of the six men who started offending under the age of 12 suggested that their first offence was housebreaking, and rarely did they go on to shoplifting later in their offending histories).

It has been suggested that the use of drugs rarely precedes the onset of offending, although the use of alcohol and tobacco does (Pudney, 2002), with the average age of onset for crime generally being 14.5 years compared to 16.2 years for illicit drug use and 13.8 years for alcohol. Pudney also suggests that there is a progression in both drug use and offending from minor to more serious activity. The offence of assault was often preceded by excessive alcohol intake amongst this sample, and those whose initial offences included assaults rarely went on to commit thefts in the future, tending to accrue instead additional convictions for breach of the peace, police assault and vandalism charges. Whilst the majority of this sample started off with minor offences of shoplifting or theft, their level and seriousness of offending (and drug use) increased markedly over the course of their offending histories, and these changes will be explored further in Chapter 7.

Factors influencing the onset of offending

During the interview, respondents offered various reasons as to why they had started offending and what had influenced them at that time. Their responses were, to some extent, interchangeable between the rationale for starting to offend and those events or people that might have had some influence or power over their propensity to start offending.

Table 6.2 sets out the main factors influencing their decision to start offending, with many citing more than one factor.

Relational factors

So-called ‘relational’ factors featured most prominently, although personal and monetary factors were almost as important explanations. Whilst a few (mainly young men) were influenced by their siblings who were offending – ‘My big brother... the two of us, we were like a team, you know... we can take on armies’ (Martin, 24) - the majority felt the need to ‘follow the crowd’, either to be seen to be sociable or as a means of gaining a sense of ‘belonging’ through identity with friends. It has been argued (Scottish Office, 1998; Stewart et al., 1994) that young men are more likely to offend for sociable reasons than are young women, and that young women are restrained by the wider condemnation that offending might involve. However, Emler et al. (1987) suggest that female offenders are more likely than their male counterparts to offend in a group setting.

Table 6.2: Factors influencing the onset of offending

Factors influencing onset	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
<i>Relational</i>			
Friends/siblings were offending	9	8	17
Attention from friends/family	3	6	9
Partner was offending/taking drugs	-	5	5
<i>Relational sub-total</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Personal</i>			
Growing up/rebelling	5	4	9
Buzz/fun	6	-	6
Anger (sexual abuse)	1	5	6
Bereavement/illness in family	2	4	6
Boredom	3	-	3
<i>Personal sub-total</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Monetary</i>			
For general money	11	5	16
For money for drugs	2	9	11
<i>Monetary sub-total</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Practical</i>			
Under the influence of alcohol/drugs	4	4	8
Offending was easy	3	1	4
High crime area	2		2
<i>Practical sub-total</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>14</i>

My findings on the social side of offending support Emler et al., as highlighted by the numbers of young women citing relational factors and sociability as a reason for starting offending. Although numbers are small, the women were twice as likely as the men to cite attention from friends and family as being an impetus to their starting offending. Chodorow (1974, cited in Gilligan, 1982) has suggested that women gain social and self identity more through interaction with others than do men. A woman, according to Gilligan, comes ‘to know herself as she is known, through her relationship with others’ (ibid: 12).

Sutherland and Cressey's differential association theory (1970) suggests that people learn to offend in a group setting that approves of, and condones, such behaviour. Although these authors do not make gender-specific claims regarding differential association, it may be the case that young women are more likely to want to learn to conform to the group because of their greater need than young men for social and self identity. Several of the women in this sample suggested an element of 'learning' to offend when they first started: 'My two older brothers [were offending]. I think I just seen what they done and thought 'I'll do that'' (Janet, 21).

All my friends were going into town to shoplift and dressing smart with the clothes that they'd stole and at first I was always saying 'how could they do that? I wish I could do that'. And then... I was in town with my friend and she was a bit older than I was and she stole herself a big shiny necklace. She said 'just do it... it's easy', and I did, and it was easy (Helen, 20).

I started getting in with the wrong crowd and it was older people, so it was like they were telling me to go do things because I was the youngest (Carol, 29).

Nevertheless, the young women tended to be more influenced by relationships than friends *per se*, even if these relationships involved abuse or offending. For five of the young women, having a boyfriend who was offending was a crucial stimulus to beginning offending, not least when those boyfriends were encouraging them to take drugs – or, as one woman described it, 'training' them to offend. Whereas many of the men would not have been involved in relationships at the time they started offending (they tended to start offending earlier than the women), the women were more likely to be in a relationship *before* they became involved in offending. Whereas for the young men, being involved in a relationship might be an impetus to *stopping* offending, for the young women relationships were often the impetus to *starting* offending:

[My first boyfriend] was a drug dealer and I admired him... I fancied him and I thought he was cool because everybody respected him and all the people my age respected me because I was mucking about with this person... I wanted the speed. I needed it (Nina, 23).

In relation to drug-abusing women and crime, the literature suggests that offending for drugs is often partner-induced (Covington, 1985), even if that involvement in relationships was not originally for the purpose of obtaining drugs but for the relationship itself (Taylor, 1993). Nevertheless, as the need for drugs increased, obtaining such drugs became a mutual interest within the relationship and one that kept the relationship going even when the focus of the relationship perhaps changed, in the women's view, from being loving and caring to being utilitarian and abusive (Taylor, 1993). The impact of drugs on offending for these young people is likewise explored in more depth in Chapter 7.

Personal factors

Starting offending because it was fun, exciting and relieved boredom were factors almost wholly the preserve of the young men. Ferrell and Sanders (1995: 311) suggest that the 'adrenalin rush' from crime is often an end result in itself, and Katz (1988: 54) describes shoplifting as a 'magical' experience over and above any material gain arising from such theft. However, Ferrell (1993: 171) suggests that such seduction is also bound up with the 'the illicit acquisition of late capitalist consumer goods'. Whilst Knight and West (1975) found only a quarter of their sample of 18-19 year olds cited fun or the relief of boredom as reasons for offending, Downes (1966) found these personal factors to be prevalent amongst the majority of young people in his experience. Any discrepancy in such findings may arise because of the point at which respondents

are asked whether offending is ‘fun’ (in terms of whether they are referring to the onset or maintenance phase and their age at interview).

Eight of the men in this sample suggested they *started* offending because of the buzz or through boredom (and shoplifting tended to be their initial offence of choice), whilst none of the women suggested that excitement was a primary reason or influence. However, the women tended to start offending at an older age than the men and it could also be suggested that excitement and autonomy, according to Gilligan (1982), are more the preserve of men whilst relational factors are more the preserve of women. Nevertheless, as illustrated in Table 6.2, not all the women started offending for relational reasons, with many suggesting that the personal trauma of abuse in the past or present was a trigger to their starting offending. Anger or depression resulting from abuse or bereavement was cited by eight women but only one man as an influence on their propensity to start offending: ‘When I was younger I got interfered with. That’s got a lot to do with it, with anger and that... I was only four’ (Alison, 20). However, the young man who cited abuse as a child had a particular reason for choosing mainly sexual offending: ‘I wanted to – I wanted to sort of like hurt people the way that I was hurt’ (Owen, 18). Certainly, many of these respondents talked about bad childhood memories of bereavement, reconstituted family structures, exclusion from school, being in care and physical and sexual abuse: ‘Just the way I was passed about in children’s homes’ (Len, 26); ‘... just being moved from pillar to post... mental and physical abuse... From zero to sixteen, I’d just been thrown from pillar to post... it made us tough, didn’t it’ (Nick, 28):

It was a horrible childhood... my mum and dad split up when I was 14 – happiest day of my life when my mum and dad split up because she was just a punch bag

to him. At the weekends she was his punch bag... I think I was already off the rails by that time (Theresa, 33).

The gender difference in these personal factors, notably in relation to anger and loss, equate with Stewart et al's (1994) category of 'Self-expression' noted earlier in this chapter. Stewart et al. disagree with the suggestion made by Utting et al. (1993) that bereavement, for example, is not readily associated with offending, and argue that the loss of a family member – by whatever means (e.g., death or separation) – is a 'critical moment' (MacDonald et al., 2001) which can influence offending behaviour. Stewart et al. (1994) also note the more likely propensity of women to offend as a result of such loss, and revised strain theory (Katz, 2000) also suggests that women will be more likely to offend because of stress/anger resulting from childhood abuse.

Just as getting older will be seen in Chapter 8 to have been a factor influencing desistance for some of this sample, getting older was also a factor influencing onset: getting older gave one the opportunity to develop autonomy and increased self-identity within a wider social context:

I wasn't going out and doing anything nasty but I was more nasty to my dad, like saying I'm not staying in and I'm not doing this and I'm not doing that and I was basically doing my own thing as I was getting older (Carol, 29).

Monetary factors

The need for money (either for survival, consumables or drugs and alcohol) was often cited as a reason for starting to offend, but whereas the young men tended to want money for consumables, many of the young women started to offend because of their

need to buy drugs, either for themselves or because of encouragement by their drug-using partners:

It was just clothes and that... able to get myself new clothes basically... my mum [did] when she could, not when I wanted. [*Researcher: Was clothes the only thing that you really wanted the money for?*] Clothes, bikes, football kits and stuff (Vic, 23).

You need to buy in bulk when you're dealing because you need to make the profit, so I didn't have the money to do that, so I started shoplifting and any money I got I was just buying a bag, two bags [of heroin], whatever I could get. As my face got known for shoplifting, I stopped that and went into housebreaking (Vicky, 27).

McIvor et al. (2004) note that whereas offending preceded drug use for the men in their sample, drug use was the impetus to starting offending for the women, hence suggesting a strong link between offending and a lack of money for women. Bates and Riseborough (1993: 2) suggest that many young people live under 'the canopy of structured inequality' and Craine (1997: 136) also argues in his study of disadvantaged young people that: 'Although choices were made and individual biographies and careers constructed, these were frequently desperate survival adaptations... not as they pleased, nor under circumstances of their own choosing'.

Whilst some of the respondents talked of offending to survive (for food, drugs or shelter), the majority wanted money as a means of self- and social identity: to have the goods and status symbols of their peers. Young women in particular may feel that their femininity or bodily image is their only asset, thus making the desire for clothes and accessories all the more important (Skeggs, 1997). One's 'style' epitomises one's personal and group identity and is an essential element of collective behaviour, such as

early offending with peers (Ferrell, 1995). But offending can not only provide the means of improving one's image, but also one's image can reflect opposition to the dominant culture. Style can thus be labelled as *potentially* criminal. As Ferrell (1995: 182) notes: 'In the lived experience of identity and inequality, personal and group style exists as a badge of resistance and honor' but it nevertheless can result in a spiral of criminalization, discrimination and amplification of such resistant behaviour.

Practical factors

Although funding the purchase of alcohol and drugs was cited as a factor that made offending more likely, several respondents also suggested that the effects of one or other substance also made offending more likely: 'Like, if I was drunk and stoned, I'd go and drive a car, fight the polis and commit a breach of the peace, and maybe fight with somebody else' (Eric, 21).

See when I was with amphetamines, it was like when I was on a come down, next again day my mind would be totally different from that so I'd like go into a shop and I was feeling like I thought I was maybe invisible, that I could do it [shoplift] (Paula, 27).

Whilst some may have needed the 'Dutch courage' of alcohol or drugs in order to offend, others suggested that success was an influencing factor. Offending was something they could do relatively easily without getting caught, and 'getting away with it' was part of the attraction: 'once you start stealing and you get away with it, you think you're not going to get caught so you just go on stealing and stealing and every time you go into a shop you steal a little bit more' (Alec, 28). Whilst only a minority specifically mentioned the ease with which they could offend as children, many more

implied that their offending generally went undetected, suggesting at least some expertise on their part or incompetence on the part of law enforcers. This finding fits with Matza's (1964) theory of drift in which he suggests that offenders often find certain types of offending 'easy' to undertake – Matza calls this 'preparation', which coupled with 'will' and 'neutralization', make it more likely that an offence will be committed.

Several respondents, more so male than female, commented on poverty or negative images within the area in which they lived as being an influence on their propensity to mix with the wrong crowd:

Most people in [local area] have got nothing and we haven't till we get something. [*Researcher: So do you think if you'd been born and brought up in [affluent area] you'd be the same as you are now?*] No. I'd be different I'd be a totally different person. I think it's maybe the area (Vic, 23).

It was just pure boredom about here, living about here. There's nothing here. They were only starting to bring little things into this place, but there wasn't anything here years ago... Oh, don't get me wrong, like, it was all down to money and that. I never had much money and things like that, so we couldn't go everywhere, know what I mean... My mum done enough for us, aye, but never had all the money in the world to go to the cinema, go places every night, things like that, play golf, whatever. Play football, that's all we ever played, football in the square, whatever (Frank, 22).

MacDonald et al. (2001) also comment on the importance of locality in circumscribing life chances: the levels of deprivation, crime and drug use in an area can have major repercussions on young people's propensity to commit crime themselves.

Friends and relationships

The peer group is already well documented as integral to a youth lifestyle and as a vehicle towards social identity and status (see, amongst others, Farrington, 1986; Miles et al., 1998; Reiss, 1988). For example, Miles et al (1998: 83) suggest that young people establish 'reference groups' with the implicit aim of having a 'sounding board' for their developing identities. Thornberry and Krohn (1997) suggest that peer groups exert most influence during the adolescent years, partly because adolescents spend more time in group activities with same-age peers and less time with their families or in one-to-one friendships. Greenberg (1979) and Thornberry et al. (1991) also highlight the concomitant reduction in parental influence with an increase in the influence of friends. The extension of the transition period between childhood and adulthood (Coles, 1995), and the concurrent dependence on the peer group for longer periods in youth, has also 'increased the vulnerability of teenagers to the expectations and evaluations of their peers (ibid: 593). In the longer term, peer groups also play a major role in choice of partner for marriage and procreation (Rutter et al., 1998); thus, peer affiliations could be seen as a testing ground for future relationships of this kind.

Clasen and Brown (1985, quoted in Ungar, 2000: 167) describe 'peer pressure' as being the pressure to do something 'no matter if you personally want to or not'. However, although often not explicitly stated, the inference from the criminological literature on subcultures is that peer *pressure* is a problem only in relation to adverse influences, such as offending or anti-social behaviour. Whereas Glueck & Glueck (1940) dismissed delinquent peer group association stating it was merely a case of 'birds of a feather flock together' (Rutter et al., 1998: 193), Sutherland and Cressey (1978) see peer groups

as being the main impetus for the development of delinquent behaviour. Several studies, however, suggest that friends have a minimal impact on offending behaviour (e.g., Kandel, 1978; Rowe et al., 1994), whilst others suggest that being part of a delinquent peer group encourages offending and having non-delinquent friends encourages desistance (e.g., Farrington, 1986; Loeber et al., 1991; Jamieson et al., 1999). Rutter et al (1998) conclude that:

... there are strong selection effects by which antisocial individuals tend to choose friends who are similarly antisocial but, even when this tendency is taken into account, the findings show that the characteristics of the peer group exert an influence on the individual's likelihood of persisting or desisting with their antisocial activities (ibid, 195-196).

Becker (1963) equated the importance of friendships with an interactionist approach, whether such interactions are deviance-related or not. In suggesting that interaction with friends offered a valuable source of personal identity in the transition to adulthood, Becker suggests that young deviants value their relationships with offending peers in much the same way as conforming young people value their relationships with law-abiding peers, as a means of reasserting their own identities. Recent qualitative research suggests that young people develop their own friendships based not on offending *per se*, but on equality, intimacy and mutual understanding, positive factors which, to many young people, tend not to be present in their relationships with adults (Waiton, 2001). Holroyd (2002: 12) supports the contention by Ungar (2000) that: 'one of the primary advantages of the peer group is that it allows for both the construction of a collective identity and the development of personal power and agency', irrespective of whether or not that peer group is delinquent. Ungar (2000) concludes that young people move from a feeling of disempowerment and worthlessness within the family to a feeling of

confidence and wellbeing within the peer group. However, many young people cite protection and sociability as reasons for congregating in groups, rather than for power and reputation (Prasad, 2003). Waiton (2001) thus argues that 'peer preference' should replace 'peer pressure' in discourses on young people's social networks. He questions the fact that curfews and the development of 'youth shelters' in the UK regulate young people's capacity to choose their friends and the public spaces in which they meet. Thus again, the youth cultural activity of 'hanging around' street corners is being criminalised, although as McRobbie (2000) points out, this is more the case for young men than young women, the former of whom see the street as a key arena for subcultural activity.

In this study, the importance of one's friends or relationships was also integral to the reasons and explanations given for starting as well as stopping offending. These young people were not propelled by friends into offending but did so proactively in the company of, or in order to please or help, their friends, partners or siblings. Reasons and influences revolving around friends and relationships rated highly in these respondents' perceptions of why they began offending but there was, nevertheless, an element for many of feeling 'under pressure' to conform. However, as noted above, the blanket expression 'peer group pressure' is misleading since it does not take into account all the nuances and choices of relationship that exist amongst young people. Whilst many studies of criminal behaviour amongst young people cite peers as a major adverse influence, few actually dissect the relevance and importance of the peer group, not least in relation to sources of personal and social power and status.

It is thus argued that peer 'pressure' is therefore not always one-sided or coercive and individual young people are not always social vacuums or necessarily vulnerable within the peer group (Ungar, 2000). Although young people may 'sacrifice personal agency' (Ungar, 2000: 177), this can often be explained as a transitional phase between dependence on family (social control and disempowerment) and independence (autonomy and empowerment). Ungar concludes that associating consensually with peers is 'a consciously employed strategy to enhance personal and social power' (ibid: 177). To Emler and Reicher (1995), reputations as well as identities have to be established through *visible* activities such as being within a group setting and conforming to group norms, activities which are in contrast to and go against wider social expectations. This requires not only personal agency but also 'strategy' (Bourdieu, 1977 - see Chapter 9).

In this study, three types of agency or strategy emerged which related to other people, namely, propensity to conform (to the friendship group's activities, requests or demands) for *sociability* reasons; propensity to conform for *self-preservation* reasons; and propensity to conform for *personal* reasons. Each of these tendencies is explored below:

Propensity to conform for sociability reasons:

It has been suggested that reputations are of as much concern to offenders as they are to law-abiding individuals, in that the former are also keen to promote and sustain a particular kind of external image (Emler & Reicher, 1995). However, the intended recipients of such external images change over time according to need and lifestyle and

it could be argued that in childhood the family is the focus of one's reputation; in adolescence the friendship group is; and in adulthood friendships, relationships and the wider community are. Research on childhood interactions with others suggest that friendships have the most influence and impact during adolescence, and particularly on adolescent-limited antisocial behaviour (Rutter et al., 1998; Thornberry and Krohn, 1997). The tendency of young people to congregate in groups (or gangs) is also seen as offering a sense of belonging as well as sociability, especially for young women who suffered parental neglect or abuse as children (Messerschmidt, 1995).

The young people spoke often of not wanting to be 'left out' by their peers and tended therefore to conform to the group's activities, however deviant these may be (see Ashe, 1956, for an analysis of group conformity): 'I was in the company of other people who were offending. They knew what to do and I just followed their lead and just got involved as well' (Owen, 18).

It was just to prove to the older people that I could do it just as well as them... It was just maybe a couple of crème eggs or a couple of bars of chocolate and going out to your mates and going 'look what I've got, whey hey!'. 'Get back in and get more'. But I wasn't realising at the time, it was me that was going to get into all the bother for it and they're sitting outside eating it and I'm going back and getting more for them... Crazy (Carol, 29).

As noted earlier, there was an element of mimicry or social learning in their desire to conform to the group's activities (Sutherland and Cressey, 1970). However, some respondents on reflection suggested that offending was often more likely to result in one losing rather than gaining friends, although this obviously depended on whether or not their friends were also offending: 'It never got me friends. You always had the same

friends. It's really hard to explain' (David, 20); 'There again, you lost friends as well at the same time that you gained. You lost one, you gained two' (Vic, 23).

Propensity to conform for self-preservation reasons:

This justification of offending for self-preservation reasons was wholly a female response. Whilst some of the young men felt 'obliged' to offend alongside their peers for sociability, several women felt decidedly 'under pressure' to comply with the offending behaviour of, in particular, their boyfriends for self-preservation reasons. They suggested that their boyfriends had used them as accomplices in crime and possibly withheld love, attention or drugs accordingly. The following quotes highlight the fear of violence from boyfriends amongst many of the women:

... my boyfriend... he trained his ex-girlfriend... I'd get battered, know what I mean, and I'd want the drugs... He only gave me a wee hit [shot of heroin] and say 'go away and steal' and he wouldn't give me another hit until I had stolen a lot, know what I mean (Laura, 27).

I just knew I needed to [offend]... If I didn't, I knew I would get battered from him at the end of the night... He'd hit me, fling cups at my head and ashtrays and slap me if I didn't get the things I was told to get. So he was making money off me but giving me the speed that he was dealing. After being at the court and that, I knew I still had to go and steal (Nina, 23).

It has been suggested (e.g., Campbell, 1981; Gilligan, 1982) that young women are more likely than young men to seek personal relationships as a means of self-identity. Certainly, as was seen in Table 6.2, the young women tended to start offending later than the young men and their age and increased maturity alone may have explained the greater likelihood that these young women would be in sexual relationships when they started offending. Where drug abuse was already problematic for one or both parties in

the relationship (as was the case for many of the women in this sample), the tendency for these women to offend with (or on behalf of) their partners became more likely.

Propensity to conform for personal reasons:

Emler and Reicher (1995) suggest that peers offer young people self-esteem and status, not least when children who offend tend not to be liked by children who do not (Parker and Asher, 1987). However, Emler and Reicher question the logic that young people with low self-esteem will resort to delinquent activity purely as a means of boosting their self-esteem – a suggestion propounded by authors such as Kaplan (1980) and Rosenberg and Rosenberg (1978) (cited in Emler and Reicher, 1995). However, if one supports the view that young people look to each other for support and encouragement in the transition to adulthood rather than being concerned about what ‘adults’ think of them, then the association between deviance and self-esteem would make sense: young people gain greater self-esteem from being with friends who collude in their behaviour and actions, even if that behaviour happens to be deviant. Barry (2001a), amongst others, found that young people consider friends to be more important than their families and other adults, in terms of being able to confide in them during the teenage years in particular.

Whilst the majority of the sample felt their friendships were supportive and equal in this respect, there were several who felt they had to ‘work at’ friendships, as highlighted in the following quotations: ‘You just wanted to make a name for yourself, eh... Just, I can do it, ken, we’ll all do it and that’s good’ (Derek, 21); ‘A lot of folk looked at me differently once they’d heard that I’d been caught for something. They were like ‘wow,

what's going on' and that' (Pete, 19). Reputation was also an important personal aspect in starting offending, because the reputation as an offender gave them power and self-identity:

When I was selling, when I was dealing [I was proud of my reputation] because you feel as if you're powerful because all these people come to you and they're trying to get, like, a tenner bag for a fiver... sometimes you feel shite knocking them back, especially if it's a pal, but you do feel powerful (Bernadette, 23).

The advantages and disadvantages of starting offending

Table 6.3 below illustrates the various advantages that respondents recalled of starting offending. There did not seem to be an association between the different advantages of starting offending that these young people cited and whether or not they had made a conscious decision to start, although actively starting offending for monetary gain was obviously considered to be an advantage as well as a reason.

Monetary advantages

By far the most commonly cited advantage was money, accounting for over half of all responses, irrespective of whether or not monetary gain had been a *reason* for starting. Women were more than twice as likely as men to see money as an advantage of starting. As Kevin, 23, explained, the advantages of stealing were that: 'You don't have to wait a week to get paid'. Six women cited money for drugs as an advantage of starting offending, but this was because they felt the need to offend in order to maintain an existing drug habit. However, once they were in the maintenance phase of offending, money for drugs became a more commonly cited advantage, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

Table 6.3: Advantages of starting offending

Advantages of starting offending	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
None	5	2	7
<i>Monetary</i>			
Money generally	7	10	17
Consumables acquired	3	6	9
Better clothes	1	6	7
Money for drugs	-	6	6
Items for children/house	-	3	3
Food	2	-	2
<i>Monetary sub-total</i>	13	31	44
<i>Personal</i>			
Buzz/fun	8	5	13
Relieves boredom	3	1	4
<i>Personal sub-total</i>	11	6	17
<i>Relational</i>			
Good reputation with peers	6	10	16

For many, having money through offending enabled them ‘to keep up with the Joneses’ rather than because they necessarily needed money themselves, as the following quotes illustrate: ‘Just having things that other kids had, you know, that I didn’t have. Like simple things, like a bike or something like that. Something that we never had, like’ (Nick, 28); ‘Not having to worry about spending your money... Just to keep in with the crowd’ (Sarah, 27).

[Shoplifting] gave me confidence. I felt going with somebody else’s cheque book and getting all dressed up and going in [to a shop], I could spend what I wanted, they treated me well because they thought I had enough money. They had a different outlook... It was like a power trip (Gillian, 29).

More of the women than men saw the monetary value of offending as important in starting, partly because of their greater need for drugs at that stage but also because conspicuous consumption and body image were part of the female youth culture,

notably at a time when sexual relationships were becoming more important to them (Skeggs, 1997).

Personal advantages

More men than women cited the personal advantages of the buzz from offending and relieving boredom through offending: ‘It stops life being a bore, cannabis, speed and ecstasy does... and it makes me happy’ (Sam, 23); ‘We used to hang about with older people... it was just boredom, hanging about doing nothing and that. Going out stealing cars and things like that’ (Frank, 22).

Whilst none of the women mentioned such personal factors as *reasons* for starting offending (see Table 6.2), they were more likely to cite such factors as *advantages* accruing from offending.

Relational advantages

More women than men mentioned the relational advantages of offending, in particular where the young people saw offending as a means of keeping in with or generating a certain circle of friends: ‘my pals liked me better’ (Avril, 18); ‘it was like I was buying my friends by doing what I was doing’ (Carol, 29).

One’s reputation as an offender – either in gaining money or in being ‘hard’ – was of key concern to many of the young people early on in their offending. Emler (1990) suggests that for young people with no other status or power, a bad reputation is often

preferable to no reputation at all, since it at least gains one attention and recognition. Law-abiding behaviour only offers one a reputation by default, whereas deviance has a more profound and immediate effect on one's reputation (Emler, 1990).

Finally, five men and two women could think of no advantages of starting offending, but these five men started as a result of alcohol misuse, boredom or as a means of making friends, with no utilitarian motives in mind: 'There was [no advantage], it put me in a worse position' (Pete, 19); and the two women started as a result of drinking to relieve depression or anger following domestic or childhood abuse.

When respondents spoke of the disadvantages of starting offending, their responses (given in Practical disadvantages

The majority of responses related to the practical inconvenience of offending, with 'getting caught' being the main disadvantage of starting offending. However, whilst many suggested that they did not think about getting caught at the time that they started and some implied that the Children's Hearing system would not be a deterrent to them starting offending, they nevertheless suggested in retrospect that involvement in both the children's hearing and criminal justice systems was a major disadvantage to starting offending. This was much more the case for the women than the men, since the former were more aware of the stigma attached to crime. As much feminist theory suggests, women are 'doubly damned', not only in transgressing the legal code, but also in transgressing the 'feminine' code (Brown, 1998). This also had negative implications for their relationships, as noted below.

Table 6.4 below) centred predominantly upon the practical consequences in relation to themselves and the relational consequences pertaining to other people. As with the advantages of starting, there did not seem to be an association between types of disadvantages cited and whether or not the young person had drifted into, rather than consciously decided to start offending. However, the women were almost twice as likely to think of practical and relational disadvantages compared with the men.

Practical disadvantages

The majority of responses related to the practical inconvenience of offending, with 'getting caught' being the main disadvantage of starting offending. However, whilst many suggested that they did not think about getting caught at the time that they started and some implied that the Children's Hearing system would not be a deterrent to them starting offending, they nevertheless suggested in retrospect that involvement in both the children's hearing and criminal justice systems was a major disadvantage to starting offending. This was much more the case for the women than the men, since the former were more aware of the stigma attached to crime. As much feminist theory suggests, women are 'doubly damned', not only in transgressing the legal code, but also in transgressing the 'feminine' code (Brown, 1998). This also had negative implications for their relationships, as noted below.

Table 6.4: Disadvantages of starting offending

Disadvantages of starting offending	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
None	5	1	6
<i>Practical:</i>			
Getting caught	4	8	12
Courts/cells/custody	2	6	8
Police paranoia/involvement	2	4	6
Getting grounded by parents	3	2	5
<i>Practical: sub-total</i>	11	20	31
<i>Relational:</i>			
Angers/upsets family	5	8	13
Bad reputation in the community	2	7	9
Losing friends	1	2	3
<i>Relational sub-total</i>	8	17	25
<i>Personal:</i>			
Feel guilty	-	2	2
Offending escalates	1	-	1
Turns your life upside down	2	-	2
<i>Personal sub-total</i>	3	2	5

Relational disadvantages

Both male and female respondents were mostly concerned about upsetting their families by starting to offend, and the women were much more likely than the men to be concerned about getting a bad reputation within the community: ‘I let my mum and dad down, I let myself down. Ended up in a lot of trouble, school, police, my mum and dad as well. The whole family was really let down’ (Bernadette, 23).

Just embarrassing my father because he was on his own with four kids, trying to bring them up, and I’m going out and offending... he had a phone call at his work saying ‘your daughter’s lying in [the police station], will you come and get her’, and then the school, I wasn’t going to school, and the school got the social workers involved (Carol, 29).

I was always getting taken away. I was always like getting in trouble. My mum and my father couldn't trust me. I lost a lot of trust... Getting the trust at a young age is very important to anybody. But to myself, I felt that not having the trust was a big disadvantage (Owen, 18).

Women, in particular, value their good reputation with others, not least because of their seemingly greater commitment to relationships more generally (Gilligan, 1982; Adler, 1985). Ironically, it was in search of a reputation, within their primary reference group (Bromley, 1993), that many of these young people started offending, and yet they still thought (albeit perhaps retrospectively) that their 'good' reputation might concurrently be damaged within the secondary reference group of wider social networks (including the police and businesses), although more so for the young women. Thus, although their reputation with their friends was more important to them *at this stage in their lives* (the phases of childhood and youth), in retrospect, they suggested that their reputation in the wider community and the family was equally important. One young woman felt this stigma particularly acutely in relation to a local supermarket, from which she had shoplifted as a child:

The disadvantages of getting into trouble? ... Getting caught, going to court, being barred from like the shop. Not being able to go in there. Even when you're with your mum and that, I couldn't go in... We're still barred from there today (Sarah, 27).

Another was concerned by the reaction of the police, which only served to exacerbate her bad reputation within the community:

Getting a bad name with the police. Em, and for the slightest thing I did wrong after that, it was just a case of, right, cuff cuff, away to the cell for the slightest thing I did wrong. Walking down the street... getting sneered at and scoffed at by the police and things like that... once they know who you are... they'll sneer at you and scoff at you and, you know, make comments about court the next week... (Karen, 28).

DISCUSSION

Although asking this sample what factors influenced or hindered them in the process of starting, maintaining and stopping offending required them to think retrospectively, they seemed able to differentiate between the processes involved in starting, maintaining and stopping offending, as evidenced by the different emphases placed on each phase of offending as outlined in this and the following two chapters.

Four-fifths of this sample started offending as children, between the ages of 8 and 15 inclusive. For the one-fifth who started offending after the age of 16 their reasons and influences were more practical and expedient. However, the majority suggested that offending gave them much needed friendships in childhood as well as cultural goods. It should be borne in mind that these young people came almost exclusively from disadvantaged backgrounds that distinguished them in two ways. They were more likely to be disadvantaged in terms of family cohesion and self-identity and they were also more likely to be disadvantaged in terms of access to the wider cultural status symbols often considered important in developing social identity (Miles, 2000).

Offending was a means of gaining attention from friends, partners or family members, whether rationally chosen or not, and may also have given them the money to acquire status and power. However, the money they gained was generally – at this early phase of offending – only useful in relation to social rather than personal gain: they could acquire items which brought social acceptance and status amongst their peers – such as designer clothes, alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and make-up, all of which were seen as symbols of getting older and becoming adult. The monetary gain of successful

offending, as highlighted in their stated advantages of starting offending, gave them increased status and reputation with their peers. The expression 'buying one's friends' further epitomises the duality of these monetary and relational aspects.

Creating and sustaining a reputation amongst one's friends seemed to be a key factor in these young people's propensity to start offending, but equally, the damage done by offending to their reputations within the local community was also cited as a disadvantage to starting offending, notably for the women. This ambivalence was a constant dilemma for these young people as they moved through the three stages of offending, as will be seen from the following chapters. According to Bromley (1993), a bad reputation can cause anxiety and guilt whereas a good one can bring self-worth and security. He also notes that reputations that are deliberately cultivated, as evidenced by many of the quotations in this thesis, are more vulnerable to change. Bromley also suggests that disempowered individuals and groups are likely to focus on their immediate group for the development of a reputation: 'Membership of a minority group of like-minded individuals can be an effective buffer against a hostile majority' (ibid: 33). Given that these young people are in a transitory stage in their lives and see themselves as increasingly dependent on friends as a 'buffer' between leaving childhood and attaining adulthood, then it is likely that reputations with peers will be deliberately and rapidly cultivated and thus not be sustainable. As will be seen from the following two chapters, the majority of these young people experienced just such a lack of sustainability in reputations in youth, and many consciously discarded such reputations in favour of more durable reputations in adulthood. Thus, modifications to their social identities were made following a weakening of effective reputation

management in childhood and early youth, exacerbated by external constraints such as the criminal justice system:

If people wish to break free from a particular social identity, they need to break free from the constraints of social circumstances, and the influence of particular people... conversely, if people want a particular sort of social identity, they need to submit to social constraints and influence (Bromley, 1993: 57).

In terms of gender differences in starting offending, the women tended to cite relational reasons (for attention or friendships) as the main influence in their starting offending, whereas the men tended to cite practical or personal factors. Whilst both men and women saw the financial benefits accruing from starting offending within this sample, the women were more likely to want such money primarily for drugs, whereas the men would be more likely to spend it on consumables. This finding runs counter to a study undertaken by Miles et al (1998) which suggested that young women placed greater emphasis on consumer goods than young men, in terms of gaining confidence and status from feeling and looking stylish. Equally, this finding runs counter to Pudney's (2002) study where young men are generally more likely to be at risk from drug use than young women and therefore need to offend in order to purchase drugs. This anomaly in the present study may have resulted from the fact that some of the women already had experience of drugs and were more likely to start offending *out of necessity* to gain money for drugs rather than for consumables *per se*. The men were perhaps young enough not to be dependent on, or lured by, drugs at that early stage in their offending histories³². However, the women were also more affected by current or

³² Nevertheless, this sample of men did not apparently develop the kind of problem drug use experienced by the women, with only one young man mentioning being placed on a methadone prescription as a result of addiction compared with eight young women.

childhood abuse and the resultant strain and stress was likely to exacerbate their drug use.

The women were more than twice as likely as the men to see the advantages of starting offending. Indeed, their calculation of the monetary gain in starting offending makes the fact that they eventually stop offending all the more incongruent, given that they seemingly stopped more easily than the men. Likewise, given that the men could see few advantages in starting offending, it is perhaps surprising that they carry on with such activity for so long. As will be seen in Chapter 7, however, the balance of advantages to disadvantages changes dramatically as one moves through the phase of starting to that of maintaining offending.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the young people's perceptions of when, why and how they started offending and gender differences in age of onset, reasons for offending and influences in starting. Using the age-related category of 'child', four-fifths of the young people started offending as 'children' (i.e., at the age of 15 or under), their reasons being mainly because of a lack of attention or love, to seek encouragement or recognition, to earn money or as a [latent] reaction to [past] traumas in their lives. Many came from families marred by death, illness, separation and transience, and many felt unloved or uncared for as a result. Often for the first time in their lives, the school setting offered them the chance to relate to other people (namely fellow pupils) on a relatively equal footing. Equally, the school setting may offer young people respite from

marginalization or familial neglect or abuse (Barry, 2001b) and an opportunity to create a social identity for themselves.

The young women started offending later generally than the young men and cited reasons and influences more associated with their older age or broader life experience. For example, whilst the young men cited general monetary gain and excitement with friends as a major factor in starting offending, the young women cited the need to pay for drugs or more relational or personal factors to do with relationships, past and present.

There were various personal, monetary, practical and relational factors cited by these young people in relation to their reasons for, and influences, advantages and disadvantages in, starting offending. However, it is concluded that starting offending revolved predominantly around the need for identity and status within their immediate circle of friends as they moved from relative dependence on the family to the more autonomous milieu of the friendship group. The following chapter explores how those needs changed as they moved into the maintenance phase of offending.

CHAPTER 7: THE MAINTENANCE OF OFFENDING

... once you start doing it, I mean it just starts escalating, doesn't it.... One minute you'll be shoplifting out a shop and you'll be running out, your heart will be pounding and you'll be like 'oh I done it, I done it, I done it', you know... And I mean, it's only a sweetie or something but then the next day it's like two sweeties and then 'oh I bet you can't get that game'. And you're like 'Oh, I'll have that'. And then it starts doesn't it.... it just goes whoosh. Nobody can control it (Nick, 28).

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks in greater depth at the maintenance phase of offending, exploring offending behaviour and changes in patterns and perceptions of such behaviour over the duration of these respondents' offending histories. It also examines the reasons for currently continuing to offend for those 10 men and two women who had not considered that they had stopped offending at the time of interview.

As mentioned in the conclusions to Chapter 2, most of the criminological literature on offending does not adequately differentiate between the two phases of onset and maintenance of offending behaviour. Whilst the previous chapter focused on the first phase, onset, this chapter explores young people's perceptions and experiences of maintaining offending behaviour. Given that many of these young people were actively engaged in offending over a period of between 10 and 20 years, during which they passed through the phases of youth transition, this separation of the two phases of offending seems all the more justified.

OFFENDING HISTORIES OF RESPONDENTS

Table 7.1 below gives the self-report data on offending histories offered by these young people, where it can be seen that the most common length of offending histories, *at the time of interview*³³, was between 6 and 9 years, with over half of the sample (13 men and 11 women) suggesting that they had offended for this length of time³⁴. Of those who started before the age of 12 (6 men and 5 women), four of the men said they were still offending at the time of interview, and the remaining two men suggested that they had stopped offending within the last year. Of the five women who had started offending before the age of 12, all suggested they had stopped offending, two between two and four years ago and three within the year prior to interview.

Table 7.1: Self-report data on offending history

Duration of offending history (at interview)	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
2-5 years	2	1	3
6-9 years	13	11	24
10-13 years	2	6	8
14-18 years	2	1	3
19-22 years	1	1	2

Of the young people who started offending between the ages of 12 and 15, five of the 12 men and one of the nine women said they were still offending at the time of the interview, three of the men suggested they had stopped offending within the last three

³³ It should be borne in mind that, as mentioned earlier, according to the respondents themselves 10 of the men and two of the women were still offending at the time of interview.

³⁴ However, according to the SCRO data collected two years following interview, six of the women who suggested they had stopped offending at the time of interview were in fact still receiving convictions, five of them up until the record ended in September 2002. Of the men, contrary to their own suggestion that they had stopped, four were still receiving convictions, two of them up until the record ended in September 2002.

or four years and the remaining four within the previous year. Three of the women suggested they had stopped offending two years ago and the remaining five in the last year. Of the young people who started offending between the ages of 16 and 19, one of the two men suggested he was still offending and the other that he had stopped offending in the last year. Of the five women in this category, one suggested she was still offending and the remaining four suggested they had stopped offending within the previous year.

Choice of offence type

During the interviews, all respondents completed a timeline of types and frequency of offences committed from the age of onset to the present day. Table 7.2 below lists the most common offences committed by this sample during the course of their offending histories and Table 7.3 below lists the most common offences committed by this sample according to SCRO data. These latter data apply from 1989 up until September 2002. Appendix 1 lists the full range of offences committed by this sample, according to self-report data.

Table 7.2: Most common offences committed : Self-report data

Offence type	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
Shoplifting	14	18	32
Possession of drugs	11	19	30
Assault	15	10	25
Theft	15	10	25
Breach of the Peace	13	11	24
Housebreaking	14	6	20

Table 7.3: Most common offences committed: SCRO data

Offence type	Male (n=20)	Female (n=20)	Total (n=40)
Shoplifting	12	12	24
Assault	13	10	23
Breach of the Peace	12	11	23
Theft	12	9	21
Housebreaking	12	2	14
Possession of drugs	8	5	13

The six offences most commonly reported by respondents as having been committed by them over the duration of their offending histories were shoplifting, possession of drugs, assault, theft, breach of the peace and housebreaking. These were also the most common offences identified in the SCRO data, suggesting a high level of consistency between respondent self-report data and official data. When compared with the list of initial offences committed by these respondents at the outset of their offending careers (see Table 6.1, Chapter 6), the only offences which were commonly added to their original choice of offence were housebreaking and breach of the peace; otherwise there seemed to be little expansion or modification of offence type over time.

When asked to group and classify all their offence types according to their interpretation of which offences were seen as similar or ‘groupable’, the majority classifications were ‘for money’ (including all forms of theft, drug supply, fraud and prostitution) and ‘drink or drug related’ (including assault, breach of the peace, RTAs and drug possession).

Young women in this sample have a slightly higher propensity than men during their offending histories for shoplifting and possession of drugs, according to self-reported offending. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to commit theft, assault, breach of the peace and housebreaking (with over twice as many men as women committing this

latter offence). Several authors (e.g., Chesney-Lind, 1997) have commented on the fact that women are more likely to shoplift than men, not least because of a greater association between women and shopping; however, they do not shoplift so much for the excitement, as Katz (1988) might suggest, but because of financial need.

Offending in the maintenance phase was seen by the majority of these respondents as a necessary means of funding and maintaining a certain lifestyle rather than something that they chose to do in order to make or sustain friendships as in the onset phase. Whilst monetary gain for consumer goods was a key factor in starting offending, few respondents suggested it as a valid reason for continuing to offend, even though consumerism is increasingly seen as a crucial factor influencing the lifestyles and choices of young people (Ferrell, 1995; Miles, 2000). Nevertheless, as was seen in the previous chapter, consumerism amongst young people is often closely aligned with social status – wearing the ‘right brand’ of trainers is likely to enhance one’s popularity with existing or potential friends (Miles et al., 1998; Morrow, 2001). The economic gains from offending were more related to their symbolic potential than to financial gain *per se*. Morrow (2001), for example, highlights the interrelationship between monetary gain and status in her study of 12-15 year olds, where the young people equated designer clothes with a guarantee against marginalization within the peer group setting. As one young man explained in this study: ‘If you come in with a cheaper pair of trainers than everybody else, then you’re just gonna get slagged for it’ (David, 20).

This attitude of some respondents that offending was necessary in order to gain or maintain a certain level of income supports Stewart et al.’s (1994) categorization of certain offenders as ‘professional’ and who earned a living from crime:

Offending in this category is seen as rational, utilitarian, consciously chosen as a feasible way of life. Apart from prostitution, it consists of serious or persistent crime against property or other potentially lucrative criminal activity, such as drug dealing (Stewart et al., 1994: 19).

The majority of the respondents, and more so men than women, suggested, however, that they offended for less sophisticated, more opportunistic reasons and that these reasons often did not include monetary gain. The following quote sums up the mood of many respondents about the petty but pragmatic nature of their offending:

... well, all the crimes regarding the theft and the stealing and things like that, that was just to get money for drugs. Drug offences were unavoidable due to the fact that I took them ... breach of the peaces and that, that's just idiot, basically being either drunk and shouting and going up the street, or shouting abuse at somebody ... The assaults, that's just problems with other people, getting in the way of things that they shouldn't be getting in the way of. Or saying things about other family members or things that shouldn't really be said, you know. So it was just a way of sorting problems out (Martin, 24).

Well, when you're drinking and using solvents and that, you're always going to get up to mischief, and that mischief will be petty, you know. It's not going to be like HB [housebreaking] or it's not going to be shoplifting or anything, unless you're stupid (Nick, 28).

To use the concepts of structure and agency (Giddens, 1984), it could be argued that in the face of structural adversity and feelings of disempowerment, many of these young people resorted to individual agency, however unconventional or illegal, to resolve problems that may have been seen by them as of a structural nature. For example, one young man described his reasons for assault, police assault and attempted murder as 'using your fists to solve problems'. Whilst to many offenders, such an approach may seem like 'rational choice', it also reflects *a lack of* choice over how to express their grievances within the wider community. 'Strain' and 'status frustration' (Merton, 1957)

may thus result in a rebellion – whether this be seen as subcultural or personal - against the status quo.

The nature of offending over time

Respondents were asked why they committed certain types of offence and not others, this question being a means of gauging their reasons and justifications for offending over time. Certainly, shoplifting was the most common offence committed by these respondents, because it was seen as ‘easy money’ (for drugs or other consumables) and less risky compared with, say, housebreaking or fraud. However, such offending tended to start off with smaller items but led on to more risky and serious activity:

... the shoplifting, that was mostly for drugs. I used to shoplift for myself to begin with, you know, just wee things for myself, then I started doing it as a business where I was shoplifting every day to make money (Harry, 26).

Whilst many saw shoplifting initially as the most convenient offence to commit, some were adamant that they would never, mainly for moral reasons, become involved in other forms of theft, such as housebreaking, however desperate they were for money: ‘I don’t thief from houses... Just anywhere apart from houses... Just totally invading somebody’s privacy, it’s just wrong... it’s just what I expect of myself’ (Charlie, 21).

... robbing people and stealing handbags and things? I just don’t agree with that... I hate people who take liberties like that and rob old women. I just think that’s disgusting. It wasn’t every day that I had smack to smoke, you know what I mean, and there was plenty of days when I sat and rattled [had withdrawal symptoms] and rattled and rattled for days and days... people that can’t rattle for one day go out and rob an old woman... I just couldn’t do it (Bernadette, 23).

This justification for committing only certain types of offence supports Matza's (1964) argument that techniques of neutralization are used by offenders to minimise the harm caused or to avoid moral culpability. Some respondents tried to justify their broader definition of offending according to a sense of social justice, for example:

I disagree with [the law defining as criminal]... when you're homeless and you don't have nothing at all, and like when you're sleeping outside and when you're a lassie and you're scared and you break into cars for somewhere to sleep, or you do something because you're petrified... or if I stole like a sandwich out of a shop. I know that's still stealing... there's things that you have to do to survive (Nina, 23).

However, several women mentioned fraud as something they started doing latterly in order to survive with a drug habit, as the same young woman suggested: 'I did credit cards because you can get cash back and it was easier. It was a lot easier than having to go and steal all day. It was much easier' (Nina, 23).

Much of this rationalization for choice of offence type was moralistic (although Matza might suggest that this was more a subconscious internalization of necessity), but nevertheless, their choice of offence was often overtly determined more by circumstances or logistics rather than by any moral decision-making process. Many of the sample – notably the women - made conscious decisions *not* to attempt certain offences because they were conscious of the practical limitations: 'I probably would have done [fraud] if I had been a better writer. It's just I'm no good with signatures' (Cathy, 23).

I done that when I was about 7 or 8, shoplifting. I always gave myself away. I would take a red neck all the time. I was never good at shoplifting... And my ears used to go red and everything, and I always gave myself away (Vicky, 27).

I just didn't have the heart to go into somebody's house and ransack their house. I'd take drugs out of a house, but I don't have the bottle to take anything else. Shoplifting was more my line (Cathy, 23).

I'm not into [car theft]. I can't drive. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't steal a car if you can't drive. You could run someone over. I've not really been into driving cars anyway (Derek, 21).

THE IMPETUS TO CONTINUING OFFENDING

Factors influencing the maintenance of offending

The twelve respondents (10 men and 2 women) who considered that they were still offending were asked why they continued offending for the period of time that they had to date. The remainder of this chapter focuses on responses given by these 12 persisters. Given that there were only 12, and all but one of these considered they were offending on a reduced basis, these responses should be viewed with caution. Nevertheless, the data do demonstrate a stark difference between reasons for and advantages/disadvantages of starting offending and those related to continuing to offend.

The main reasons given for continuing to offend were predominantly factors seen as being outwith their control, for example 'force of habit', mentioned by two male respondents, or having a reputation to uphold, also mentioned by two male respondents: 'It's just inside us and I can't get out of it... I'm used to doing it' (Vic, 23). One man suggested that offending was now a way of life that he couldn't control: '... it's now a habit, like an addiction' (Sam, 23). Equally, some came to expect, even depend on, a certain level of income: '[I'm] used to having things... Used to having everything... The money and everything that comes with it' (Cathy, 23).

Very few of these respondents at the time of interview had had periods of non-offending during their offending histories, thus questioning the extent of 'drift' between freedom and constraint over prolonged periods of time (Matza, 1964). Only six respondents (3 men and 3 women) noted that they had stopped offending previously (in 5 of the 6 cases only once), but then had renewed offending soon thereafter. Events which triggered this temporary cessation of offending (which usually lasted under a year) included being imprisoned (2 men), having a temporary job (1 man) and being pregnant (3 women). As will be seen in the following chapter, the majority of desisters in this sample suggested that they made an active decision to stop offending, and in the majority of cases again, this decision was adhered to. Therefore, Matza's theory of 'drift' in these cases tends only to apply to the short-term (i.e., drifting in and out of offending on a daily/weekly basis) rather than to the longer-term (stopping offending for months/years and then starting again), and indeed this seems to be the case for 'adolescent limited' offenders more generally (Moffitt, 1997).

Several respondents commented on the almost habitual and mundane nature of offending over time. This contrasting attitude to offending in the maintenance phase compared with that in the onset phase highlights the need to examine all three phases of offending as a changing process over time. Whilst many of the desistance theorists acknowledge the negative attitude to offending of those in the process of stopping, little research has been done on such negativity in the maintenance phase, which can seriously undermine many theories of offending behaviour, not least those that highlight the excitement generated by offending. For example, this negative and mundane view of offending amongst desisters is highlighted in a study of female desisters undertaken by

Sommers et al (1994), but equally applies to most studies of desisters irrespective of gender composition (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Shover, 1996):

Over time, the women in the study became... further alienated, both socially and psychologically, from conventional life. The women's lives became bereft of conventional involvements, obligations, and responsibilities. The excitement... that may have characterised their early criminal career phase gave way to a much more grave daily existence (Sommers et al., 1994: 137).

However, despite the 'chore' involved, where such offending was seen as an essential activity by the young people in this study, it tended to take on a momentum of its own and could be accommodated with little effort, not least when one's friendship group were also offending in similar ways. It could be argued that this 'force of habit' has wider connotations for studies in desistance, in that the status quo (of offending) may be more secure and preferable to a change in lifestyle or peer group in order to desist. The need to uphold a reputation could also be seen as wanting to maintain the status quo amongst existing friends as a 'face-saving' mechanism, rather than giving up what is known for something that is uncertain: 'I think it was because nobody knew me... I felt as if I had to make a name for myself' (Martin, 24).

Just reputation... Just impress people like – aye, me and my friends will go to other pubs, but there will be still people there that will go 'I've heard you're off your heid and that'. No, I'm no. This boy said something 'Are you taking that?'. Ken, they kind of look. I've got to do something about it... (Derek, 21).

Bromley (1993: 11) highlights this need amongst some of the respondents to *maintain* a reputation gained in the past because to do otherwise would draw adverse attention to their seemingly changed persona: 'The autonomy of reputation, as a process distinct from the personality it is supposed to reflect, is the cause of much ambivalence'. For

those who continued offending because their ‘customers’ expected it, this ambivalence was all the more apparent. However, many of this sample became solitary offenders as either monetary success or drug addiction took over from the original sociability aspect of offending. Once their offending behaviour became more solitary with the decreased influence of friends and associates, some suggested an increased feeling of isolation, which was likewise an impetus to reassessing that behaviour (see Chapter 8).

Other factors cited for continuing to offend were because of homelessness, being a known criminal, being unable to control one’s temper (in this instance, one of the women blamed alcohol for her temper) and because of a need for money, either for survival or to feed a drug habit. Many respondents saw their offending as a vicious circle, exacerbated by drugs or alcohol, because of either needing drugs/alcohol or being under the influence of them at the time of an offence: ‘It was rebellion against the system initially – not enough money. Then addiction to drugs took over, and then the need to have money [for drugs]’ (Kevin, 23).

... see when I was like on the amphetamines and then coming down, I felt like I could get away with it. It’s hard to describe... in a way I do think it was the drugs... I did feel as if I could get away with a lot (Paula, 27).

Whilst friends were cited by both sexes as influencing their propensity to start offending, only one male respondent mentioned friends as an influence more recently, although the young man in question considered drugs to be a bigger influence than friends *per se*. This lack of anxiety about one’s circle of friends could partly be because school friends in particular tend to disperse once one leaves the school milieu; new friends emerge within a wider setting, ties with family of origin may be renewed and

sexual partners and relationships with more conventional others may emerge as one gets older (Shover, 1996).

The advantages and disadvantages of continuing to offend

The respondents who were still offending were asked what the advantages and disadvantages were of offending now. Half the respondents (5 men and 1 woman) could see no advantages from continuing to offend, with one young man suggesting it had become an addiction and another suggesting it was a futile, almost incomprehensible, activity:

No advantages... It's just all losses, eh. There's no advantages. It's about time to grow up. I'm... twenty one and a half. Anybody else that's 21 with a bit of head and a bit savvy will grow up. There's no advantages. You just get prison, eh. It's just, it's just daft (Derek, 21).

For the others, the main advantage of continuing was that it gave them money, either for drugs or for better possessions. Five respondents (four men and one woman) suggested that the lifestyle or the money were too attractive to give up: 'I can get all the best things. I can have as much money as I want' (Cathy, 23); 'A better lifestyle... You can make loads of money. Plenty money. Live like a king' (Eric, 21)

As was seen in Chapter 6, few respondents cited the attraction of being able to get drugs or alcohol as an advantage of actually *starting* offending, with only six women citing this as an advantage at the time they started offending (bearing in mind that several women started offending specifically to feed a potential or existing drug habit). However, once their pattern of offending and perhaps even their drug use was better

established, their capacity to acquire drugs through offending became easier for many of them:

... it gets easier and easier and then people find out and they start saying to you, get me this, get me that, so you get money and it's more money for the weekends... for dope, and then it went on to harder and higher stuff, do you know what I mean? (Bernadette, 23).

Apart from the monetary value, none of the advantages cited in Chapter 6 for starting offending applied equally to continuing to offend. No one mentioned attention from peers, the buzz/fun of offending or the relief of boredom as advantages of offending subsequently. It had become for many very much a routine activity either necessitated or encouraged by the expectation of money, with few attractions other than such monetary gain. Indeed, the disadvantages outweighed the advantages by three to one, as Table 7.4 demonstrates. As mentioned earlier, theories which stress the excitement and cultural embeddedness of offending, such as those of cultural criminology, cannot readily explain the mundanity and negativity of offending in the maintenance phase.

Table 7.4: The disadvantages of continuing offending

Disadvantages	Male (n=10)	Female (n=2)	Total (n=12)
<i>Practical</i>			
Going to jail	5	1	6
Getting caught	4	1	5
Losing freedom	2	-	2
Appearing at court	2	-	2
Getting a drug habit	1	-	1
Criminal record	2	1	3
<i>Practical sub-total</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Relational</i>			
Losing family/friends	2	1	3
Bad reputation	1	-	1
<i>Relational sub-total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>

The impact of the criminal justice system weighed heavily on the minds of those continuing to offend and was seen as the main practical disadvantage. As Cusson & Pinsonneault (1986) and others have suggested, getting caught, appearing at court and going to jail are uppermost in offenders' minds as they become older. One respondent, who had stopped shoplifting some time ago but was continuing to be involved in assaults and drug use, summed it up in terms of 'paranoia':

Respondent: ... there's no way I could shoplift any more. I could not do that at all.

Researcher: Why not?

Respondent: Because the paranoia gets too much and I feel as though there's lots of people around and you can never ever tell which one's watching you.

Researcher: Well, why were you happy to do it five years ago and not any more?

Respondent: Because I didn't have the paranoia then... Because I was doing something new and I thought I was good at it and, em, because I thought I was good at it then I kept on doing it. But I was caught for shoplifting in [town] once. That was the last time I can remember stealing out of a shop... My day's finally come, you know. If they catch me now, they'll catch me later on, you know. You lose your edge basically and you do have an edge.

Researcher: Is that because of age or something else, or responsibilities?

Respondent: I think there's a bit of both to be honest but although, having said that, I still know people that are 30, 40 and they're still quite happy doing their shoplifting. It's just, I think it's each individual (Martin, 24).

This greater calculation of risk and seeming inevitability of being detected were closely associated with the fear of a loss of freedom and being away from family and friends: '[The disadvantages are] missing your family, your friends, social life, parties, ken, just, just freedom. That's what it all comes down to. That's it basically (Derek, 21); 'I'm causing grief. You get time to think in jail... I've got more of a conscience now. Jail slows you down' (Len, 26); 'I'm sick of the jail, sick of it, I'm too well known by the police. They stop and question me for no reason and people judge me' (Sam, 23).

Shover (1996) argues that age brings greater calculation of the risks involved in offending and with age comes a greater awareness of the need for social bonds with significant others:

Successful creation of bonds with conventional others and lines of legitimate activity indisputably is the most important contingency that causes men to alter or terminate their criminal careers (Shover, 1996: 129).

It is argued in this thesis, however, that it is not age *per se* that brings a greater calculation of risk – which suggests that age is not a dissuasive factor in its own right. Greenberg (1979: 591) notes in this regard that ‘the costs of apprehension are different for persons of different ages’. On the contrary, it is perhaps the process of becoming an ‘adult’ with the responsibilities, status and rights of adulthood (and thus something to lose) that is a strong persuasive factor. The risks for these young people in childhood were minimal compared with the growing number of risks associated with adulthood, as evidenced by the increasing number of disadvantages and decreasing number of advantages of offending cited by these respondents over the three phases of starting, continuing and stopping offending. Each respondent had different levels of responsibility and status and, therefore, by inference had varying levels of potential loss by offending when nearing the adult phase of the life cycle. Hence, the importance – as illustrated in Chapters 9 and 10 – of seeing offending as a process which runs concurrently with the process of transition.

Drugs and alcohol

Whilst the majority of young people who start out experimenting with drugs do so for sociability or excitement in the initial stages, addiction to drugs or alcohol is becoming

an increasing problem for young people as they enter their late teens (Harnett et al., 2000; Taylor, 2000). However, many women also experiment with drugs as a means of coping with past victimization – for example, girls are more likely than boys to be a victim of child sexual abuse and to have subsequent problems of depression, anger and fear (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Katz, 2000). Whilst for many of the women cited in this thesis, drugs were seen as an important medium whereby a [potentially] loving or caring relationship could be fostered with someone of the opposite sex (many offended to help sustain firstly their partner's and then their own drug habit), these social bonds were tenuous and often resulted in addiction and subsequent breakdown of the relationship. Equally, social bonds with non-drug using friends and family often became strained as a result of such addictions and many of the women in this sample talked of losing the trust of their family as a result of drug use (Chesney-Lind, 1997; see also Leibrich, 1993). Prolonged drug use can often result in increased isolation, irritability, depression and paranoia. That isolation may also be exacerbated by young female drug users being paranoid about their deteriorating body image as a result of ill health (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

For the majority of these young people (16/20 men and 18/20 women), drug or alcohol use was seen as the main reason for, or an influence in, their offending in the past. Of those who saw drugs/alcohol as the main reason for their offending, the majority cited them as the main impetus to their *continued* offending. The vast majority of offences relating to theft were to fund alcohol or drug use, rather than for consumables, and this is in contrast to the reasons given for committing theft at the outset of offending, which was predominantly for consumables (although, at that stage, more so for the men than

the women). This suggests that in the maintenance phase of offending, the need for money to fund an addiction had taken over from the desire for status, sociability and identity. Davies (2003b) suggests that shoplifting and dealing in drugs are the preferred means of funding a drug habit. Drug dealing (as opposed to possession) in this sample was undertaken almost exclusively to fund a drug habit, with more women (8/20) than men (4/20) suggesting they had been involved in drug dealing. Drug dealing was not for monetary gain as such, but rather as a means of maintaining a certain level of drug use, as one young woman explained:

Everybody thinks that you make money when you're dealing. You don't. Although you've got money, it's for your next batch. You can't spend it... see when you're drug dealing, it's really so that you've always, always got drugs to smoke, do you know what I mean? It's never, I mean, although there's always money there, you can't spend it... believe it or not, I actually got into a lot of debt when I was dealing because although I always, always had money, it wasn't mine to spend. So I got into a lot of debt and it took me a lot of time to pay that debt off (Bernadette, 23).

In that respect, several women put their offending (for money) down to drug debts, which had to be paid off over and above maintaining their drug habit. This same female respondent suggested that she preferred dealing, however, to shoplifting because it was easier:

There was no need [to shoplift]. [*Researcher: Because the dealing covered all the money you needed?*] Aye. [*Researcher: And that was easier than shoplifting was it?*] Aye. Definitely... people would just come to my door and I was serving them through the letterbox. I didn't even have to open my door (Bernadette, 23).

Often the need to 'feed' a drug addiction resulted in one's offending escalating, becoming more solitary and as some respondents implied, increasingly seeming like 'a vicious circle'. Taylor (1993) has suggested that shoplifting by women for drugs, for

example, had to be carefully planned and methodically carried out, not only to ensure adequate monetary returns to feed a habit but also to ensure that the women were not caught. In this sample, offending – if successful in terms of monetary gain - was increasingly seen as a business or a necessary way of life which required skill as well as planning: ‘I thought this was getting better and better, so what’s the point in stopping... You can make quite a lot of money from [shoplifting]. Well I did anyway’ (Vic, 23).

As my face got known for shoplifting, I stopped that and went into house breaking... I went on to fraud, credit card fraud... I was making about £300 to £400 a day and it was just going on purely drugs... I was a prostitute and using credit cards to go buy clothes to work in (Vicky, 27).

Whilst drugs and alcohol were seen as a problem in the past for the majority of this sample, only three men suggested that drugs or alcohol were still a problem for them now, and all three were still offending. None of the women suggested that they had a problem with illegal drugs or with alcohol now, although several felt dependent on methadone, which they considered a problem, health-wise. Four men and six women suggested that although drugs/alcohol had been a problem for them in the past, they now no longer used them and a further five men and 11 women suggested that their use of such substances was now controlled. In this respect, one man and eight women mentioned that they were currently on a methadone prescription.

Early offending, both in terms of experimenting with drugs or committing other offences such as theft, tended to be for fun or for friendship for these respondents. However, for the young people in this sample who started taking drugs or alcohol, 29 (11 young men and 18 young women) considered that their use of these substances was problematic at some point in their lives and had increased their propensity to offend.

There was then a noticeable shift in the reasons for offending if the individual became addicted to a substance and needed money to fund their usage: 'I was getting addicted to speed. When I was 16 years old, I was on an ounce a day, which is £80 so I had to steal to get my habit' (Nina, 23). Such problem use was almost exclusively related to drugs (8 young men and 16 young women) as opposed to alcohol (3 young men and 2 young women):

I didn't realise it was killing me. I didn't think there was anything wrong with me but it got to a point every day you wake up, you do the same thing, you get up, you've the clothes on you had on from the night before, you get up, you find where you're going to get money from, you'd walk for miles and miles, you'd climb a mountain for a tenner at the top of it and you'd walk back down it again and buy yourself a bag [of heroin]. You wouldn't eat. The only thing you would eat was chocolate. If you never had money for chocolate... you'd steal a bar of chocolate to keep your sugar level up (Diane, 21).

Jamieson et al (1999) found that as young people got older there was a greater likelihood that their drug use would become problematic, with around one half of their sample of 22-25 year olds reporting the possibility of an addiction. Certainly the women in this sample seemed more likely to suggest that they had a drug problem compared with the men. When these young women spoke of trying to stop offending, the factor they identified as being most likely to enable them to do this was to address their drug habit, after which offending would cease to be a necessity for them. However, giving up drugs was not easy, given their addiction, their circumstances and their need for support:

It was actually on a Sunday. I can remember it quite clearly. It was the day after my older brother's birthday. I'd walked up... to my mum's, went in and I begged my mum to help... get me in... like rehab and things like that (Diane, 21).

Methadone calms you down and makes me go to sleep and relax, but it's sore to come off it but I want off it. I don't want to be on it. I want babies and a normal life. That's what I want. It's all I've ever wanted (Nina, 23).

I was in my bed for four weeks. [My boyfriend] used to have to lift us out the bed to put us into a bath because I was that slow but I got through it. I fought it. I'm really glad now that I did, really glad (Sarah, 27).

Aspirations towards desistance

All 12 current offenders seemed determined to stop offending in the near future, although several thought it likely that they would continue to use drugs 'recreationally'. This optimism about stopping offending seems to be common amongst young offenders, who often seem on the verge of desisting following every incident of offending. Jamieson et al (1999) have suggested that women are even more likely than men to suggest that they have started the process of desistance, often only within days or weeks of their last offence. Given, also, that the process of desistance is a long and uncertain one, with many opportunities for relapse (Matza, 1964; Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001), it is likely that these young people will perhaps find that their intention to stop will be put to the test on many occasions not least in the near future.

Both women who were currently offending cited their children as a reason for wanting to stop and because of the fear of imprisonment. One of these women found it increasingly difficult to offend in the company of her daughter as the latter grew older:

When I'm in shops, she says things like 'mummy, you have to pay for that'. A couple of wee things like that... She kens I shove things in my bag. [*Researcher: She's never landed you in it?*]. A couple of times just about. That's why I've had to stop taking her. I had to stop taking her because she started opening her mouth (Cathy, 23).

Other reasons for wanting to stop, each cited by one respondent, were: wanting to grow up, wanting a house, wanting a job, not having to worry about the police, not being a worry to others and wanting to drive a car legally. Other comments were that offending had damaged their reputation and its ramifications and consequences had limited their experience of childhood as a time of innocence: 'I've lost a lot... just basically growing up... I grew up too fast. I don't know. Just places I should never have been' (Bob, 20).

As with other studies which elicited the views of young people regarding offending (see, for example, McIvor and Barry, 1998a), many respondents suggested that they had to help themselves if they were to stop offending. Whilst others could give encouragement and advice, these young people considered that it was ultimately up to the individual to change their attitude or behaviour themselves: '[I am] the only person that can help. If you want to do something, you'll do it. If you don't want to do something, you won't do it (Bob, 20); 'I suppose like really if you're gonna offend, you are going to do it, no matter what anyway... There's not much you can really do (Yvonne, 25); 'The only person that can help another person is themselves... It's somebody's own mind that's got to think 'right, I've got to stop this'. Nobody else can do it for you' (Karen, 28).

Six respondents (including one woman) mentioned either reducing or stopping their drug use as being a key to helping them stop offending, since many saw their offending as purely to feed their drug habit. Jamieson et al (1999) also found that stopping taking drugs or being prescribed methadone were strategies which helped young people to stop offending, more so for young people who had been on drugs for a longer period of time. Other factors which were seen as incentives to stopping offending revolved around the

social bonds of finding or remaining with a partner or child, getting help from family members or professionals and keeping away from offending peers. Practical incentives included getting a job or other occupation (to bring in money or reduce boredom), being able to settle into a new area or house of their own and having a 'clean slate' in terms of court appearances/charges.

Factors impeding desistance

Five male respondents mentioned reverting to, increasing or merely sustaining their use of drugs or drink as a major obstacle to stopping offending. As Bob, 20, explained: 'It's easier to walk away when you're sober'. One woman implied that if she got back together with her ex-boyfriend, she would revert to hard drugs again, and two young men mentioned potential police harassment as a likely obstacle to them remaining trouble-free in the future.

The potential adverse influence of friends who were offending was also mentioned by two respondents and the loss of current employment by one respondent. Being imprisoned was mentioned by one man and one woman as being a likely trigger to re-offending, as was getting caught driving without a licence for one young man.

DISCUSSION

The data presented in this chapter suggest that the men and women diverged in whether they 'chose' to offend in the maintenance phase. The men seemed to think *less* about what they were actually doing in their offending over time (hence being increasingly opportunistic or habitual in that behaviour) The women seemed to think *more* about

their behaviour and its consequences over time but continued to offend through necessity, having calculated the consequences. Likewise, the men were more likely to seek continued status from offending whereas the women were more likely to be dependent on drugs and therefore more compelled to commit specific offences in the maintenance phase to fund their habit.

Substance misuse and crime have tended to show a close association that cannot be put down to chance alone. Whilst crime rates have dropped over the last 10 years in most Western countries (Leonardsen, 2003), there have been significant increases in substance misuse since the Second World War (Pudney, 2002). Whilst Rutter et al. (1998) and Pudney (2002) suggest there is uncertainty as to whether drug and alcohol use predispose individual users to crime or vice versa, the data from this thesis suggest a negative association. In a study conducted by Flood-Page and her colleagues, the peak age of drug use for both sexes was between 18 and 21 and harder drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine tended to be associated with more serious or persistent offending than softer drugs such as cannabis (Flood-Page et al., 2000). Flood-Page and her colleagues also suggest that drug use is 'the most predictive factor in regard to offending' for 12-30 year old men in particular (ibid: 2000: 56).

The image amongst one's peers of being a successful offender was important to the men, in particular in the early stages of the maintenance phase, even though such a reputation may have caused them more ambivalence latterly (Bromley, 1993). Although people cannot be seen as responsible for the reputations others attribute to them, they are nevertheless held to account for that reputation being either sustained or abandoned. In addition, in a community where young people – especially young men – have few

alternative sources of power or friendship, maintaining a public image, however difficult to uphold, may serve an immediate and pragmatic purpose. However, to uphold and build on one's reputation as an offender in the transition to adulthood often required these young people to focus in on that offending activity and to view their offending more as a business. Jamieson et al. (1999) also suggest that offending temporarily gives the impression of social inclusion in an otherwise exclusionary phase in the life cycle.

Nevertheless, many of the respondents also talked of distancing themselves from offending peers in an attempt to reduce or stop their own offending behaviour (see Chapter 8). This growing disenchantment coincided with the 'hassle factor' of the criminal justice system which was mentioned by many respondents as a strong deterrent to continuing offending. Such risks seemed to become more apparent to them as they had more to lose by offending.

Those who continued to offend cited factors that might help them to stop offending in the future, including coming off drugs, being responsible for themselves or others and wanting to 'settle down'. However, because of their working class backgrounds and their legal and social status in transition, many of these young people's aspirations could have been blocked by poverty, unemployment, a lack of responsibility and a lack of status within the wider community. For example, Hope (1993, cited in Bright, 1996) suggests that, in the current economic climate, unemployment may result in young men of working age feeling they have no stake in society and thence feeling they have nothing to lose by continuing to offend.

CONCLUSIONS

When comparing reasons and advantages or disadvantages of *starting* offending with those of maintaining offending, the data support the suggestion brokered in Chapter 2 that these are distinct phases of offending which cannot be justifiably combined in an understanding of youth offending over time. What had started out as generally sociable and enjoyable activity through crime in the onset phase had become isolating, habitual and increasingly risky behaviour for many in the maintenance phase. This puts into question those criminological theories (e.g., cultural criminology) which highlight the excitement of offending and its cultural embeddedness. As Sommers et al. conclude: ‘involvement in crime moves offenders beyond the point at which they find it enjoyable to the point at which it is debilitating and anxiety-provoking’ (1994: 146). It is, indeed, this ‘debilitating’ change of attitude over time that creates an important element of the motivation and opportunity for desistance to be attempted.

The number of young people who suggested they were still offending at the time of interview is relatively small (two women and ten men, all aged between 19 and 26), with no apparent association between age of onset and the fact that they were still offending. Six of the 10 men and one of the two women had made an active decision to *start* offending, suggesting a greater awareness of the possible advantages of offending, at least early on their offending careers. It could also be argued that these 12 young people were more successful at offending and therefore did not want to desist, but this was not borne out by their accumulated offences listed in the SCRO data, nor by their seeming dissatisfaction with their current predicaments. In addition, five of the men and one of the women were currently living with their parent(s), suggesting that such close

family contact is not necessarily conducive to desistance (although see Graham & Bowling, 1995).

The reasons given for *continuing* offending were rarely synonymous with the reasons for *starting* offending, and it seems that the initial kudos, sociability or excitement gained from offending soon wore off as drug use increased, practical need took over or ‘criminal justice system fatigue’ set in. Their offending seemed to become very much a pragmatic means of sustaining a certain lifestyle or habit in the seeming absence of an alternative lifestyle, and few were currently satisfied with their situation. Nevertheless, whilst it seems from the evidence in this chapter that offending became a routine or a chore for many of these current offenders, the following chapter highlights the strength and commitment that the remaining 28 young people developed in stopping offending. Whilst the respondents’ opportunities overall for conventional lifestyles were hampered by their status as liminal beings (Turner, 1967, 1969), their optimism about stopping offending seemed apparent from their narratives, whatever the potential structural constraints (Jamieson et al., 1999; Rudd & Evans, 1998). It is to the views and perceptions of those who succeeded in stopping offending that this thesis now turns.

CHAPTER 8: DESISTANCE FROM OFFENDING

The true age of desistance from offending can be determined with certainty only after offenders die (Farrington, 1997: 373).

Once you start getting into trouble, it's just really hard to get out of it (Charlie, 21)

INTRODUCTION

The above quotations suggest that the concept of 'stopping offending', or more importantly, *maintaining* a non-offending lifestyle (Maruna, 2001), is problematic for both professionals and offenders alike. Yet, the actuality of desisting suggests a greater optimism, with Blumstein and Cohen (1987) suggesting that the vast majority of offenders eventually stop offending in their late twenties (cited in Maruna, 2001). The problem is how.

There are two concepts within the desistance literature which need to be borne in mind. One is the concept of desistance as *outcome* (measured predominantly by reconviction data) and the other is the concept of desistance as *process* (gauged predominantly by narrative data). Whilst this study had the capacity to analyse reconviction data for up to two years following interview, its main intention has always been to seek young people's views about their own offending and what events and triggers precipitated or confirmed their desire or propensity to stop offending. To that extent, this study is more concerned with process than outcome, but briefly compares the two sets of data, namely the self-report and official reconviction data, before exploring these young people's experiences and perceptions of desistance as process.

THE OUTCOME OF DESISTANCE

As Farrington perhaps rightly suggests in the opening quotation to this chapter, desistance as outcome is riddled with empirical ambiguities and is rarely accurately predicted. From an individual perspective, just as a health-conscious but addicted smoker will give up cigarettes and then return to them again with worrying regularity, so the offender may give up crime for days, weeks, months or years, and then return to it (Maruna, 2001). From a structural perspective, when one dissects the meaning of the word 'offending', the problem is intensified. For example, if speeding, dropping litter, urinating in a public place or smoking cannabis are considered to be crimes, then the vast majority of the population have failed to desist from crime, even though they may not have been officially labelled as offenders in the first place. Equally, certain crimes are tolerated in certain populations or at certain times: tax evasion by an affluent businessman may not be such a concern for the police as credit card fraud by a disadvantaged young person³⁵; and prohibitions on the sale and consumption of alcohol and drugs varies across cultures and at different times in history. Labelling theory in relation to offending suggests that young people, disadvantaged sections of the population and minority ethnic groupings may be discriminated against on the grounds of political targeting of certain offences. Certainly, the respondents, whilst not representative in terms of minority ethnic groupings, were certainly young and disadvantaged and often talked of feeling discriminated against or targeted by criminal justice agencies.

³⁵ Jamieson et al. (1999: 157) cite figures from Cook (1997) which suggest that tax fraud costs the government almost five times more in lost revenue than DSS fraud.

As was suggested in Chapter 5, self-report data on their own can be unreliable, being affected by poor respondent recall, being dependent upon an open and honest perspective by the respondent and possibly being influenced by the respondent's rapport with the researcher. Equally, reconviction data as a measure of re-offending are often ineffectual, in that they incorporate only a small minority of offences and offenders (since only a small minority of offences are detected and processed by the criminal justice system³⁶), and often measure reconviction rates over a short period of time. However, being able to supplement the self-report data with official data in this sample was not only reassuring but also confirmed the relative accuracy of respondent recall. However, there were a few anomalies. When compared to the official SCRO data on offending histories compiled between 17 and 31 months following interview (in September, 2002), it would seem that the female respondents were perhaps overly optimistic and the men more realistic about their status as desisters.

Although desistance may be difficult to measure exactly, there is strong evidence from reconviction and self-report statistics to support a definite decline, if not cessation, in offending activity in the early twenties. As will be seen from Table 8.1, approximately one third of those who said they had desisted suggested that they had done so two or more years prior to interview: four of the 10 men and four of the 18 women who said they had desisted considered this to have happened between two and four years prior to interview. On the other hand, 14 of the 18 female respondents compared with six of the 10 men suggested at interview that they had stopped offending within the year prior to

³⁶ According to the Youth Lifestyles Survey for 1998/99, although 57 per cent of young men and 37 per cent of young women aged 12 to 30 admitted committing at least one offence in their lives, only 4 per cent of young men and 1 per cent of young women suggested that they had been cautioned or taken to court in the last twelve months. Although the figure for court appearances increases for known offenders, crime statistics generally only identify the 'tip of the iceberg' (Maguire, 1994).

interview. These latter figures constitute nearly three quarters of the female sample and nearly two thirds of the male sample. However, this was an exploratory study that aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of current and previously persistent offenders within a certain age range, rather than to gauge the actuality and accuracy of their self-classifications as desisters or persisters.

Table 8.1: Self-report data on desistance

Self-reported desistance period	Male (n=10)	Female (n=18)	Total (n=28)
Under 1 year	3	11	14
1 year	3	3	6
2 years	3	3	6
3 years	1		1
4 years	-	1	1

The young women were not only more likely to start offending later than the young men but they also tended to desist later (only two men stopped offending in their late twenties, compared to eight women). Farrington (1997) has found that the earlier the recruitment into offending, the longer the criminal ‘career’ irrespective of age. He stresses the importance of the correlation between age and crime, with his study indicating a modal age of onset of 14 and a modal age of desistance of 23, although certain studies have suggested that the age of onset will differ depending on the type of offence (e.g., LeBlanc and Frechette, 1989). In this study, early onset did seem to equate with prolonged offending in the young men, but less so in the young women. However, as can be seen from Appendix 1, this pattern is inconclusive, not least because of the differing ages of respondents at the time of interview, the short time scale between desistance and interview and the small numbers involved overall.

THE IMPETUS TO STOPPING OFFENDING

This section explores young people's reasons for and influences in desisting and the advantages and disadvantages of stopping offending. It is based purely on the qualitative, self-report data from the interviews with young people, irrespective of whether or not these narratives were supported by the SCRO data. It should be borne in mind that nearly twice as many women (18) as men (10) suggested that they had stopped offending at the time of interview.

The level of decisiveness in stopping offending

Respondents were asked if they had made an active decision to stop offending, as opposed to 'drifting' out of it (Matza, 1964). This was to gauge whether there were any specific 'triggering events' (Laub et al., 1998) or 'turning points' (Maruna, 2001) which might have helped these young people to change their attitude or behaviour or whether it was more of a gradual process of desistance. Seven of the 10 men and 16 of the 18 women said that they had actively decided to *stop* offending whereas, in stark contrast, the majority of respondents said that they drifted into rather than made an active decision to *start* offending. This puts into question Matza's (1964) theory of drift as a longer-term phenomenon, since making an active decision to desist suggests that neutralization and will are eventually and inexplicably set aside by offenders in favour of adopting a specific attitude and approach to the 'problem' of their offending.

Turning points are not necessarily a cause of desistance *per se* but may merely be concurrent with the timing of a decision to stop offending (Laub et al., 1998; Maruna, 2001). Events may be negative as well as positive, thus creating a 'push' rather than a

‘pull’ factor in one’s decision to desist. Giddens (1979: 124, quoted in Farrall & Bowling, 1997: draft 7) describes turning points as ‘critical situations’: ‘a set of circumstances which – for whatever reason – radically disrupts accustomed routines of daily life’, whilst Sommers et al. (1994) describe ‘socially disjunctive experiences’ as precipitating conscious and often difficult decisions to desist from offending. In their study of women offenders, Sommers et al. suggested that they all made an active decision to stop, based more on shock than on specific turning points. Maruna (2001) tends to be sceptical of the value of turning points, not least because they can often condemn one to a life of crime or encourage further offending rather than make one more determined to change:

[Turning points] serve an important symbolic and psychological function, [but] their value to the understanding of desistance has probably been overstated... nothing inherent in a situation makes it a turning point. One person’s reason for changing their life... might be another person’s reason to escalate offending (ibid: 25).

However, Maruna’s sample mainly recounted turning points in their childhood years rather than latterly and fitted more into Maruna’s category of ‘condemnation script’ rather than ‘redemption script’ (2001: 75). However, several studies suggest that it is more recent attitude change, a more mature or heightened awareness of risk and the increasing likelihood of having something of value which could be lost by offending that impinge significantly on offenders’ decisions over time (see, for example, Leibrich, 1993; Shover, 1996).

Nevertheless, if an offender *feels* that s/he has made an active decision to change his/her behaviour because of a so-called turning point, this should not be discarded as

insignificant, not least when such turning points seemed in this research to be dramatically more important in the decision to stop than to start offending. When asked about significant events or 'turning points' in their lives, the respondents in this study were twice as likely to mention events post-16 as pre-16. However, the vast majority of these events were 'push' rather than 'pull' factors, not least for the men: 'That was it. Sat back and said "fuck this". Excuse my language' (Pete, 19).

I'd been caught for housebreaking... and from then on, like, I thought 'no, that's it, you know. They know we're at it now. The next one's gonna be worse and the next one's gonna be worse than that, and eventually we're gonna get years for what we do'. So I mean, from then, I thought 'no, this isn't it, like. This is not how we're gonna do it, you know' (Nick, 28).

When I was at court one day and I got the probation, I just sat down on my arse and thought: do you give it up or do you do it, because one day you will get the jail and get the kids took off you and it's not worth it. OK you've not got all the nice clothes you did have, and you've not got the money. I can do without things like that just now. I can focus on getting to... the point where I can go out and get a job and get another bit of my life done instead of stealing (Helen, 20).

Of the seven men who made an active decision to stop offending, push factors included receiving too many custodial sentences and the need to address a drug addiction. Of the 16 women who made an active decision to stop, push factors included the need to address a drug addiction, abusive partners, bereavement or ill health within the family and fear of losing their child[ren] into care. Three men cited pull factors, including feeling committed to a partner or child and gaining employment. Only one woman cited a pull factor, namely, feeling committed to her partner. As with the reasons for starting offending cited in Chapter 6, the men's reasons for desistance were more practical and personal, while the women's were more relational, although the differences were less contrasting in desistance than in onset.

Trigger events which I have described as ‘push’ factors require agency on the part of the individual to actually change their lifestyle, but with the help of the trigger event as a form of pressure. All the desisters felt that the decision to stop rested entirely with them, and that no external constraints would get in the way of that decision. However, as will be seen in a later section of this chapter, some respondents tempered their resolve with the hypothetical identification of the ‘worst-case scenario’ which might in the future result in re-offending.

Sommers et al. (1994) suggest that giving up crime requires determination and resolve to completely turn around one’s lifestyle. Their sample of women street offenders not only had to cease to associate with past ‘friends’, and suffer the consequent isolation, but they also had, in the majority of cases, to consciously overcome a drug addiction.

For many of the women in this sample, stopping offending also meant stopping drugs and so the major decision was more to do with how and when to stop using drugs:

I woke up one morning and just said ‘no more’ and I didn’t collect my [methadone] script after that... My partner could tell you. We were going down [to the surgery] one day and I just went like that ‘I can’t be bothered with this any more. I don’t want to do it any more’. And from that day I stopped (Sarah, 27).

I just woke up one morning. I’d slept on a friend’s floor... and I was ill, I needed heroin and I was in lots of trouble with debts, people after me. And I just phoned my mum up and said ‘I’ve had enough. Give me one more chance’. She came down and picked me up (Gillian, 29).

However, many of the women who were on methadone suggested that offending became an unnecessary activity once their drug use was controlled and prescribed free of charge, suggesting that offending once they were addicted to drugs had only been for

the purpose of feeding such a habit: ‘methadone’s harder to come off than heroin but rather than stealing, I’m getting it for free... I don’t have to steal to get money now’ (Nina, 23); ‘I’m on a methadone programme... At first I had to offend, now I don’t need to’ (Cathy, 23).

These views are backed up by a recent evaluation by Eley et al (2002) which noted that drug-using offenders were likely to reduce the amount of money they spent on drugs (from an average of £490 per week to an average of £57 per week) as a result of being placed on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order. The majority of young people in Eley et al.’s study suggested that they were unlikely to reoffend if their drug use was controlled. Likewise, McIvor et al. (2004) suggest that young people who are addicted to drugs are only likely to desist from offending once their illegal drug use has stopped.

Factors influencing desistance

Factors influencing desistance, given in Table 8.2 below, are explored under the same headings as those given for starting and continuing offending. To reiterate, these headings are practical factors (including the 'hassle factors' of loss of control of their lives as a result of offending or detection³⁷, health reasons, the lack of 'success' in offending and the employment and education implications of having a criminal record); relational reasons (pertaining to family, partners, children or friends); monetary reasons; and personal reasons (for example, wanting a better lifestyle or ‘growing up’).

³⁷ The 'hassle factor' is included under practical reasons because the inconvenience caused by continued offending related more to structural constraints than to attitudinal change.

Table 8.2: Factors influencing desistance

Factors	Male (n=10)	Female (n=18)	Total (n=28)
<i>Practical</i>			
Fear of imprisonment	3	8	11
Had enough/too much hassle	4	4	8
Health reasons	1	5	6
College/job/career prospects	2	1	3
Conscious of criminal record	1	-	1
<i>Practical: sub-total</i>	11	18	29
<i>Relational</i>			
Because of child(ren)	2	5	7
Because of family	1	3	4
Because of partner	-	3	3
Because of bereavement	1	-	1
Losing friends	1	-	1
<i>Relational: sub-total</i>	5	11	16
<i>Personal</i>			
Want better life/to settle down	-	4	4

Practical factors

Overall, the respondents placed greater emphasis on the practical consequences of offending than on relational or personal factors when explaining why they desisted. The two most commonly cited practical factors for stopping were because of a fear of imprisonment (3/10 men and 8/18 women) and the 'hassle factor' (4/10 men and 4/18 women). Several respondents mentioned the 'hassle' which accompanied offending, most notably continued harassment from the police and impending court cases or outstanding charges, which eventually outweighed the social or material gains from offending. The final crunch was often the risk or fear of getting caught and the resultant loss of freedom or control over their movements:

I'd just had enough... I had enough of going around and getting lifted by the police and that. Everything what was happening, I was getting blamed for, even when I was in the jail they were coming [to my house] saying that I had been

seen, they said ‘we saw your son walking down the street with a telly’. I was in the jail! (Frank, 22).

I had just grown up, realised the serious trouble I had been in... and well, at 20, I had my own house at this point... At the start, I had all nice stuff in it and then like with the heroin, I had sold it all for £20 at a time. Everything, and then I just thought to myself ‘what am I doing here? I’ve got nothing. I’m in my twenties’. Do you know what I mean?... and I was ‘right, that’s enough, time to grow up here’... the police knew... it was this house I was dealing in, right, and they were sitting right outside... the door was going constantly... that was enough. That was enough after that (Bernadette, 23).

The deterrent effect of the police and the criminal justice system was remarkably strong for both the young men and the young women. Whilst they talked of having ‘had enough’, they were actually referring not so much to the effects of ageing or to lacking energy to continue offending (‘burn out’), but to being undermined by the effects of being caught and being subsequently embroiled in the criminal justice system:

... you could get away with it when you’re under 15, 16. You can get away with crime and that. But after that, you can’t get away... it’s not worth going to all the hassle of being in [jail]... and like you’re in there at New Year and Christmas and that, and all your family are outside and that, opening presents and things like that... and they just get pissed off going in and out of the place (Frank, 22).

Maruna (2001: 151) has described the ‘burn out’ model of desistance as relating to ‘defiant rebels [who] eventually lose the youthful spirit and passion required to maintain a deviant lifestyle in the face of repeated failure’. ‘Burn out’ is what Leibrich (1993) calls a ‘dissuasive’ factor – one that influences desistance because of its negative implications, whereas it is argued in this thesis that for desistance to be sustainable, the positive impact of ‘persuasive’ factors is needed in that process (see Chapter 10). Whilst there is undoubtedly a strong correlational effect between ‘burn out’ and desistance,

Maruna (2001) argues that burn-out is not a conclusive explanation for stopping offending, as it can as easily happen to active offenders as to desisting offenders.

For women, health reasons (the potential or actual consequences of an addiction) were more of an incentive to stopping offending than for men, and although health comes under the 'practical' category, these women saw it ultimately in terms of relational factors: 'It [heroin addiction] was killing me. I was five and a half stone and it was killing me, and I didn't realise it was killing me' (Diane, 21); 'I near died and like, you know, support machine and everything... so it gave me a fright... I thought that was gonna be [my daughter] seeing me for the last time' (Laura, 27). Many feminist writers have stressed the importance of body image to young women (see, for example, Chesney-Lind, 1997; Skeggs, 1997) as a means of exerting power in an otherwise restricted market, and indeed several of the women in this sample suggested that people would comment on their deteriorating appearance once they were addicted to drugs, and that this negative public image was a motivating factor in their decision to give up drugs.

The men, on the other hand, were more concerned with pragmatic factors such as employment prospects, the effects of a criminal record and offending becoming less profitable and more risky. These findings are consistent with other studies of gender differences in the desistance literature, where women are more likely to take a moralistic or emotional stance in relation to desistance whereas men are more likely to think or act pragmatically (see, for example, McIvor et al., 2004).

Actually having employment or being on a college course (as opposed to the prospect of such opportunities in the future) were more influential in encouraging desistance for the men than for the women. As was seen in Chapter 3, employment is often cited as a key factor in encouraging desistance from offending, and yet 24 of the 28 desisters (8/10 male and 16/18 female respondents) did not have employment but still considered that they had managed to stop offending. Of the five young people employed at the time of the interview (3 men and 2 women), one young man said that he was still offending. Whilst employment was not given as a *reason* for stopping offending *per se*, it was deemed to be an *influencing* factor cited by the three working men but not by the two working women: ‘... just the job [was an incentive to stop]... just something to do. The thought of getting up out of your bed and working instead of just sitting about all day’ (Alec, 28). Other comments included: ‘I can work for money now. I don’t need to steal it’ (Rory, 23); and ‘Well now I’ve got a job... Well I’ve got something to look forward to. I’ve got something to look forward to when I get up in the morning’ (Frank, 22).

It has been acknowledged in the literature on offending that the lack of employment opportunities for young people – especially for men - may exacerbate their reliance on offending for status and a relief of boredom (Greenberg, 1979; Cohen, 1955). Child-minding restrictions, or in the case of some of the women in this sample - incapacity to work because of drug addiction, may deter women from seeking employment on a regular basis. Employment generally may thus be seen as more important for men in the transition to adulthood than for women and research demonstrates a higher correlation between unemployment and offending for young men than for young women (Flood-Page et al., 2000). Several male respondents without employment commented on the

fact that it was unlikely they would get a job in the future because of their criminal record or reputation as an offender: 'I was working last year for a week... it's really because of my reputation as well, you know, with being in jail all the time' (John, 23); 'nobody's gonna accept me... one because of my illness and two because of my criminal record' (Owen, 18). Nevertheless, it seems that the majority of these respondents considered that they were in the process of desisting if not completely stopped at the time of interview irrespective of their employment status.

Relational factors

Whilst Gilligan (1982) suggests that men have fewer friendships than women as they get older, Shover (1996) in a study of older male ex-offenders nevertheless suggests that the social value of interpersonal relationships for his sample of men (i.e. with friends as well as the wider community) should not be underestimated:

The extreme importance of interpersonal respect, particularly to men who almost certainly are denied it based on their location in class and moral hierarchies, cannot be minimised (Shover, 1996: 106).

Relational factors were marginally more influential for the young women (11/18 women compared with 5/10 men), for example, because of now having responsibility for children, because of the positive impact of a relationship or because of the support from family more generally:

Reasons for stopping? Well the kids, know what I mean. To try and make a family... [My daughter] had seen so much... She hadn't seen the needle or nothing, know what I mean, but kids aren't stupid (Laura, 27).

... having a son. Once he was born, then I really put the foot down... Because I had someone else I had to look out for other than myself... my son, he was too young to look after himself. That's my job (Martin, 24).

Whereas social control theories are not conclusive in relation to more structural 'turning points' such as marriage or employment, they are useful in relation to the *people* who were influential in helping these young people stop offending - namely, family, friends and professional workers. It is acknowledged that one's family background and the influence of siblings and peers may well have encouraged offending in the past for these young people, as suggested in Chapters 6 and 7. However, as these young people got older they suggested that the negative influences of offending siblings and peers weakened whilst the positive influences of family and 'law abiding' friends was strengthened. This may well have resulted from changes in lifestyle during the transition to adulthood, for example in leaving school and gaining one's own tenancy or finding a job. For the women in particular, having children often resulted in their becoming closer to their own mothers for sharing child care or for financial support (Allatt & Yeandle, 1992), but they also often moved away from the circle of friends in the area in which they were brought up because of a restricted choice of social housing vacancies.

However, for this sample the social bonds of family and relationships seemed more apparent for the women than for the men. This may have been because the women were more likely to have responsibility for children or closer contact with their families (Heidensohn, 1996), but it may also have been the case that young women feel more comfortable sharing their emotions and feelings with a researcher than do young men (Oakley, 1981; Phoenix, 1994). The women suggested that they were more determined

to stop offending if such offending meant jeopardising a loving relationship with a non-offending partner. One young woman who became addicted to drugs at 17 because of pressure from her then-boyfriend, was at the age of 23 now on a methadone programme because of encouragement from her current (non-offending) boyfriend, whose threats to leave her if she continued to offend were the major catalyst to her stopping: 'My boyfriend would say.. if I stole, he would leave me' (Nina, 23).

Another woman, who met her fiancé a year before the interview, stopped offending at that time because of the positive change of circumstances and emotions resulting from this new relationship:

[My fiancé] brought a really different side out on me. He makes me relaxed, more calmer, and it's like as if I found someone who really cares and actually is interested in me, for who I really was (Yvonne, 25).

In a study by Knight and West (1975), these authors found that the majority of those who said they had desisted also mentioned that this was an active decision resulting from the breaking of friendship ties with delinquent peers. Indeed, Stewart et al. (1994) found that in their sample of offenders, the influence of peers decreased concurrently with offending behaviour as they got older³⁸. However, in this sample, the positive impact of conventional friends seemed to be as much an incentive to stopping offending as the negative impact of offending friends had been an incentive to starting offending. Losing close friendships through crime was sometimes mentioned as a cost:

Em, well you get a lot of friends when you're in one sort of circle but they're not really true friends and friends that you should have and should keep don't want to

³⁸ Stewart et al. (1994) found that 45 per cent of 17 year olds in their sample were said to have been influenced by peers ('social activity'), whereas only 18 per cent of 23 year olds were said to have been thus influenced.

know you. So you can lose a fair amount of respect. Although you gain friends, or acquaintances shall we say, you seem to lose a helluva lot of respect from the people that will care about you or people that want to know (Martin, 24).

Personal factors

Four women suggested that one of their main reasons for stopping offending was because they wanted a 'normal'³⁹ or better life, the chance to conform and to 'settle down':

I wanted to do something with my life. I wanted to get out of this rut I was in... carrying on like this and going to court. I was only building up a record for myself and it wasn't the place I wanted to be. I didn't want to be in this situation. I still needed my money, I still needed the clothes, but now I've got to do without that. That's just tough. I've got to live on the money that I'm getting and I'm doing it... I'll go and get a good job that I want to do and get legal money to go shopping 'cos I'll feel a hundred times better about myself and I've realised that. I've grown up really (Helen, 20).

I've got away from all the bad things in life... I can't be bothered with that... I'm just getting too old for it. I'm just not wanting to roll about the streets fighting and things like that. It's embarrassing... I'm not wanting that kind of life anymore, I want to get a house and get settled down (Carol, 29).

This increasing pragmatism and disenchantment as they continued offending was closely related to the 'hassle factor' mentioned above, but was also associated with a developing realization that offending was not compatible with their increased need and desire to achieve conventional goals. The vast majority of this sample had identical conventional aspirations to those of young people more generally, namely a job, a house of their own and a family of their own (Barnardo's, 1996; Barry, 2001a). Thirteen men

³⁹ 'Normal' was defined by one young woman as 'getting up in the morning, doing my housework - although I never done it this morning! That was because I was out all night, right! - going to the shop, getting the paper, a couple of rolls... my mum and that come down as soon as they can... [have] a cup of tea. That's normal for me' (Bernadette, 23).

and 13 women mentioned wanting a job, and seven men and 10 women cited a house. Seven men and five women mentioned having a settled family life, but only after they had gained stable employment.

Many respondents emphasised the support of significant others in the process of desisting from offending, mainly partners, family members, friends, social workers and other agency workers. Support from immediate family members was particularly helpful to the women. Equally, the women were more likely than the men to be influenced by their own responsibilities towards their partners, family and children:

I think it's when the social worker said that we've put [my daughter] with prospective adoptive parents and I sort of freaked out then. It made me more determined to fight for her (Sarah, 27).

... with a sentence at 3 years, you're away from everybody that means anything to you. You're away from them all. So it was 18 months I was away from my son. He cried at every single visit... what I was doing was having – the impact it was having on my family. I mean not the rest of my family, my son really. And I just thought, I can't do this anymore. I can't do that. People say you can't come off drugs... My son was my staying power. He kept me going. I couldn't do any more to him (Theresa, 33).

In terms of cohabitation and having responsibility for children, seven of the men and five of the women were living with their partner, and of these only two of the cohabiting men did not have children. A further seven men and five women lived with their parent(s). Co-habitation and having children seemed to be associated with desistance for this sample, since only two of the 12 respondents with live-in partners suggested they were still offending, whereas 10 of the 24 living alone or with parents said they were still offending. Equally, of the 7 men with children, only two were still

offending. Both women persisters had children; of these women, one was living in her own tenancy and the other was living with her parents.

The advantages and disadvantages of stopping offending

Respondents who suggested they had stopped offending were also asked what the advantages and disadvantages were of not offending now. Their responses are given in Table 8.3 and Table 8.4.

Table 8.3: Advantages of stopping offending

Advantages of stopping offending	Male (n=10)	Female (n=18)	Total (n=28)
<i>Practical</i>			
No [police] hassle/paranoia	4	9	13
Stay out of prison	3	6	9
No court cases	2	2	4
Better job prospects	1	2	3
Better health/wellbeing	2	1	3
<i>Practical: sub-total</i>	12	20	32
<i>Personal</i>			
Control/autonomy/freedom	3	7	10
Pride in my house	-	2	2
Can lead a normal life	-	2	2
<i>Personal: sub-total</i>	3	11	14
<i>Relational</i>			
Better relationship with family/child/partner	3	6	9
Reputation	4	5	9
<i>Relational: sub-total</i>	7	11	18
<i>Monetary</i>			
'Honest money'	2	4	6

Practical advantages

Four of the 10 men and nine of the 18 women cited the advantage of no longer being a focus for police attention and of no longer being 'paranoid' about being 'hassled' by the

police. This was the most important practical advantage of not offending followed by the advantage of not being imprisoned again: 'Well you're not curtain twitching, you're not looking over your shoulder. Look at the grey hair I've got and I'm only 28. Gee whizz, man!' (Nick, 28); 'Not having to worry about anything, about the police coming to the door. Nobody can come to me now and say 'you've done this' because I've not done nothing' (Sarah, 27).

I'm ultra feared of going inside. I mean, when you're walking through the town, you can put your finger up and say 'come and search us if you want' ... I'm not doing it any more [but the police] choose not to believe that and they choose just to keep tarring me with that same brush (Helen, 20).

I don't need to keep watching my back. I don't need to keep my eyes open, like when the police pass. I don't need to keep watching and see where they're going. I can just ignore them, you know, and not bother about them (Harry, 26).

Women, in particular, saw avoidance of imprisonment as an advantage of not offending now, not only because of a fear of being within a prison environment, but also because it would restrict their freedom, their access to their children and their ability to maintain a house of their own: 'I don't want to lose my house. I don't want to go to prison. I'm basically getting too old for it. I've got my freedom and I wouldn't like to lose that' (Carol, 29).

Personal advantages

Three men and seven women spoke of the personal gains of not offending in terms of being in control of their lives and having the freedom to be 'normal': 'Being free. It's, like, no worry. I don't have to be on edge ... It's good just being free' (Yvonne, 25).

... being able to get a job, then I'll live my life ... I've got a lot more control over what I do. I've got a lot more control where I go, who I speak to, you know (Pete, 19).

It starts to feel good, the fact that you're just a normal, everyday person with a normal job... and normal money coming in... I can just do everyday life things that ordinary people do (Theresa, 33).

This feeling of being in control, free and 'normal' highlights this sample's overall desire for conventionality and stability in their lives.

Relational advantages

Improvements in relationships, either with family, partners or their own children, alongside staying out of prison, were equal second in these respondents' lists of advantages of no longer offending. Three men and six women mentioned improved or renewed relationships as advantages to them:

[Researcher: What are the advantages of not offending now?] My son, my job, things like that. I've got my family ... I don't miss it. I'm quite glad that I'm away from it and I'm earning money and supporting my family with honest money, know what I mean (Frank, 22).

I've got to think about what my family want and what I want. Do I want to go to jail all my life? No. Do I want my mother and father to come and visit me in jail? No. So if I stop offending, they won't come and see me in prison because I won't be there (Owen, 18).

Improving one's self-respect and self-worth were seen as advantages of not offending. Certain responses illustrated the need that many of the sample had for the praise and encouragement of family members or non-offending partners or friends. They felt they had achieved a lot by stopping offending and benefited from the positive reaction and

encouragement of others. This came across strongly in what they said about not offending now: 'You get respect... I feel proud because you're not committing offences. You're not letting people down' (Owen, 18); ' People don't look down their noses at you anymore cos they don't see you as a hooligan. It sort of gives you a bit sort of respect' (Martin, 24).

I don't feel like scum anymore... [I] feel worth something now. I can make something of myself now. Get on with my life. I want to have babies and I want to get married. I just want all the normal things in life and I feel now that I'm grown up a wee bit and my head's more clearer. I've got a lot of loss of memory with drugs and I've still got a lot of very bad depressions but I've sort of got my family back a wee bit. I don't want to ever lose that, it's so sad (Nina, 23).

This developing feeling of interdependence, social identity and empathy amongst the respondents in relation to people in their lives other than their peers is seen as an important factor in aiding desistance.

Monetary advantages

Many of these young people expressed a sense of pride of having what one young man described as 'honest money' since stopping offending: 'You don't need to steal when you're working... I prefer working' (Rory, 23); 'Being able to walk into a shop without stealing something... I go in and *buy* it... I like paying for my ain things. I like going out shopping and buying clothes' (Avril, 18).

I can hold my head up high. I'm not ashamed of myself. I've got more self-worth now... I've worked a week for my money, my money's mine to spend, the stuff I buy [my son] isn't stuff that I've stolen... He never wanted for anything, but... I feel better now buying him something... Seeing my mum happy, proud (Gillian, 29).

When asked whether there were any disadvantages of stopping offending, the vast majority of respondents felt that there were no disadvantages. However, hypothetically some could think of disadvantages – on the whole monetary - but stressed that these did not outweigh their determination to remain offence-free in the future.

Table 8.4: Disadvantages of stopping offending

Disadvantages of not offending now	Male (n=10)	Female (n=18)	Total (n=28)
None	8	14	22
<i>Monetary</i>			
Miss the money	3	4	7
Miss the clothes	-	2	2
<i>Personal</i>			
Miss the buzz	-	2	2

Monetary disadvantages

The lack of money was the most commonly cited disadvantage to not offending, although this was only pertinent to those whose offending had been for financial gain in the past and had been successful in that respect: ‘Well money. But that doesn’t bother me at all. *[Researcher - So you don’t miss the money?]* No. Well, I miss it but [laughs], everybody would!’ (Marie, 21); ‘The clothes I used to get off credit cards, I miss them. Aye... the money was good. The money was good and I used to get all my clothes and all these designer jackets and all that’ (Vicky, 27).

One woman, however, somewhat resented the fact that she had to pay for such items now rather than shoplift them:

[I miss] not having any of the things that I could have had. You know, walk into a shop and grab any clothes you wanted. I had as much clothes as I wanted... and

the good make-up, everything. I'm having to buy it now. When you've stole all that time. Like paying £10 for mascara, which I think is ridiculous. I wouldn't dream of paying for that and I actually bought a foundation that was £7. I cringed and I was sitting looking at it and thinking 'I could just lift that in my bag' but I thought 'no'. I bought it, paid for it, and that was it. It's horrible paying for toothpaste and shite (Helen, 20).

Craine (1997) also suggests that offending for monetary gain becomes as much a virtue amongst one's peers as it is a vice within the wider society: 'The ability to reap high rewards for the minimum of effort provided status and self-worth within the subcultural milieu'. Thus, to give up not only the money, but also the status, requires a great deal of effort on the part of those young people with few alternative means of cultural identity. Nevertheless, it would seem, contrary to cultural criminological theories of offending, that youth culture *per se* does eventually become a secondary source of identity in the desistance phase, when aspirations towards conformity with the parent culture develop – for example, through having a home of one's own or gainful employment. Just as Brake (1985) suggests that young people in subcultural activities play off their individual worlds against that of the wider society, so too, in the process of entering an adult-oriented cultural milieu, young people may reject previous affinities to a youth-oriented and non-conformist subculture.

Personal disadvantages

For those whose offending was not for material gain, there were no real disadvantages in stopping, apart from losing the excitement. For some, the buzz from offending was sometimes seen as difficult to shake off: '... when you're shoplifting you get a wee buzz. I sometimes miss that' (Sarah, 27); 'I miss the buzz, being honest with myself, I

suppose I do' (Vicky, 27). Both these women had also cited the 'buzz' as an advantage to starting offending.

However, several respondents implied that they had gradually become used to the changed lifestyle since giving up offending and that it was easier to cope with the disadvantages as time went by:

... If you'd asked me that a couple of years ago, I would have said money [was a disadvantage]. Now I'm used to even being on the dole, having money then, at least being able to deal with that, you know. Working sort of round it... I really did miss that money at first. Now I don't miss it at all really. I've got used to getting by (Harry, 26).

Sustaining desistance

The respondents who suggested they had stopped offending were asked what might happen in their lives to make them start again in the future. The most common response from the women was that if they were to lose their children for whatever reason (especially if their children were taken into care), this would probably lessen their resolve to remain offence-free. One of the women's strongest influences to stopping offending had been their responsibilities towards their children, and so it is perhaps not surprising that if the children were no longer with their mothers, then the latter may have little reason *not* to offend. Two women also feared that losing a partner or parent would start them offending again. The majority of the female respondents suggested that they would lose contact with, or the love and trust of, their families (notably their parents, their partners and their children) if they were to re-offend. All these female respondents suggested that it would be drugs or alcohol that they would initially fall back on, but that funding such a habit would eventually lead to offending. Suffering

depression or continued physical, emotional or sexual abuse and having a methadone prescription stopped were also cited as obstacles to remaining offence-free: 'If my kids got took away. If they ever got took off us, then I would just go right off the rails and I would be away. That's it' (Helen, 20); 'If I get struck off my methadone. That is the only thing that would make me start offending, if I was to get cut off... I'd start back on drugs' (Marie, 21).

What would really push us over the edge would be to lose this case [applying for custody of her son]. That's what I'm scared of... I think I would probably start with the drugs and then it would turn into offending again (Sarah, 27).

Many of those who had stopped before in the past suggested that drugs, drug-taking partners or a lack of money or employment were the impetus to them starting again. Certainly, probationers interviewed in a study by Farrall (2002) suggested that drugs and alcohol were the most likely obstacle to remaining offence-free.

However, four of the 10 men and six of the 18 women suggested that nothing would make them start offending again in the future:

Researcher: What might happen to make you start again in the future?

Respondent: Nothing at all.

Researcher: Worst possible scenario?

Respondent: Even the worst possible scenario, not a frigging hope in hell I'm starting offending again. I want to live my life now.

Researcher: So you wouldn't get back into drink and drugs in a big way?

Respondent: Well, probably. I might. I might go on a wee bender every now and again with drink or with drugs, but there's no way I'm getting hooked properly, know what I mean (Pete, 19).

I would never take drugs again. I couldn't put [my daughter's] life in jeopardy... I'm too strong now, I couldn't... I couldn't go back down that road. I hit rock bottom and I mean rock bottom and I would never go there for nothing in the world... Nothing. And I'm positive about that... I've been through a lot, definitely, I've been through a lot to come off it and it's been really hard... Oh God, it's been a long struggle to get to where I am (Vicky, 27).

Nevertheless, however adamant they appeared that nothing would influence them to start offending again, some of the women tempered this with the need to adequately provide for their children:

I just couldn't go back. I couldn't. I couldn't go back to that. Start to shoplift to feed the habit. I suppose, we were just talking about it, me and my friend, about two weeks ago – if, say, maybe I had a couple of [children] and things were really tough and I had not a penny, maybe I would say 'right, well I'm going to have to do something here to get money', shoplift or – I mean, I think that's as far as I would go, would be shoplifting. [*Researcher: To feed the kids?*] Aye, but not to, not to feed the habit (Bernadette, 23).

Cornish and Clarke (1985) have identified a certain 'readiness' in offenders to return to crime should the need arise or should circumstances justify it. If asked, individuals will doubtless come up with a 'worst case scenario', as they did in this study amongst others (see, for example, Burnett, 2003). Burnett (2003) identified ambivalence and uncertainty amongst her sample of property offenders, where some suggested that if the circumstances suggested they would not be caught, they may be tempted to re-offend, whilst others suggested that sudden hardship or the denial of conventional opportunities might tip the balance in favour of re-offending. However, the majority of these respondents were satisfied with their current lifestyles and optimistic about achieving future goals, such as finding employment (26 respondents), getting their own house (17 respondents) and having a settled relationship (14 respondents).

When asked what they had to lose by starting to offend again, the majority cited relational rather than material factors, especially the young women, with 13 women compared to five men citing family or parents and 14 women compared to 3 men citing their children. However, there was more of a gender balance between those who cited

their partner or their freedom (through incarceration). Only three men in the total sample felt they had nothing to lose by re-offending, but they felt they had nothing of significance in their lives in the first place: 'When I get out [of prison]? I've nothing... I've no house, no kids, nothing' (Len, 26). However, Leibrich (1993) argues that it is not so much material possessions that deter people from re-offending but the personal values they hold and their changed attitude to those around them.

DISCUSSION

Recent research on desistance highlights a change of peer group, a sense of direction and 'settling down' as factors associated with desistance (e.g., Graham & Bowling, 1995; Jamieson et al., 1999). McIvor & Barry (1998a; 1998b) also found desistance came with motivation to stop, a desire to avoid incarceration, the impact on one's family, positive relationships, employment and education opportunities and a feeling of getting older.

Whilst none of the desisters mentioned 'growing up' as a specific reason for stopping offending, this justification received prominence in many of the sample's reasons why *other* young people stopped offending in their early twenties. These responses support the desistance literature (Rutherford, 1986; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Moffitt, 1993) which suggests that the most common explanation for desistance is that young people 'grow out of' crime or 'grow up':

I think when you go through your 20s, you go into a different stage. You know how your life goes through all these stages... your teens – you're a bit young and stupid, but in your 20s you start to think a wee bit more about life and the person who you are, trying to get a wee bit of identity yourself and trying to better yourself in some way - I mean, trying to get more intelligent (Vicky, 27).

Alec, 28, summed up the opinion of many when he said: 'I wouldn't say I grew out of it. I realised I had to get out of it'. Realization was a factor often mentioned in their responses to why young people stopped offending, that young people become more aware of the pitfalls of offending or want to be more conventional or 'settle down': 'I really think that's when people are peaking, growing up, getting to the adult stage... [You stop] because of things in your life. Different things make them realise they can't carry on like that' (Cathy, 23); 'Maybe they've realised it's not worth it. Or something's better – like me. I've got something better that I thought I never could have – a good man, a lovely house, a nice life, (Yvonne, 25); 'you're just starting to realise, you know, maybe it's not all worth it. It's time to settle down. Staying off alcohol, staying off drugs, finding the right person' (John, 23).

I think they just get old enough to realise it's just a nuisance. I've got a huge record and my life doesn't feel as though it's mine anymore because I'm facing the threat of the police on my back, somebody looking for you, somebody in a wig deciding what's right for you and what's not right for you (Martin, 24).

Nevertheless, their explanations regarding 'growing up' suggest maturation and adulthood rather than age *per se*. Whilst the effect of the 'hassle factor' connected with offending was strong for many respondents, the key motivating force for desisting - or wanting to desist - came from the practical, cognitive factors of realization and reassessment. Twenty-eight of the sample of 40 implied that both they themselves and other young people who stop offending were indeed getting older or 'growing up', suggesting that offending is a 'childhood' or youthful activity. However, rarely was this ageing process seen as the only factor influencing desistance. There was always an additional catalyst, whether this be a change of attitude or a change of circumstance:

I've grown up... My attitude's totally changed. I mean, I've grown up a lot since I came in here [prison]. Before I was like, em, mentally immature... If I had a problem with anybody or an argument, I would solve it with my fist because I could handle myself... that's not the way to do it like. That just doesn't solve anything. That makes matters worse (Nick, 28).

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored young people's perceptions of why they stop offending, what factors influence them and what the implications are for them of making that decision to desist from crime. As was seen in the introductory quotation to this chapter, Farrington (1997) suggests that criminal careers can only truly be analysed once an offender has desisted from such behaviour over a lengthy period of time. Studying criminal careers suggests a longitudinal, developmental approach to offending behaviour that the present research had neither the capacity nor the time to adopt. Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter has been on young people's perceptions of stopping offending, and in that respect, their stories must be taken at face value.

The data from this study suggest that there is no obvious turning point or time when an offender moves from the maintenance to the desistance stage. As other authors have suggested, it can be a cyclical or zig-zagging path towards eventual desistance. However, what was interesting about this sample's perceptions of desistance was the fact that it was very much their decision to stop, albeit with the help and encouragement of significant others or changed circumstances. The need for friends, attention and an identity in their younger lives had encouraged them to experiment with offending. The increasing success of offending in terms of gaining both financial, personal and social benefits, had encouraged them to continue offending for several years through adolescence and into early adulthood. For many their earlier experimentation with

offending often resulted in imprisonment, a distancing from family and friends and stigmatization in their communities. It was the losses and the stigma attached to offending, the growing realization of the adverse effects these might have on their futures and support and opportunities offered by significant others in their lives which eventually gave many of these young people the impetus to desist from offending.

The two key factors associated with desistance for these young people tended to be practical or relational: that is, criminal justice system ‘fatigue’ or because of relationships with, or the support of, family, friends and significant others. Whilst many of these factors support the theoretical evidence on desistance, there are certain anomalies. For example, the majority of the sample managed to stop offending even though they were neither in a stable relationship nor in employment. Many reasons given for stopping offending were reactive or resulting from adverse experiences rather than proactive or resulting from encouragement or practical opportunities. The majority of these respondents suggested that they made an active decision to stop offending because of the loss of control in their lives resulting from the restrictions placed on them by their reputation and lifestyle. Whilst they may have drifted *into* offending in childhood, their agency and determination to leave such a lifestyle in early adulthood was particularly strong, given that this decision meant giving up something that they were accustomed to, successful in or addicted to. There were few, if any, ‘pull’ factors involved, and this made their resolve all the more powerful. This lack of positive incentives for desistance to occur – and more importantly, to be sustained – is discussed in greater depth in the following chapters which draw together the common factors between youth transitions and the three phases of onset, maintenance and desistance. It

is argued that not only can these common threads help to explain the different stages through which young people traverse as they move towards adulthood but also goes some way to identifying the factors which influence their propensity or otherwise to offend during this process.

CHAPTER 9: THE CONCEPTS OF CAPITAL

I'd love to be able to go back until I was like about seven – six or seven... I wouldn't take drugs at such an early age. I wouldn't offend. I'd try and be myself with people... instead of being somebody different... I was playing a role that I thought would fit in but it didn't (Pete, 19).

INTRODUCTION

In concluding Chapter 2, it was suggested that the criminological literature to date did not adequately distinguish between the two phases of onset and maintenance of offending and could not adequately account for the generally transient and youthful nature of offending. It also tended to focus on the agency of the individual rather than on the structure of society and could not readily explain the discrepancies between men's and women's offending. Likewise, in concluding Chapter 3, it was argued that the desistance literature emphasised the agency of the individual, focused on men rather than women and could not readily explain the 'age-crime curve', which suggests a process of change over time. Chapter 4, therefore, turned to the literature on youth transitions as a means of placing youth offending within a broader socio-legal and transitional context. The gaps in these sets of criminological literature, and perhaps more importantly, the lack of complementarity between them have been highlighted by the findings in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. These findings suggest a common thread between the 'powerlessness' of youth in transition and the 'powerfulness' seen to be gained by young people from offending, a thread which existing criminological literature does not fully explore. As a result of the commonalities emerging from the young people's experiences and views, I turned to the work of Pierre Bourdieu, notably his concepts of capital. Bourdieu's theory of social practice and his concepts of capital (1986, 1989,

1990, 1991) were seen as a useful, albeit imprecise heuristic device (Jenkins, 2003, pers. comm) for exploring this thread further, and it is to this analysis of capital that I now wish to turn.

BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF SOCIAL PRACTICE

Bourdieu is principally interested in the *relational* context of everyday actions and perceptions: the struggle for identification and recognition (Bourdieu, 1989; May, 1996), a major resource for which is capital. Bourdieu attempts to bridge the gap in social theory between agency and structure, without losing the 'major contribution of the structuralist legacy to social science' (May, 1996: 125). The disciplines contained within the social sciences have long argued that there is a dichotomy between what Callinicos (1999: 79) has described as 'the anti-humanist dissolution of the subject practised by structuralism and post-structuralism... [and] the reduction of social structures to emanations of individual subjectivity common to both Rational Choice Theory and the phenomenological tradition'. Bourdieu (1990) suggests that individual and collective constructions of the social world are not developed in a vacuum but are reproduced by, and themselves reproduce, social structures and are thus subjected to structural constraints. There is a constant interplay between structural constraints and individual choice, and the importance of time, space, agency and the individual's capacity to change are all implicated in the construction and reconstruction of the social world (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu's theory of social practice (1986) stresses personal networks and focuses as much on agency and sociability as on structure and institutionalization as well as on

power relationships and the inevitability of the unequal distribution of capital amongst different groups and societies. Bourdieu argues that throughout their lives, individuals accrue capital - social, cultural, economic and symbolic - through their social practice (Bourdieu, 1984). These forms of capital, as utilised by Bourdieu, are described in more detail below.

Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (1997: 51) as:

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit.

In other words, social capital is valued relations with significant others and is generated through relationships which in turn bring resources from networks and group membership. To Bourdieu, social capital includes not only social networks but also ‘sociability’ – ‘a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed’ (1986: 250). Sociability links to the skills and dispositions which enable social networks to be used constructively. Allatt (1993) sees sociability as a learnt resource from one generation to the next. In her study of middle-class families, she found social capital as a crucial form of extending privilege between generations:

... not only did parents possess social capital vested in the social networks they used on behalf of their children, but parents also fostered in the young the skills necessary for the creation of their own social capital – sociability and an understanding of the mechanisms of social networking (Allatt, 1993: 143).

Economic capital is the financial means to not only the necessities but also the luxuries of everyday living, including inheritance, income and assets. Bourdieu utilises the concept of economics in the Western Marxist tradition (Fowler, 2000) in that he emphasises the importance of economic power in the market place. Bourdieu stresses the dominance of economic capital because such capital can be transmitted, preserved and rationally managed (Bourdieu, 1990). However, it would seem that economic capital is not readily attainable for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Indeed, economic capital is not a major source of capital for young people generally, given their transient status between childhood and adulthood, their confinement to full-time education and their resulting segregation from the adult labour market, although it is acknowledged that young people from middle class backgrounds will be able to draw readily on the economic and other capitals accruing to their families. However, it could be argued that for young people who have few responsibilities or commitments, economic capital may bring short-term status rather than longer-term financial security. However, for those offenders who commit crime as a means of earning a living, which Stewart et al. (1994: 19) refer to as ‘professional’ offenders, a successful criminal career may be consciously chosen as a viable alternative source of economic capital to employment.

Cultural capital is legitimate competence or status and comes from knowledge of one’s cultural identity in the form of art and education in particular: ‘language use, manners and orientations/dispositions... and formal qualifications’ according to Jenkins (1992: 116). It exists in three forms – in an embodied state of long-lasting dispositions of mind and body (e.g., styles and modes of presentation and identity); in an objectified

state, as in cultural goods; and in an institutionalised state, through educational and other qualifications or status. Allatt (1993: 143) also includes ‘a sense of responsibility and individualism’ in her account of cultural capital and Skeggs (1997) suggests that cultural capital, as well as being class-based, can also be gendered, albeit for women this may take the form of tactical rather than strategic power⁴⁰ based predominantly on the caring role or body image. To Bourdieu, cultural capital is not easily acquired or transmitted and is seen as an established form of capital that only truly gains legitimacy over time and via institutionalised or objectified means. It does not lend itself readily, therefore, to the relatively short (in terms of the life cycle) transition period between childhood and adulthood. However, the concept of cultural capital is increasingly being adopted in relation to the commodification of youth and young people’s unique cultural identities (MacRae, 2002; Skeggs, 1997; Thornton, 1995).

Symbolic capital, to Bourdieu, is an overarching resource that brings prestige and honour gained from the collective, legitimate and recognised culmination of the other three forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1989): ‘Capital has to be regarded as legitimate before it can be capitalized upon’ (Skeggs, 1997: 8). Symbolic capital is ‘the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition’ (Bourdieu: 1989: 23), and is primarily accrued through: ‘services, gifts, attention, care, affection’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 128).

It is, in effect, the ‘recognition’ received from a group:

⁴⁰ De Certeau (1988) sees strategies as having institutional backing, whereas tactics ‘have no institutional location and cannot capitalize on the advantages of such positioning... tactics constantly manipulate events to turn them into opportunities... They are determined by the absence of power just as strategy is organized by the postulation of power’ (quoted in Skeggs, 1997: 10).

... struggles for recognition are a fundamental dimension of social life and... what is at stake in them is the accumulation of a particular form of capital, honour in the sense of reputation and prestige, and... there is, therefore, a specific logic behind the accumulation of symbolic capital, as capital founded on cognition [*connaissance*] and recognition [*reconnaissance*] (Bourdieu, 1990: 22, emphasis in original).

However, Bourdieu argues that symbolic capital is basically unstable in comparison with economic capital: 'being based on reputation, opinion and representation... [it] can be destroyed by suspicion and criticism, and is particularly difficult to transmit and to objectify' (Bourdieu, 1990: 93).

Field, habitus and practice

In an attempt to bridge the gap between structure and agency, Bourdieu utilises three key underlying concepts in his theory of social practice, namely field (objectivity), habitus (subjectivity) and practice (interaction).

Field

Jenkins (1992: 85) defines a field as 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined... a structured system of social positions'. Fields are the site of struggles between holders of capital and are constituted by the distribution of different types of capital or power within them:

... each field prescribes its particular values and possesses its own regulative principles. These principles delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the position they occupy in that space, either to change or to preserve its boundaries and form... a field is a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), *a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity*... [and] simultaneously a *space of conflict and competition* (Wacquant, 1992: 16-17, emphasis in original).

In other words, fields reflect the ‘unequal distribution of capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 46), and where there is a discrepancy between fields, likewise there may be a divided habitus. Nevertheless, individuals gain knowledge and experience through such fields (e.g., the fields of education, language, leisure, employment, etc), and this historical knowledge – or past - becomes part of their ‘habitus’, which is conditioned by the field ‘to the extent that [the field] provides for its realization’ (May, 1996: 128).

Habitus

Habitus is ‘an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted’ (Jenkins, 1992: 74). Habitus is both ‘an internalization of reality’ and, through practice, ‘an externalization of self as constituted through past experience’ (Haugaard, 2002: 225). Habitus is the unconscious shaping of actions and interactions and can change over time, albeit to a limited extent (Jenkins, 1992; Wacquant, 1992). The habitus bridges the gap between history and sociology in that it is ‘history embodied in human beings’ (May, 1996: 126). However, external circumstances interplay with individual practice to create expectations and aspirations; individuals cannot of themselves influence how or when external circumstances change. This makes habitus seem like a self-fulfilling prophecy, and hence lays Bourdieu open to the criticism of being overly deterministic (Jenkins, 1992). The alternative, to Bourdieu, is for individuals to try to move up the social ladder via increased status or capital accumulation. Status is valued because it is desired, but in desiring it, individuals exacerbate the domination and power held over them, instead merely reinforcing such domination as a result: ‘the act of raising expectations towards social mobility is, ironically, to validate the system of hierarchy’ (Haugaard, 2002: 226).

Practice

Practice, to Bourdieu, is the conscious result of the interplay between habitus and field. Whilst practice is often unquestioned - as interaction, behaviour or everyday life - Bourdieu attempts to construct a theoretical model of social practice (Jenkins, 1992). Social practice is not merely what people say and do, but why, when and where they say and do it. Practice is located in time and space and is neither totally deliberate nor without purpose. The interplay between the habitus (agency or subjectivity) and the field (structure or objectivity) is one of 'ontological complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 128), whereby there is a congruence between the individual and his/her social world that makes the latter seem self-evident and thus acceptable to the individual.

The methods by which individuals accrue capital within their practice are predominantly strategic. To Bourdieu, strategies are an important link between fields, habitus and practice, even though the habitus is mainly made up of 'tacit' knowledge. Whereas Giddens (1984) adopts the concept of 'rules' in relation to everyday practice, Bourdieu uses 'strategies' as a tool to locate practice within the habitus, or in one's own experience of reality. To Bourdieu, strategies are less rigid and circumscribed than rules, and adopting strategies within practice 'gives room to both the freedom and spontaneity yet also the restriction and limitation that is characteristic of human interaction... Strategies allow for a sense of generativity⁴¹ rather than a set of fixed, finite rules' (Emond, 2000: 188-9).

⁴¹ 'Generativity' in this sense is used to denote a production and re-production of rules, and should not be confused with 'generativity' as in caring for others as denoted by Maruna (2001) (see Chapter 10).

Strategising includes rational calculation (tempered by the constraints of limited resources) and the achievement of objectives in the medium to long term (Jenkins, 1992). However, strategising is not only about rational choice but incorporates the needs/expectations of significant others. Bourdieu describes it as ‘a feel for the game: a practical sense’ which emanates from the habitus (Fowler, 2000: 77).

The durability and legitimacy of capital

The concepts of durability and legitimacy are crucial to an understanding of the effects of capital accumulation on the individual or group in society and will be discussed further in Chapter 10. Meantime, they are described briefly below in relation to the significance of capital accumulation for young people in transition.

Durability

Capital of whatever kind takes time and effort to accumulate and to transmit. Its potential for profit and reproduction is therefore, through time, dependent on the structure, dynamics and constraints of the social world (Bourdieu, 1986). Durability is an important element in Bourdieu’s concept of capital. He describes social capital as being a ‘durable network’ (1997: 51) and recognition as being a ‘durable feeling’ (1998: 102). However, whilst social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital are readily identifiable forms of *potential* power for young people, it is argued here that for working class youth in particular, they are not durable, not least because they are not recognised as legitimate by the wider society as a result of the paucity of opportunities available to many working class young people in transition.

It could be argued, therefore, that capital takes on a less durable profile in relation to young people who are generally seen as *in transition*. Young people, by dint of their status as ‘transitional beings’ (Turner, 1967: 98) and especially those from working class backgrounds, tend to have few, if any, fixed or permanent obligations towards, responsibilities for, or expectations of, gaining capital beyond their immediate environment of friends and family. Durability of capital, along with collective legitimacy (see below) is one of the crucial elements that is missing within the childhood and youth phases, partly because of young people’s liminal state both economically and socially, but also because they are not seen as full citizens with the longer-term obligations, independence and responsibilities associated with adulthood (Jones, 1995). Turner (1967: 100), in describing the ‘liminal phase’ – albeit in relation to primitive societies but arguably of relevance in modern society - has identified equality as being a strong factor in relationships between individuals in transition: ‘The liminal group is a community or comity of comrades’. Turner argues that this equality is based on a negation, amongst young people in transition, of the factors which characterise status in society:

transitional beings... *have* nothing. They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship, position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows (Turner, 1967: 98-99, emphasis in original).

Legitimacy

Within legal circles, the word ‘legitimacy’ refers to justice, fairness and statutory authority (Matza, 1964; Morrison, 1995; Tyler, 1990). Tyler suggests that legitimacy (and hence ‘normative compliance’) is achieved when ‘one feels that the authority

enforcing the law has the right to dictate behaviour' (1990: 4). Thus, legitimacy can be expressed as an obligation to obey a given law or as support for the person[s] in authority making the law. Weber (1930) identifies three types of legitimacy: traditional (the sanctity of age-old rules and powers); legal (rationally established authority) and charismatic (considered and treated as exceptional authority) (cited in Morrison, 1995).

However, Bourdieu's definition of legitimacy is more sociological than legal and refers more to recognition and acceptance than to authority and compliance. Sennett & Cobb (1972: 265) suggest that legitimacy is related to 'social rights': 'the source of social legitimacy in capitalist society comes primarily from what a person produces... and who he essentially *is*' (ibid: 267-8, emphasis in original). It is one's identity rather than what one produces that is the key to Bourdieu's understanding of legitimacy. Bourdieu defines 'legitimacy' as '[A]n institution, action or usage which is dominant, but not recognised as such, that is to say, which is tacitly accepted' (Bourdieu, 1984: 110). In other words, capital of whatever form is legitimate or 'symbolic' only in an implied sense. McClelland (1975) suggests that if one acts on behalf of others, it is usually considered legitimate, but illegitimate if one acts on behalf of oneself, and that legitimacy is closely correlated with how power is exercised. The concept of legitimacy is important in the gaining and imposition of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital accrues when one's actions or power are acknowledged, legitimated and, hence, finally recognised. Whilst informal acknowledgement and recognition can happen within and between groups, however marginalised, formal acknowledgement and recognition by the state (in the form of reports, nominations or qualifications) 'tend to have a universal value on all markets' (ibid: 136). Symbolic capital is, therefore, less effective in a

‘restricted market’ (Fowler, 2000: 41) where official legitimation is unlikely outwith the ‘mainstream’. The nation state ‘is the site par excellence of the concentration and exercise of symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 47). Whilst Adams (2003) has described legitimacy as a well-defined social function and position in society, Cloward and Ohlin (1961) argue that legitimacy can be subjectively defined, but is manifest in an acceptance of the rules by the group members. [These authors were referring to a delinquent subculture].

Whilst Bourdieu infers that the accumulation of symbolic capital requires both durability and *official* legitimacy within the wider society, I argue that for young people in transition, in the possible absence of other forms of capital, symbolic capital is also a viable and vital source of identity, status, recognition, reputation and power within the friendship group and although not necessarily durable, can accrue once legitimated by other young people in the short term rather than by the wider society in the long term. Such ‘informal’ legitimation could offer children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds improved access to continuity and recognition in an otherwise decompartmentalised and potentially unstable set of transitional experiences and networks.

CAPITAL ACCUMULATION IN TRANSITION

It is acknowledged here that the terms ‘childhood’, ‘youth’ and ‘adulthood’ are relative, culturally specific and socially constructed. As such, they have limited value other than that they constitute age-related categories that seem to be closely correlated with the

process of onset, maintenance and desistance and are used here in the absence meantime of any more appropriate marker of transition.

Because offending could be seen as a process of change for young people in transition, a more dynamic theoretical approach is required which incorporates both time and space. The following analysis, therefore, aims to broaden the academic context in which offending behaviour takes place, combining the criminological literature, Bourdieu's approach to social practice and the phases of youth transition.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this second stage of analysis is based on an appropriation of various of Bourdieu's concepts in order to demonstrate the possible relationship between the phases of offending and those of transition. I would argue, for example, that Bourdieu's concept of field could apply equally to the constructs of childhood, youth and adulthood, in that these phases of transition are 'a structured system of social positions' (Jenkins, 1992: 85), embedded in the age- and status-determined power relations within society. Bourdieu (1986: 46) suggests that the field reflects an 'unequal distribution of capital'. As will be seen from the following analysis, the forms, sources and levels of capital accumulation vary between each phase of transition, depending on the value placed on such capital by both the holders of it and those significant others who contribute towards, or restrict, its accumulation. Bourdieu also suggests that the habitus may become torn between two or more fields, resulting in the possibility of heterodoxy or orthodoxy (May, 1996) – respectively, an undermining or an acceptance of the status quo. Offending behaviour in childhood and youth could be argued to be a manifestation of heterodoxy, whilst desistance in adulthood could be argued to be a manifestation of orthodoxy, based on a redistribution of capital. The

internalization of new norms and values by young people, their progression through the fields of transition and the accumulation of different and extended forms of capital in adulthood can enable the modification of the habitus and the eventual orthodoxy of practice.

Table 9.1 demonstrates the various ways in which young people more generally can accumulate capital *through conventional means*, whilst still acknowledging that capital can also be accumulated through offending. These conventional sources of capital for young people in transition are deduced both from Bourdieu's definitions of each type of capital and from the literature on youth transitions (for example, Coles, 1995; Jones, 1995) and youth culture (Brake, 1985; Miles, 2000; Willis, 1990). Such sources of capital are pertinent, but not necessarily available, to *all* young people, depending on the ease with which they can make the transition to adulthood, both from an agency and a structural perspective.

Table 9.1: Potential sources of conventional capital accumulation for young people

Capital	Onset/childhood	Maintenance/youth	Desistance/adulthood
Social	Family, friends	Friends, relationships	Family, wider social networks
Economic	Family income	Personal income	Employment
Cultural	Schooling	Consumption, acquisition of skills and qualifications	Further education
Symbolic	Family, friends, dependence	Friends, reputation, independence	Family, interdependence

The following analysis is based on the young people's experiences, views and aspirations, as noted in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Case study material is drawn upon to illustrate the linkages between offending and transition and the relevance of capital. The

case studies were chosen because they represent a cross-section of the overall sample in terms of their age and length of offending history. They also represent two ends of the spectrum in terms of desistance and persistence, in order to compare the varying levels of capital accumulation in the transition to adulthood and, in Chapter 10, to explore their levels of capital expenditure. Each respondent's classification of himself/herself as 'persister' or 'desister' at the time of interview is acknowledged at the start of each case study.

Capital accumulation in the onset phase

In childhood, most of the young people's sources of social capital came from family and friends, although the levels of stability within their family and friendship groups varied dramatically. Many of these young people suggested that their family upbringings had *not* been a source of support or encouragement for them, resulting in them often turning to friends for company and social identity.

Pete, 19, desister

Pete is 19 years old and started offending when he was 10, having moved from a city to a rural community and into a new school, hence a change in his sources of social, cultural and symbolic capital. Because he knew nobody at the school, was depressed following a traumatic earlier childhood, was concerned by his mother's alcoholism and was therefore unhappy at home, he concluded at the age of 10 that offending was a possible means of being placed in care away from his mother. Offending was also a means of gaining social and symbolic capital: *'I was looking for, I suppose in a way, folk to look at me in a different light. For folk to think of me differently - to fit in, in a way... and to be noticed by my mother and stuff, you know, with her alcohol abuse, I*

was always like alone and it was very difficult to like, I don't know, to get on with anyone, you know... I was picked on at school. I tried to keep myself to myself and other folk don't like that and I was an outsider so they went out of their way to do you know, and that was what the main problem was really... I had to make friends because I was alone in a strange countryside village with no one that I knew about me and it was like, how - what can I do? Where am I gonna turn, you know? And to me, [offending] was my only escape'. Pete tried to adapt his habitus in his new environment through gaining the attention of his peers and to 'fit in' as he described it – a source of both social and symbolic capital in an otherwise isolating existence. However, he found that infiltrating this potential social network through offending proved counterproductive: '... it never [got me friends], it put me in a worse position... Folk my own age and that rejecting me, you know. They didn't want anything to do with me and that was the hardest part'.

As was seen in Chapter 6, although many respondents suggested that their childhood experiences had influenced their likelihood of starting offending, either because of a lack of care or attention within the family, latent anger or poverty, the majority also equated starting offending with the desire to be with and impress friends. Lacking the social and symbolic capital that come through respect, responsibility and attention within the family, many of these young people turned to a new circle of potential friends within the school environment. They chose a strategy which they thought fitted with the norm of that environment, namely consumption, experimentation, rebellion, mimicry and assimilation.

Vic, 23, persister

Vic suffered physical abuse from the age of 3 from his stepfather, and was relieved when his mother left his stepfather when Vic was 10. He started stealing at the age of 8, the age when he suggested he started to 'register' what money really meant. However, he said he was the 'black sheep' in the family and was more influenced by the friends he was with at that time: '*... everyone else was doing it... it was just the crowd I was hanging about with*'. He said he was more a follower than a leader and worried that if he did not join in their activities he would be left out or rejected by his friends. He agreed that offending was, therefore, a way to keep friends, a crucial source of social and symbolic capital to him at that time. He also realised that offending could be quite profitable, hence giving him additional economic capital. Although his mother bought him clothes, shoplifting enabled him to get what he wanted when he wanted, rather than when she could afford to buy them, and shoplifting clothes and football kit gave him both symbolic and cultural capital. He said the buzz and fun were also key ingredients in offending at that age: '*Just the buzz of getting away with it. And sort of showing off is a big part of it... saying 'I've more than you'*'. He suggested that many of his friends at that time were in residential care and he calculated that if he got caught, he may have been put into residential care, a further source of economic capital: '*They were getting 350 quid a month or something to get clothes. I thought I would get extra clothes... They were getting taken to the pictures, skiing, things like that... I thought, I want to go to that*'.

As may be remembered from Chapter 6, Vic was conscious of the poverty both of the area in which he lived and within his own family. The fact that he could, and often had to, resort to offending for consumables was, to him, a direct consequence of that poverty.

Many of the young people came from reconstituted or single-parent families and several had experienced periods of being looked after in residential settings. Whilst not implying that such an upbringing precludes one from accumulating capital within the family environment, it nevertheless often results in transient lifestyles or a lack of continuity of care and protection as children, which can have a major impact on one's ability to accumulate capital (Morrow, 2001). Emond (2000: 2), for example, suggests that being looked after has the double stigmatization of restricting contact with parents and of labelling the child as either 'troubled' or 'troublesome'. Whilst the majority spoke of limited access to economic capital in childhood, one source of such capital was on entering the care system, as Vic acknowledged. Being 'looked after' gave one greater access to pocket money and new clothes as well as a social network with which one could readily identify. Bullying at school was also a common phenomenon for these respondents which could have resulted in pressure to conform or to rebel within the friendship group. Many talked of not wanting to be discriminated against by their peers – a major source of capital in childhood, or to be isolated from them.

Derek, 21, persister

Derek suggested he came from a stable family background and that his relationship with his parents, brother and two sisters had always been good. He was one of the few young people in this study who spoke positively about their family background. At the age of

12 when he entered secondary school, he said he started offending (initially shoplifting and housebreaking) to keep in with and impress his friends. At that age he was of below average height, was bullied at school and felt the need to prove himself through the cultural and symbolic capital of being 'macho' and 'hard', traits which were an expected part of the youth culture of the area in which he lived: *'You just wanted to make a name for yourself... I don't know. It's just about bottle. 'I can do it, can you do it?'* *That's what it was like... Well you wanted to offend with them. If you didn't, you'd feel left out... you were in a group and that, and we just all done it. It was just, it's hard to explain. It's just spur of the moment when you're young and a boy, you don't think about it, you just do it'*. The social capital of his family was not enough to protect Derek from the wider environment of the area in which he lived and he was also conscious of the fact that he was not well-off compared with some of his friends. Keeping *in* with them also required keeping *up* with them: *'Well my mum and that never had much money. I was hanging about with a few pals that had money. They always had like a couple of pound and that was a lot in they days. But I mean, your mum and that's got a big family, ken, it's like that... If my friends can buy it, I can get it for nothing, just like that... I just wanted to be in there too. I didn't want to be the odd one out... just reputation... and to show that you can get it for nothing'*. The visibility of his offending with his peers, however, seemed to be more important to him than any utilitarian gain (economic capital) – the *showing* he could get it for nothing, rather than the actuality of getting it for nothing.

Both Derek and Pete were quoted in Chapter 6 as exemplifying the need to conform to peers for personal reasons – in order to gain and maintain friendships in childhood. Friendships were a crucial source of identity, status, affection and respect for many of

these young people as they got older and at a time when they felt the need to distance themselves from their own families in search of a more socially inclusive identity amongst their friendship circles (Greenberg, 1979). Greenberg (1979: 593) also notes that age segregation through education and work essentially cuts young people off from 'the validation for the self' by the wider society and makes them more dependent on their peers. For the women, relationships formed in their early teenage years were also a source of social and symbolic capital, often giving them the love and attention from boyfriends that was otherwise missing in their childhoods.

Laura, 27, desister

Laura started offending on entering secondary school, partly because it gave her money and friends but also because her parents had separated at that point and she moved out of the family home to live with her then-boyfriend who shared a flat with drug addicts. She was working part-time in a shop at the age of 13 from where she stole large quantities of cigarettes which her boyfriend then sold on: *'I made thousands of pounds, you know, stealing from the shop'*. She put much of her vulnerability at that age down to her relationship with her mother, which had not been a source of capital for her as a child: *'If my mum hadn't separated, if my mum had any time for me, you know... I didn't get the help... There was a lot of hatred between me and my mum... I wasn't getting on with my mum. Not feeling loved really'*. The social and symbolic capital of having a boyfriend and the economic capital accruing from her success at offending both gave her the attention which was lacking in her childhood.

Anna, 21, persister

Anna said she started rebelling when she was 14 mainly because her parents were very strict and she had a very poor relationship with her mother: *'[Researcher: What would have helped you.... Around the age of 14?] If my mum and dad had been less possessive and let me do my own thing... If I'd more love. I mean, if my mum and dad showed me love instead of just being strict... If my mum had been a better mother to me'*. This lack of social capital through her family, coupled with a move of family home and bullying at school, resulted in Anna resorting to offending in order to gain and keep friends, even though she described them as *'a really wrong crowd'*. Her boyfriend at the time was into shoplifting to fund a drug habit, and she drifted into a similar lifestyle aged 15. Anna said that the advantages of starting offending were that she got money for drugs, it gave her friends and it was fun, forms of capital hitherto missing in her childhood.

Not only did being 'one of the crowd' bring social networks and sociability, but also the status these young people attained from offending with peers suggested that such social capital was valued and legitimated. The women in particular gained social capital from offending with friends as well as gaining economic, cultural and symbolic capital from the status symbols of youth, for example through shoplifting designer clothes and other items. Skeggs (1997) has argued that a young woman's feminine embodied cultural capital (how she looks to others and feels about herself) is her only 'tradeable' commodity in youth, whereas when she gets older, she may have access to the capital accruing from relationships or motherhood.

Yvonne, 25, desister

Yvonne's mother left her father when Yvonne was 9, and Yvonne did not see her father again. Her mother and the seven children moved to Scotland, causing a break in Yvonne's sources of social and cultural capital in particular. For the first few years things went well for Yvonne, but then her mother started drinking heavily when Yvonne entered her teens, thus restricting her access to social capital: *'... my mum being an alcoholic and then she battered me. She couldn't be bothered. Going with all different men. She just didn't care. She was just going out drinking all the time'*. Yvonne turned to her peers for attention through offending at the age of 13. She also spent some time in care where she received the social, cultural and symbolic capital that was lacking in her earlier childhood: *'I got spoiled when I was in care. I was getting clothes bought for me, I was getting taken to places, but at my mum's, she wasn't caring. She wasn't buying us good clothes, nothing. She never took us anywhere. She never gave us any money or anything'*.

For many, the initial impetus to offending was to form friendships and gain attention. As Yvonne said in the opening quotation to Chapter 6, offending with peers was 'an ego boost' when no one else in her life cared for or about her. Equally, Pete suggested in the opening quotation to this chapter that he was 'playing a role' in order to 'fit in' with friends. Both these quotations highlight the importance in childhood of social capital, however unconventionally acquired that capital might be.

Cultural capital was mainly gained through legitimate means, however, for example from encouragement at school, whilst some mentioned positive relationships with teachers in residential schools which facilitated a greater propensity to study. Two young men spoke highly of their time in residential schools whilst in care: ‘They don’t treat you like shit. They listen to what you’ve got to say’ (Frank, 22); ‘[It was] different from any other school... just the attention, seven to a class... it’s brilliant man... you got treated like, like a young man. Other schools you got treated like an idiot’ (Derek, 21). However, whilst school exclusion, truancy and a disaffection with the school curriculum suggested a lack of cultural capital in terms of qualifications or skills development, rebelling against schooling also enhanced their status, and hence symbolic capital, within the friendship group. Some spoke of truancy as also offering a strategy towards having the time to shoplift: ‘... you’ve got that many orders, you’re skidging school to go in and get [the] stuff’ (Bernadette, 23).

Capital accumulation in the maintenance phase

Throughout the sample, offending behaviour either escalated or remained high in youth, often because such behaviour became entrenched or ‘routine’, an addiction to drugs took over or because it was successful in giving them capital through status, consumables or financial independence. The symbolic capital gained by successful offending increasingly came from having ‘customers’ but as the necessity to offend ‘to order’ took over, offending often became a solitary activity, thus negating the original emphasis on sociability.

Vic, 23, persister

Vic's main reason for continuing to offend in youth was that theft and selling stolen goods was profitable and made him feel a part of his network of friends, hence giving him all four sources of capital. At 15 or 16, he suggested his offending shifted from being a source of social capital to being mainly one of economic capital. However, his offending reduced in his late teens because he was 'sick of' always being imprisoned: *'In 7 years, I've been home a matter of 18 months – one year and a half outside, since I turned 16... As soon as I get out, I'm away doing it again'*. Prison seemed like 'home from home' to him, but did not outweigh the economic capital accruing from offending between periods of incarceration: *'what I can make in 5 minutes, people couldn't make that in a month'*. As he said in relation to the money gained from offending, if he had saved all that he had made through crime: *'[I] would have had plenty money... I would have had my own business if I had kept my money'*. Having 'customers' (social and economic capital), being acknowledged for his skills at offending (cultural capital) and the resultant reputation amongst his peers (symbolic capital) gave Vic a purpose in life and a sense of achievement, however short-lived his periods of living in the community. Although continuing to offend into his mid-twenties, he was getting tired of it, feeling he had been doing it for too long: *'It's not the same as it used to be – it's like a routine now'*. He also knew he was upsetting his mother by continuing to offend: *'She's the only person I really care for a lot'*, suggesting that offending, however successful, was not a lasting or meaningful source of capital.

The young women were more likely to speak of relationships with partners who were also offending, usually for drugs, and this created a dichotomy for many of the women who wanted to support their partner's lifestyle, but did not necessarily want to match their partner's drug habit. Often when a relationship had started out as a source of love and attention, it rapidly became a liability, often resulting in domestic violence, addiction and stigmatization within these women's wider social networks.

Laura, 27, desister

Laura considered that her second boyfriend, whom she met when she was 14 and who was five years older than her, escalated her offending (theft, housebreaking, fraud and assault) and her drug use, even though such a relationship was a crucial source of social and symbolic capital at the time: *'I never saw the money, he always kept the money. He just kept me going on my drugs and bought what I needed'*. As described in Chapter 6, Laura tended to conform to her boyfriend's demands for self-preservation reasons, because she was subjected to physical abuse from him throughout their relationship. However, when Laura left him at the age of 24, she was prescribed alternative medication, having nearly died in hospital through a drug overdose and pneumonia. This was a major turning point for Laura as she was in hospital for five months, which gave her the time and space – and without drugs, the mental capacity - to reassess her situation. She also realised at this point that she could have lost her children (or they could have lost her) through her drug taking, thus denying her a crucial source of social and symbolic capital: *'I just didn't want to hurt them anymore. I knew I had hurt them enough'*.

As was seen in Chapter 8, for Laura the need to maintain good health in order to be with and care for her children was of paramount importance to her. Anna portrayed a similar story.

Anna, 21, persister

Anna became addicted to heroin when she was 18, partly because her then boyfriend (twelve years older than her) was a heroin addict and she had moved with him to a city, hence losing the social capital of her childhood network of friends. She blamed her boyfriend for the fact that she got into harder drugs which resulted in her offending escalating: *'I got forced into it. Basically my boyfriend turned round and said do you love me? I said aye, I love you. He said, if you love me, try this. I said I don't want to. And he said he'd batter me if I didn't... I hated [the prostitution]. I was in tears every time because of him making me do that, but then he used to batter me'*. At the age of 20, following a prison sentence, she decided to leave her boyfriend, move back to her home area and to come off drugs, these decisions being partly influenced by renewed contact with her father. She wanted to prove to the social work department that she was capable of looking after her daughter full-time, but suggested that she would not get custody for at least five years, thus denying her a strong source of social, cultural and symbolic capital.

This growing realization of the social, cultural and symbolic capital accruing through having children was a common phenomenon amongst the women, as both Laura and Anna illustrated. Economic capital also became increasingly important to these young people as they grew older, with many mentioning money as a reason for continuing to offend or for adapting their offending to maximise the economic gains anticipated. In terms of both economic and cultural capital, some of the sample spoke of developing

skills learnt from older peers or from being successful at offending, which increased their likelihood of continuing to offend. Whilst consumption of clothes, leisure, cigarettes and alcohol were important to these young people in youth, many of the sample - most notably the women - required money to also maintain a developing drug habit.

Many of these young people in youth still seemed to feel under pressure from the adverse influence of others, whether this be bullying or encouragement by friends or the demands of a partner, although the latter was more of a problem for the women whereas the influence of friends seemed stronger for the men, as Derek (below) highlights:

Derek, 21, persister

Derek was at a loss to explain why he continued to offend: *'I'm sick of it. You do get sick of it... I've got to grow up and fucking have kids and, ken what I mean'*. His reputation in the area was such that other people expected him to act in a certain way and he felt the need to respond accordingly: *'I've always been a thug since I was young so, ken, people start talking. It does, it gets to you... you want to grow up but they're not grown up so you want to show them... I'm not proud of [my reputation]. In a way I am, I'd rather be what I am now than be a wee choir boy... I've just done what I've had to do instead of getting bullied... I could calm down... I really do want to do it, but it's, I don't know, it's just like people... other people will go 'check him, he's changed, ken. He's a shite bag. Let's get him'... It's hard if you're a guy from [housing scheme] and that... they've got nothing to show which is what they are'*. With no obvious alternative sources of capital in youth, other than that gained within his immediate circle of

acquaintances, the ability to move away from the status quo became all the more difficult for Derek. He was still offending at the time of interview, although on a reduced basis and had recently found part-time labouring work with his father which gave him both economic and symbolic capital: *'when you've got money, you don't need to [offend]... you've earned it and it feels brilliant. Earning a wage feels brilliant, man'*.

Many suggested that offending would not have been so necessary if they had found employment, but this source of capital was elusive to the majority of them, who seldom had the skills, qualifications or social networks necessary to find conventional or legitimate sources of income and status. However, in the transition between school and eventual employment, offending was one way of ensuring some form of income, however precarious such activity. Equally, whilst offending may have initially been seen as a source of kudos and status for these young people, as their offending became more persistent, symbolic capital was undermined greatly by their involvement in the criminal justice system. Whilst the kudos from offending in the childhood phase gave them varying levels of symbolic capital, in youth the effects of the criminal justice system increasingly eroded what little symbolic capital they thought they may have accumulated.

Yvonne, 25, desister

Although Yvonne drifted into offending through the friends, she said she latterly got a name for herself as an offender and her peers expected her to act in a certain way. *'The thing is I'm not hard. When I look back, I'm not, I was just a bully. It was 'cos someone else wanted me to do it. I was scared of the older lassies. I was better off battering this other lassie than getting a kicking from the older lassies'*. She liked her reputation at the time, even though she thought she was being used, but at least she had a purpose, and

this reputation gave her increased social and symbolic capital. Most of Yvonne's later offending (assault and breach of the peace) was drink-related; she never got into drugs so this was not a problem for her. Even if she was short of money she would never have committed theft: *'I didn't have the balls basically... I'm not really that way inclined'*. She suggested that if she had not drunk alcohol, she would never have started offending, unless someone really *'got on my nerves'*, but her reputation with the police and the local community latterly made breaking her cycle of offending more difficult, irrespective of the social and symbolic capital accruing: *'... being drunk...gives you more balls... I knew that I could fight. I knew that I could hold my own'*. Yvonne married and had a daughter when she was 20, and suffered depression as a result of being rejected by her mother in particular, who had recently been diagnosed with cancer, coupled with the death of her sister (who had been a vital source of social capital to Yvonne in her teens) and the latent reaction of an attempted rape when she was 13. Because of her drinking, she gave her daughter to her husband to look after, thus losing a major source of social and symbolic capital at that time: *'I couldn't take to being a mum. I was still carrying on... getting drunk. I gave [daughter] to her dad 'cos I was getting into trouble, I had all idiots in my house. Then I was getting her at the weekends.... I felt she needed a mummy which I couldn't really be'*.

Pete, 19, desister

Pete's main offences as a younger teenager were theft and shoplifting, offences that he described as *'the ones that were open to me. They were the only ones that I had the bottle to do I suppose, until I got older, until I hit like 16... It was just what was easiest'*. His drug use increased as he went through his teens, as did his alcohol intake,

and he felt that his offending was mainly a direct consequence of his substance misuse, which itself was mainly a direct consequence of his traumatic upbringing. He said that drugs and alcohol were *'the only way I could cope with things'*. At 17 he became worried about his heroin addiction, a drug he had been using since he was 16, which required him to increase his offending in order to fund his habit. His mother and best friend were apparently instrumental in persuading Pete to stop taking heroin and he came off it with no medical support: *'They said stop now or you're dead. It will kill you... cold turkey alright, aye, a week and a half locked in my bedroom in my mother's house... they did me the world of good keeping me away from it and now I've learned to keep myself away from it'*. Apart from coming off heroin, he was also remanded in custody for the first time at the age of 17 and his girlfriend had two miscarriages during the course of their relationship: *'Reality bit me very hard on the backside... I realised, you know, what was going on. What am I doing here, you know. I'm in a very big hole'*.

The realization of the adverse effects of offending became apparent only when such offending became a 'hassle' and unprofitable, and did not fit easily within these young people's developing habitus as young adults. From a Rational Choice Theory perspective (Cornish & Clarke, 1985), the disadvantages of offending eventually outweighed the advantages, when wider social networks and responsibilities (to themselves and their families) became increasingly valuable to them. They seemed to no longer value the capital accrued in the childhood and early youth phases but wanted to progress to adulthood and new, more conventional forms of capital accumulation.

Capital accumulation in the desistance phase

Of the six case studies, only Yvonne, Pete and Laura are cited in this section, since they suggested at interview that they had stopped offending.

Capital accumulation of a different or 'conventional' nature (through employment or renewing or developing family relationships, for example) tended to result in a reduction of offending behaviour in adulthood for several reasons. Capital could be gained from conventional or legitimate sources through opportunities to take on responsibilities, or to break with past associates, thus making offending less attractive. There tended to be a renewed emphasis on the need for family for support and a greater empathy with one's parents. Meeting a non-offending partner was also a social catalyst to a reduction or cessation of offending behaviour.

Yvonne, 25, desister

Yvonne stopped offending aged 24, when she met her fiancé, but this required her relinquishing previous forms of accumulated social and symbolic capital: *'A good man, a different lifestyle away from all the wrong people... I moved here away from them all and I don't phone them or go and see them or nothing'*. Yvonne wanted to get custody of her daughter again, and had therefore consciously stopped offending so as not to give her ex-husband *'ammunition'* to fight the case. The advantages of not offending were that she had a good relationship, she was free from worry and from violence: *'I don't have to be on edge'*. She was also getting more respect from people, as well as gaining self-respect, both sources of symbolic capital. She said she had too much to lose by offending again: for example, the battle for her daughter, her fiancé and her future happiness.

Pete, 19, desister

In retrospect, Pete suggested that his offending had never been successful as a means of gaining social, economic or symbolic capital or escaping from childhood traumas. However, three people were particularly influential in helping him latterly: his social worker, his mother and his best friend: *'They sort of made me realise as I grew up that what I was doing was wrong and helped me over the past sort of four or five years'*, and it was this social capital that gave him the impetus to come off drugs and stop offending. Pete suggested he had responsibilities to these people, most notably his mother – *'just to be there in case I'm needed'* - as well as to his current girlfriend, and that if he started offending again: *'[I would lose] my house, my pet, my girlfriend, my mother, all my family, all my friends, everything that I've worked hard for over the last couple of years'*. He was *'proud'* of the fact that he had stopped offending and come off heroin, and was determined to make something of his life in the future, although he was fearful to raise his hopes only to have them dashed again: *'Every time I've set myself a goal, something's gone wrong'*.

Economic capital gained from employment rather than offending –described as 'honest money' by one respondent - became a reality for several of the sample, even though such employment may have been casual or short-term. Imprisonment and a criminal record can often deny one access to the economic and symbolic capital of employment. Periods of incarceration often made these respondents feel marginalised from their communities or job opportunities, as did an adverse reputation (as an offender or drug addict) with family or potential employers.

State benefits also became an alternative source of income for those aged over 18 and those prescribed methadone found the economic savings considerable. Cultural capital accrued from a renewed interest in educational courses for skills development or career opportunities. Symbolic capital tended to equate with stability in adulthood, through either employment, the status accruing from having responsibilities for oneself or others, being maintained on a methadone programme (and thus not being seen as a 'junkie') or having one's own family or tenancy.

Laura, 27, desister

A friend of Laura's helped her stop offending and using drugs and this required her relinquishing the social and symbolic capital of her drug-using friends and her boyfriend of some ten years' standing. However, having come off drugs and having left her boyfriend, there was no reason to offend, since her offending latterly was purely to feed her drug habit. She wanted to make a family with her two children and to avoid hurting them any more, and although her ex-boyfriend and others were still trying to dissuade her from going straight, she was adamant she would never return to offending, even though she was sometimes tempted: *'I've had phone calls and that asking if I would sell and all the rest of it, but I'm just not interested... I think about it right after I've said no. [Laughs]. I will say that, I do think about it. I think, I could make money... but I don't miss it. It's like I'd rather not have the money, know what I mean. I'd rather live off my dole money than have loads of money and have the fear of being lifted and being put in the cells and that'*. The advantage of not offending now was a feeling of self-worth (symbolic capital): *'being free from a damaging relationship... Being able to lift my head high... I feel I can lift my head high although people would doubt me. I feel I can walk down the street with my two kids... considering the state that I was in, know what I mean, I am proud'*. However, after three years of being offence-free, she

suggested that her reputation as an offender was still apparent: *'everyone would look down on me, they still actually do... they would still doubt me, know what I mean, and names stick'*. Her determination to remain offence-free was all the more apparent given this lack of symbolic capital accruing from a positive reputation in the community. However, what kept her going was the support of her friend, having her own tenancy and renewing contact with her mother, all of which were crucial sources of capital for her meantime.

As was seen in Chapter 8, getting older and realising what one had to lose by offending were important factors influencing desistance. For the women in particular, their reputations were at stake, not least with potential partners. McRobbie (2000) argues that young women are more likely to be concerned about their reputation – as offenders, drug addicts or alcoholics, or concerned about their physical appearance being adversely affected by drugs or alcohol. They are thus, perhaps, more likely to stop or modify their offending accordingly as they get older.

Maturation on its own was thus unlikely to result in capital accumulation – one had to have something to lose, such as a reputation, a partner or an opportunity for legitimate status, before one realised the value of such a potential loss. Employment, a source of legitimate income, responsibility, one's own tenancy and lasting relationships were all factors cited as being of value to these young people in early adulthood. However, as Laura implied, stopping offending also meant losing something of value - the social capital gained from being with fellow drug users or with fellow prison inmates, for example (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Thus, the agency required in deciding to stop

offending also meant giving up sources of stability, continuity and sociability in childhood and youth.

DISCUSSION

The case studies drawn on above illustrate the experiences and perceptions of the majority of the young people in this research. What emerges from these accounts is the seeming lack of continuity or stability in these young people's lives and their desire throughout childhood and into adulthood for interaction and integration within society, whether this be through family, friends, partners or employment. Pete, Laura, Anna and Yvonne spoke of the trauma in childhood of moving from somewhere familiar into a new or strange environment, because of a change of home area or school. These moves tended to coincide with a feeling of isolation or instability, resulting in the need to counteract this with the making of new friends, however disruptive these friendships may have been. Pete, Vic, Laura and Yvonne spoke of bereavement, familial abuse or separation from one or both parents, and many in the wider sample spoke of the lack of care or attention given by their parents in particular. All of these factors reflected a lack of capital and were often suggested to be major influences in these young people's propensity to offend.

It has been suggested earlier in this chapter that the three phases of transition (childhood, youth and adulthood) could be seen as 'fields' according to Bourdieu's definition of field. They are sites of struggle between competing forces of power, both within and between each phase of transition. In childhood, for example, offending could be seen as a means of gaining power within the friendship group when other sources of

capital are either dissipating (through a distancing from the family unit) or changing (through the entrance into an adult-led and authoritarian school environment or through the development of an individual and social identity). Either way, children from disadvantaged backgrounds or those lacking confidence or emotional support, may well feel vulnerable in such changed circumstances. In youth, if offending proves successful in accumulating more, or sustaining existing, capital, such behaviour is likely to be continued, not least if alternative sources of capital are elusive, denied or rejected. Only when offending is seen to have more social costs than personal benefits will young people attempt to modify their behaviour so as to adapt to their current social situation.

Capital, in this respect, could be seen as equating with Tittle's (1980) concept of 'control balance'. He argues that the ratio of control one can exercise, relative to that which one is subjected to, is a crucial independent variable in deviance. If an individual has a control deficit, deviance may well rectify that imbalance by increasing their level of control; equally a control surplus can result in the desire to extend that surplus. The young people in this sample all experienced a control deficit in terms of both their status as 'liminal beings' and their class position, and offending could therefore have been seen as an attractive means of gaining control (or capital) via the only perceived route available to them. Just as Tittle suggests that the more balanced the control ratio in a society, the lower the level of crime, so too the more balanced the control ratio within the individual (in terms of control exercised versus control subjected to), the lesser the need to commit crime. However, it could be argued that 'control' in this respect has a competitive edge to it and thus young men may be more inclined to attempt to rectify a control imbalance than young women, hence the former's higher rates of offending.

A lack of capital – or control – in one’s life tends to manifest itself as a pervasive undercurrent, rather than being triggered by specific circumstances. Thus, there is not always a ‘trigger event’ that propels these young people into or out of offending. Some eventually leave it for proactive reasons (having gained capital from legitimate sources, for example). Others leave it for reactive reasons, for example because the symbolic capital denied them, as a result of involvement in the criminal justice system or their wider reputation as offenders, outweighs the actual benefits of offending. Once young people reach the age of 16, and assuming they are detected in their offending, the criminal justice system may then interrupt the flow of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital they can accrue (Greenberg, 1979). Over time, their involvement with the criminal justice system may erode what little capital they have already accumulated, even though such involvement may have initially enhanced their access to social and symbolic capital within their friendship groups.

The vast majority of respondents mentioned friendships as being important to them at this time of personal change and social development, and the majority talked of offending as a means towards gaining or sustaining such friendships. However, for the women, it would seem that the need for identity within the social group extended beyond the phase of onset into the phase of maintenance of offending through the influence of boyfriends, as illustrated by Laura and Anna. It was through these relationships, often with men older than themselves, that many of the women gained attention and love, even though a mutual drug habit was often the catalyst to their sustaining, or persevering in, such relationships. Gilligan (1982) argues that in adolescence, young women confuse identity and intimacy and define their own identity

through their relationships with others, whether or not this be through the medium of drugs. The men, on the other hand, seemed to be less rather than more dependent on friends or partners as they got older, and relied more on the economic and symbolic capital that money and reputation gave them.

Several respondents found renewed sanctuary within family relationships at the time of stopping or attempting to stop offending, relationships that had often, hitherto, been problematic (for example, Laura, Pete and Anna). It has been argued (Gillies et al., 2002; Jones and Wallace, 1992; Thomson et al., 2003) that there is a lack of importance given to family and other relationships in theories of individualization in late modernity, given that much recent research on young people's narratives has stressed the influence of family in the transition to adulthood:

While young people constructed adult status in terms of independence and personal responsibility, the enduring significance of relationships with parents was also emphasized... the majority of young people in our sample still valued and relied on a close relationship with their parents. The knowledge that parents are available to provide emotional and practical support when needed appeared to be particularly appreciated (Gillies et al., 2002: 43).

For many of the young people with an addiction, giving up drugs or alcohol, like stopping offending, required the support and encouragement of others (in terms of social or symbolic capital in particular), as evidenced by Laura, Pete and Yvonne. Equally, methadone was an important source of capital during the process of stopping offending in that it relieved the symptoms of withdrawal, was free on prescription and enabled greater stability and continuity within their lives. Eight of women and one man were on methadone prescriptions at the time of interview and all, bar one of the women, had stopped offending.

It would seem from these accounts that the need for increased capital was important to both men and women in childhood but that as they progressed through the youth phase and into adulthood there was a gendered divergence: the women were more likely to value increased or sustained social capital in particular, whilst the men were more likely to value increased or sustained symbolic capital. This suggestion supports the contention by Chodorow (1974: 43-44, quoted in Gilligan, 1982) that 'feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than masculine personality does'. However, it was not possible in the present study to explore the extent to which societal expectations of gendered roles influenced these young people's propensity to accumulate one or other form of capital.

CONCLUSIONS

In childhood and early youth, offending and the attention or influence of friends became crucial sources of capital for these young people, during a time when they possibly lacked attention, protection or encouragement from family or the wider community. Although the family can be a renewed and enduring source of support and social capital for young people as they get older (Gillies et al., 2002), it does nevertheless seem the case that in the youth phase, the friendship group takes precedence over the family as a means of consolidating and reinforcing one's own identity within a social setting.

In later youth and early adulthood, on the other hand, the criminal justice system tended to erode what little capital accumulation they had gained from offending or indeed from conventional activities or relationships in the past. Nevertheless, opportunities for renewed family contact, relationships with conventional partners and employment or

other forms of legitimate income and responsibility were a major source of capital accumulation for those desisters who had left the confines of the criminal justice system.

Underlying this chapter have been the concepts of capital, habitus, field and strategy and these concepts have been used to illustrate the ways in which offending behaviour can be seen as part of one's social practice that offers various forms of capital accumulation in the transition to adulthood. The phases of transition could be seen as fields within which children and young people live out, test and modify their habitus through their social practice and it is suggested that offending is one strategy which young people with limited capital may adopt to gain greater recognition in that transition. Young people place increasing value on friends and family in the process of growing up. Their culture and social world are but a microcosm within the wider society, but Bourdieu's notion of capital offers a common denominator between the microcosmic world of young people in transition and the macrocosmic world of 'mainstream' society.

Bourdieu's concepts of capital are crucial in linking the phases of transition with the three phases identified in offending histories – onset, maintenance and desistance. The period of youth is one where boundaries are blurred, guidance and support are often reduced or passing from one source (the family) to another (the friendship group), and where responsibilities are not wholly acknowledged as legitimate or sustainable. This phase in the transition is the one in which most offending takes place. Youth is the phase when young people have few socially recognised means of legitimating their stake in the social world but may see offending or its benefits as their only means of

gaining recognition meantime, even if such recognition comes only from their friends. However, what is missing from this analysis is the answer to the question of how capital in its various forms can reduce the likelihood of offending when such capital can be gained from offending itself. The answer, I believe, may lie in the concept of ‘social recognition’, where a combination of *expenditure* and accumulation of capital is necessary not only in the transition to adulthood but also in the transition to desistance. This adaptation and development of Bourdieu’s concepts of capital is explored further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 10: IN SEARCH OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION

The desire for recognition... has no material object but seeks only a just evaluation of one's worth on the part of another human consciousness (Fukuyama, 1995: 358).

I just done it to be part of everybody (Janet, 21).

INTRODUCTION

As was seen in the previous chapter, young people may use offending as a means of gaining recognition, attention, income or friends, not least at a time when other sources of capital accumulation are unattainable or restricted. For those who stopped offending in their twenties, many had found opportunities to accumulate capital through means other than offending, opportunities which did not result in criminal justice system involvement, a lack of control or wider social disapproval. Such opportunities for capital accumulation included improved family relationships, not being dependent on illegal drugs, having a job or their own tenancy and being a parent themselves. However, it is acknowledged that many who had *not* stopped offending also had access to such opportunities for accumulating capital but were unable or unwilling, for varying reasons, to desist from crime. This anomaly has been a major source of concern for criminologists, as was seen in Chapters 2 and 3, and suggests that capital accumulation on its own cannot account for desistance. This chapter further develops the concept of capital in order to provide a possible solution to this anomaly.

I suggest in this chapter that capital *expenditure*⁴² is a missing link in the chain of events surrounding both youth transitions and youth offending and that what I call ‘social recognition’ – namely, *the attainment of a combination of accumulation and expenditure of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital that is both durable and legitimated* - is a possible way forward in understanding the temporary nature of much youth crime. Whilst capital accumulation is a crucial factor in aiding both desistance *and* a smoother transition to adulthood, the added factor of capital expenditure is required to ensure that young people have the opportunity and incentive to desist from crime as well as the longer-term opportunities afforded their counterparts in adulthood. My argument is that social recognition may well be a helpful concept in understanding desistance amongst young people in transition because it expresses the capacity and need that young people have for longer-term reciprocal relations of trust and responsibility within the wider society.

The following section explores in more depth the concept of expenditure of capital, in particularly two key avenues for such expenditure: taking on responsibility and generativity. The chapter then proceeds with a brief re-examination of the case study material from Chapter 9 to illustrate the ways in which opportunities for capital expenditure were available to these young people. The chapter then explores some of the potential constraints that hinder the expenditure of capital – and therefore the process of desistance – amongst these young people. The chapter concludes with a fuller discussion of the concept of social recognition.

⁴² Whilst Bourdieu tends to refrain from any discussion of *expenditure* of capital, focusing almost exclusively on the *accumulation* of capital, I utilise his analogy with economics to describe the uses to which young people can put their capital in the pursuit of mainstream social integration, namely through taking on responsibility and generativity (see Table 10.1).

EXPENDITURE VERSUS ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL

Bourdieu (1997; 1998) has argued that only in durable circumstances will capital accumulate and reproduce itself. However, in youth transitions, such durable circumstances are, by definition, unlikely, given the transient and ‘liminal’ status of young people in the youth phase. Skeggs (1997) argues that capital can only be ‘capitalized’ upon if it is convertible (‘traded up’) in an institutionalised setting, through lawful authority (ibid: 161), for example, converting cultural capital (qualifications) into economic capital (better employment prospects) and symbolic capital (academic recognition). Young people generally, because of a lack of opportunities for wider societal responsibility and because of their limited legal and social status as adults, have less capital which is legitimate, convertible and, therefore, tradeable, not least for young people from working class backgrounds (Skeggs, 1997). It is acknowledged here that many young people, notably those from middle class backgrounds, have the opportunities and resources to both accumulate and expend capital. Equally, many young people as well as adults do *not* have these opportunities and resources because of structural constraints. However, without status, resources and rights in the adult world, many young people are unlikely to gain the legitimacy or convertibility of capital: what capital they accumulate tends only to be recognised in the eyes of their immediate social network rather than being given wider social recognition.

Bourdieu suggests that individuals’ identities are flexible and dynamic – ‘nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies’ (1989, quoted in Haugaard, 2002: 237). In other words, individuals behave in ways that ‘fit’ with their social position. However, Bourdieu sees social positions *per se* as relatively rigid and static,

and again this denies the fluid and changing situation for young people in transition. Skeggs (1997: 94) agrees with Bourdieu to the extent that ‘identities are continually in the process of being re-produced as responses to social positions’. However, Skeggs found in her study of working class women that they did not adjust to their social positions, as Bourdieu might suggest. On the contrary, ‘they made strenuous efforts to deny, disidentify and dissimulate’ (ibid: 94). This suggests that individuals have greater agency to determine their ‘ideal’ social position, rather than having this determined for them by structural constraints. Skeggs also argues that whilst there are differential amounts and distributions of the various forms of capital within a society, for working class women such capital has limited availability and market value.

Accumulation of capital for these young people was achieved through, *inter alia*, having a reputation amongst their peers, through becoming involved in friendships or relationships, through making money from crime or employment and through having children. As they got older and took on greater responsibilities for themselves or others (e.g. through caring for partners or children or gaining employment), the opportunities for expenditure became more accessible to them. However, such expenditure of capital was more difficult to achieve in either the childhood or youth phase, by dint of their age and liminal status.

Forms of capital expenditure in the process of desistance

Instances of accumulation of capital often far outweighed those of expenditure for these young people, and yet it was the expenditure of capital as they got older that gave these young people a strong sense of achievement and was more likely to encourage

desistance. Table 10.1 suggests some instances where legitimate expenditure was achieved by the desisters in this study. Whilst acknowledging that some of the persisters had also had opportunities for the expenditure of capital in youth and early adulthood, it is suggested here that either there were no sustained opportunities for the expenditure of capital, or the outlets for such capital were not of a legitimate nature. Some of the opportunities for expenditure of capital described in Table 10.1 may well have arisen in the childhood and youth phases, but these opportunities tended to be short-lived and based on the recognition or legitimation of friends and family rather than the wider society. As the young people moved into the more public arena of adulthood, however, a combination of accumulation and expenditure of capital which was both durable and legitimated was more likely to occur.

Table 10.1: Expenditure of capital associated with desistance

Capital	
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having responsibilities to one's family, partner or children - becoming a parent - giving love, friendship or attention to others - seeking custody of one's child
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'buying' clothes and other consumables (as opposed to stealing them) - spending money on one's house or children - paying taxes and other state contributions
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contributing towards others' development or welfare through employment, teaching or influence, based on one's own skills or experience - setting an example by one's actions or words - encouraging and helping others
Symbolic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wanting to give of oneself (as mentor, volunteer, worker, etc) - wanting to offer restoration/reparation to the community - having responsibilities towards one's house or job

Whereas economic capital can be spent on goods and services as well as on people, the expenditure of the three other forms of capital – social, cultural and symbolic – is mainly achievable in relation to people. I wish to focus on this *social* aspect of capital expenditure since it is argued here that such interdependence and reciprocity is crucial in achieving social recognition. In this respect, two key models of interdependence and reciprocity, taking on responsibility and generativity, which both allow for opportunities for expenditure of social, cultural and symbolic capital, are examined in the following section. This section, however, briefly examines the expenditure capacity of economic capital in relation to this sample, before moving on to explore in greater depth the expenditure capacity of the other three forms of capital.

Having income from employment enabled some of these respondents not only to earn money but also to spend money that had not been gained by illegal means, often for the first time in their lives. For those who had given up drugs as well as offending or for those who had latterly been prescribed methadone, the very fact of not having to spend their money on drugs, but being able instead to spend such money on household items, was often seen as a novelty. In short, they spoke of their pride at being able not only to accumulate, but also to spend ‘honest’ money on ‘normal’ things: ‘I’ve *bought* things that are in my wardrobe. I’ve *bought* all my Christmas presents. That makes me feel good’ (Nina, 23); ‘I’m quite glad that I’m away from [offending] and I’m earning money and supporting my family with honest money’ (Frank, 22).

The main function of economic capital for young people seems to be as a means of gaining increased symbolic capital (through being able to buy ‘designer’ or other desirable consumer goods) rather than as a financial investment for the future. As such,

young people with seemingly few prospects for expending capital in reciprocal ways may resort to conspicuous consumption rather than deferred gratification. As Fukuyama (1995) has pointed out in relation to the importance of employment for gaining capital:

Our motivation in working and earning money is much more closely related to the recognition that such activity affords us, where money becomes a symbol not for material goods but for social status or recognition (Fukuyama, 1995: 359).

Several respondents mentioned first-hand experience of poverty as children and some suggested that being placed in the care of the local authority was a relatively more secure means of ensuring access to economic capital than the family home (through clothing allowances, increased pocket money, etc.). But again, this economic gain was symbolic in that it gave them access to status rather than material gain *per se*. Many of the respondents also suggested that the need or desire for money as children was an incentive to starting offending, and some calculated that the financial benefits of offending often outweighed the costs.

The two main forms of expenditure that I wish to examine more closely here are ‘taking on responsibility’ and ‘generativity’, notably in relation to social, cultural and symbolic capital. These are described briefly below before interweaving the views of the young people in this sample.

Taking on responsibility

There are subtle nuances in the meaning of the word ‘responsibility’. It can mean ‘having responsibility’ which suggests being accountable [to someone] for something; ‘acting responsibly’ where expectations are placed on the actor by others or

alternatively ‘taking on responsibility’ which suggests the opportunity of being trusted with something for someone. Farrall and Bowling (1997: 22) describe responsibility as:

an identity which entails behaving in a particular manner. This manner represents the duality of structure, in that the social identity of ‘responsibility’ is both prior to the individual and dependent upon individual actions and decisions.

These authors equate responsibility with Giddens’ (1984) notion of both ‘rules’ (legal or social expectations) and ‘resources’ (a desire for accountability or caring for others). Qualitative studies of young people have implied that both rules and resources influence their feelings of responsibility (Barry, 2001a, 2001b; Dearden & Becker, 2000; Farrall & Bowling, 1997; Graham & Bowling, 1995; Holland et al., 1999), and this study is no exception, as the quotations cited below illustrate. Whilst the young people took on responsibility as both an expectation and a desire, in this section I particularly want to stress the ‘resource’ implications of responsibility-taking, namely, having the desire, the opportunity, the capacity and the incentive to be trusted with a task of benefit to significant others. Many adults – as well as some young people themselves (Barry, 2001a) - may see responsibility-taking by children in particular as a burden inappropriate to their age and status. However, others see such responsibility-taking as emancipatory and participatory, although the level and intensity of such responsibility need to be tempered with the capacities and wishes of the child (Franklin, 2002; Archard, 1993).

It has been suggested by several authors that young people tend not to equate adulthood with rights *per se* but with personal responsibility (Barry, 2001b; Gillies et al., 2002; Lister et al., 2002). A study by Holland et al. (1999) suggests that young people view

responsibility as one of the defining positive features of adulthood, not least in relation to a sense of responsibility towards their families. Based on their sample of adolescents, Holland et al. suggest that feelings of obligation towards parents and other family members become more prominent as young people become older. Equally, Dearden and Becker (2000) in their study of young carers, suggest that young people consider responsibility as a positive asset in terms of caring for others and learning new skills. Farrall and Bowling (1997), in an analysis of the interplay between agency and structure in young people's propensity or otherwise to stop offending, imply that taking on responsibility for one's family or oneself has a positive impact on the likelihood of desistance. These authors suggest that social identities in adulthood incorporate both rights and responsibilities, and that such identities require the fulfilment of certain roles, the adherence to certain rules (responsibility is not compatible with offending behaviour) and the management of resources (achieving adult goals).

Employment was seen as a crucial arena in which the young people in this sample could gain social status through taking on responsibility, with 17 young men and 14 young women mentioning their desire for a job in the future. This is not an unusual finding, given the emphasis placed on employment by young people generally in the transition to adulthood as a means of gaining status, rights and stability (see, for example, Barry, 2001b; Stephen, 2000).

For the majority of this sample, their main responsibility was to their current partners (9 men and 7 women) or to their children (6 men and 15 women). Equal emphasis was placed by both male and female respondents on responsibilities towards people

(including themselves) as towards practicalities, such as a tenancy, paying bills, a job and to remain offence- or drug-free in the future:

I've got a responsibility to myself, to keep myself out of trouble and off drugs and I've got my baby on its way. I've got a responsibility towards [my partner] as well ... Attend probation, hospital, lawyers (Sarah, 27).

Just making [my fiancé] happy. I love that. I get all excited when he comes home. I like doing his cooking but I wish I had more responsibility. I've got responsibilities to try and be a mum again. That's a responsibility. [*Researcher: What other responsibilities would you like?*] A job. Getting up every morning. Working for a living (Yvonne, 25).

I decided that it was time to wake up and realise what I've got and what I would lose. I've got my wee laddie and that... I had enough of going around and getting lifted by the police and that... if I go down, I'm going to lose the life of my son growing up and things like that... I had my girlfriend, I had my son, my family (Frank, 22).

One young man went as far as to say he also had responsibilities towards the wider society, epitomising Giddens' definition (1984: 18) of responsibility as a 'rule' or legal or moral expectation within society:

Responsibility to the public and, you know, society as a whole. I mean, I can't go round thumping society... I can't go round using my fists all the time. I can't keep committing crime. I can't do it. Society won't stand for it (Nick, 28).

Finally, only four men out of the total sample of 40 young people considered that they had no current responsibilities – three were in prison at the time of the interview and the remaining one was living with his parents⁴³: 'I did have responsibility for a house and a

⁴³ Living with one's parents is not, of itself, a reason why an individual may not have responsibilities or stop offending; indeed, Graham & Bowling (1995) suggest that for young men in particular, living at home into their twenties had a positive influence on their likelihood of desisting from offending.

job, but I've no responsibilities now' (Kevin, 23, interviewed in prison); 'I've nothing. No house, no kids, nothing' (Len, 26, interviewed in prison).

Generativity

Erikson (1968: 141) coined the phrase 'generativity' to mean a passing on of care, attention and support to future generations based on one's own experiences. McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998: xx) describe the term as: 'The concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, manifested through parenting, teaching, mentoring...'
(quoted in Maruna, 2001: 99).

Generativity suggests the expenditure of cultural and social capital in particular. However, these young people had little access to institutionalised cultural capital (Skeggs, 1997), in the sense of educational attainment, qualifications or legitimate competence, not least because of their young age, their seeming disaffection from the educational system and their lack of rights and responsibilities as adults. The few qualifications they did have were often deemed by them to have been undermined by their criminal records and reputation, and therefore seemed of little use to them in the future. Equally, the skills and competences gained in childhood and youth – their sources of cultural capital - are often not recognised or legitimated by adults and tend, therefore, to go undetected (Barry, 2001b). As Bromley (1993: 62) points out:

Failure to establish an approved role in society, through educational failure and unemployment for example, leads some people to suppose that they have little to lose from antisocial behaviour. This applies especially if their social network consists of people of a similar kind. Consequently, threats to their wider reputation through misconduct may have little or no effect on behaviour.

Conversely, people with an established approved role in society have a lot to lose (Bromley, 1993: 62).

In this study, five of the men and three of the women specifically stated that they were interested in the caring profession (social work or counselling, for example) as a result of their own skills and experiences in the past. A further two already had experience of employment as drugs counsellors. Their wish to give of their own skills or experience to benefit others illustrates a feeling of generativity:

I'd love to be a drugs counsellor, I would. I really would. I'd love to be able to sit with a group of people and talk to them. It is, it's a shame. I've been through it all myself (Anna, 21).

I want to be an instructor for an outward bound course. I want to put into the community what I've taken from it. I want to do courses with under-privileged kids like myself (Nick, 28).

... maybe get a really good job in the social work or something like that... I get on with the younger ones up here and I try and say to them – don't do what I done, stop taking that [drugs] because it ruins everything (Bernadette, 23).

Sixteen of the women and seven of the men mentioned at interview that they had children. McRobbie (2000: 206) suggests that young women, notably those with no immediate employment prospects or other sources of capital accumulation, may choose motherhood as a positive option:

For girls who had never been brought up to consider themselves as wage-earners, never mind career women, bringing forward motherhood by a few years was hardly a surprising step, indeed it was from their point of view a resourceful activity.

Craine (1997) acknowledges that motherhood may bring social and housing stability in the short-term, thus easing at least one aspect of the transition to adulthood.

Nevertheless, he argues that: 'early domestic careers of pregnancy, childrearing and home-caring served, typically, to locate young women in situations of economic and often domestic, subordination' (ibid: 143). In addition, as highlighted by recent cultural criminological research, the attraction of motherhood as an alternative occupation for young women with few other legitimate opportunities in the transition to adulthood, has been vilified in the media as rejecting family values, being sexually promiscuous and misusing welfare benefits (McRobbie, 2000; Rolfe, forthcoming).

However, many respondents in this sample saw parenthood as a positive choice for them. Nevertheless, several commented on their concerns that they wished to be better parents than their own parents had been, thus ensuring that their own children were not compromised in the way that they themselves had been: 'My main goal is to watch my kids grow up healthy and keep them away from drugs' (Harry, 26); 'I'm teaching my kids to be nothing like this. My kids won't be like that' (Vic, 23).

Making sure that [my daughter] gets the things that I never got in life, like a good home, steady family, mother and father to care for her, good schooling, you know. Just make opportunities for her (Nick, 28).

One of the young women feared for the safety of her own daughter, having been abused herself at a young age. Her need to protect her child illustrates a generative expenditure of social and cultural capital:

'cos she's a girl as well and I feel as if I've got to be there 24 hours a day to protect her but I know if she's with [my partner], I know she's alright when she's with him (Diane, 21).

Maruna (2001) stresses the importance of generativity not only in being constructive for others but also in being cathartic and purposeful for oneself in helping one to stop offending. He identifies four reasons for this:

- fulfilment (giving the individual meaning and a sense of achievement);
- restitution (giving the individual relief from a sense of shame or guilt);
- legitimacy (giving the individual social credibility); and
- therapy (reinforcing the individual's determination to reform).

Whilst Maruna's study of current and ex-offenders illustrated examples of all four reasons for generativity, the present sample tended to emphasise only two – fulfilment and legitimacy. As far as therapy and restitution are concerned, few of the young people actually mentioned a sense of reflection, guilt or shame in relation to feelings of generativity. When talking about offering their own experience and knowledge to help others in similar circumstances to themselves, it was more because of a belief that such experience and knowledge were still valuable tools in retrospect. They took a more pragmatic rather than 'restitutive' approach which focused more on preventive measures for other young people than on rehabilitative measures for themselves. However, this line of reasoning is tentative since it was not explored at interview. Nevertheless, it would merit further research, not least given the wide range of literature which supports a shaming, reformatory or therapeutic angle to changing one's behaviour or lifestyle (see Maruna, 2001 for a résumé of such literature).

If young people have greater opportunities to take on responsibilities, they can accumulate social, cultural and symbolic capital through being needed, trusted and respected. In addition, they can also expend such capital through taking on a caring or

responsible role and giving of themselves to generative activities as a means of paying back the community for past offending (see, for example, Braithwaite, 1989). Maruna (2001) found the influence of generativity emerging in the career aspirations of the current and ex-offenders within his sample who were keen to help others in similar situations to themselves⁴⁴. McIvor (1992) also commented on the therapeutic effects of community service on offenders, notably when they were actively helping others and could see the direct benefits of their work to recipients.

In summary, taking on responsibilities and generativity are crucial factors in the development and sustainability of social recognition. Responsibility towards other people (e.g., through a caring or loving relationship) or towards oneself (e.g., in maintaining a tenancy or holding down a job) gives young people the legitimacy and opportunity to expend as well as accumulate capital within the wider society. Equally, generativity offers both fulfilment, interdependence and legitimacy, the latter of which in particular is an essential element of ensuring ultimate social recognition.

EXAMPLES OF EXPENDITURE OF CAPITAL

The following six case study summaries – the three persisters and three desisters cited in Chapter 9 – exemplify the levels of capital expenditure available to many of the young people. However, it should be borne in mind that this analysis is secondary, and

⁴⁴ Whilst ex-offenders are no doubt ‘experts on the subject of deviance and desistance’ (Maruna, 2001: 120), there is, nevertheless, resistance to using ex-offenders as counsellors or befrienders in the criminal justice field. Such resistance can come as much from middle-class professionals in the field as from the wider public (Leary, 1962, cited in Maruna, 2001). In the USA as in the UK, prison-based programmes involving inmates ‘educating’ or ‘scaring’ children and young people on day visits to the prison have had mixed responses and are inconclusive in the extent to which they either help inmates or the young visitors to change their behaviour or attitudes (Lloyd, 1995). However, Maruna argues that the reforming abilities of involving offenders in rehabilitation schemes are significant and such generativity acts as an alternative source of ‘empowerment and potency’ to offending behaviour (ibid: 121).

the issue of expenditure of capital was not specifically addressed at interview, other than through the question of what responsibilities they currently had and what they would lose if they were to continue offending in the future.

Yvonne, 25, desister

Social	Seeking custody of her daughter; having responsibilities to her fiancé; caring for her terminally ill mother
Economic	-
Cultural	-
Symbolic	Responsibilities to her house; [potential] responsibilities to a job

Yvonne stopped offending when she met her fiancé, and implied that the act of stopping offending was one that required expenditure of capital: ‘You can see you’re hurting someone else... I had to [stop offending] if I wanted to keep [my fiancé]. He wouldnae have stayed around... I don’t want to lose him. He means too much. He’s done too much’. Likewise, she had to stop offending in order to prove that she could be a mother again to her daughter:

I miss seeing her; I’ve not really seen her for a year... It’s making me realise what an idiot I’ve been. I’ve missed out on a lot. I think she’s gonna be my strongest part... I’ve got responsibilities to try and be a mum again. That’s a responsibility.

Although Yvonne did not have a job at the time of interview, she hoped to find one after her wedding that year, since this would give her the increased responsibility that she wanted in her changed life: ‘A job. Getting up every morning. Working for a living’. Meantime, she was expending cultural and emotional capital caring for her mother who had cancer. She decided to renew her relationship with her mother - one that had been, she thought, non-existent in her childhood – when she heard that her mother was terminally ill and needed her support. Although there was still friction between the two

of them, and she felt this was damaging her relationship with her fiancé, she nevertheless continued to visit her mother and support her in whatever ways she could: ‘She’s been through a lot, she’s had all these big operations, but she’s still drinking and smoking... [and] hurting me. She doesn’t really give a damn about anybody or anything’. Her main responsibilities, however, were to her daughter, and the pending court case for custody, and to her fiancé: ‘Just making [him] happy. I love that. I get all excited when he comes home. I like doing his cooking’.

Pete, 19, desister

Social	Responsibilities to his current girlfriend and his family
Economic	Paying off debts
Cultural	Concern for his [ex-]girlfriends
Symbolic	Responsibilities to his house

Pete’s main responsibilities currently were to his house (he had his own tenancy), to his pet dog, to his girlfriend and to his family - in that order! Previous bereavements (two girlfriends had miscarriages) and latterly splitting up with these two girlfriends had given him a greater awareness of and concern for other people’s needs: ‘The loss of my kids made me think a lot more. And the loss of two people I loved, my girlfriends. I’ve got feelings for my girlfriends. That made me think an awful lot like’. His mother had been a strong source of support for Pete when he overcame a heroin addiction recently (thus expending her own cultural and social capital on her son) and he felt a need to repay that support when necessary: ‘Just to be there if I’m needed’.

At the end of the interview, Pete offered further advice for professionals working with young people which demonstrates the need for expenditure of capital. He spoke with concern about how young people generally could be helped to stop offending, and

implied that opportunities to prove themselves through taking on responsibility were an important factor:

Give young people ... give them somewhere they can go and do something. Open up more chances for them getting jobs after school and stuff like that, you know. Give them community stuff they can do like get all the kids in the community to build a park like in the town. Build a skateboard run... Give them something that's gonna help the community.

He also implied that the expenditure of cultural capital by professionals (e.g., the caring nature of social work) required first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by young people:

[Get] folk who understand what they're going through to talk to them... Having somebody there that's done it. That's what's wrong with care, a lot of the people that are care workers and that are all folk who've been brought up in a good home, they've been to a good school, they've had everything paid for until they're 16, and they've gone out and got work straight away and that, and they've got their life sorted. They don't understand what it's like to be unemployed, to be on the dole, to be in jail or care or anywhere like that, you know. And folk who understand it can sit there and say to the kids 'now look, I've been there, I've done exactly what you're doing and this is the way it will end up'. You know what I mean? They need more experience in the care system about offending and stuff like that.

Laura, 27, desister

Social	Responsibilities to her two children and her family
Economic	Responsibilities to pay the bills
Cultural	Concern not to hurt her children further
Symbolic	Responsibilities to her house

Laura spoke of her pride at having both her children, and how important they were to her now, since she nearly died from an overdose two years prior to interview. It was her responsibilities to her children that made her decide to stop offending:

I near died and like, you know, support machine and everything... so it gave me a fright... The thought of... my kids not seeing me again... So the thought of that, you know what I mean, actually freaked me out.

Now on a methadone prescription, Laura was working towards reducing the dosage and her aspirations for the future were to ‘see my kids settled and happy’, through the expenditure of her own cultural, social and symbolic capital. Although she did not have employment, the fact that she had given up illicit drugs meant that she could expend economic capital (from benefits) looking after her house and children, rather than on drugs.

Vic, 23, persister

Social	Responsibilities to his mother
Economic	-
Cultural	[Potential] concern for the upbringing of his children
Symbolic	-

Vic was in prison at the time of the interview, and seemed resigned to further periods of incarceration. When asked whether he had any responsibilities currently, his first reaction was ‘none’, but then suggested that he had responsibilities to his mother: ‘just to keep my nose clean’, even though he implied that his mother was as resigned to his continued offending as he was himself. Vic suggested, hypothetically, that if he found a job, settled down and had a child, it might help him to stop offending, but he could not readily suggest ways in which he could or would give to others (in terms of capital expenditure), other than the comment that if he had children in the future: ‘I’m teaching my kids to be nothing like this’. Given that he had spent the major part of his youth in prison suggested that Vic had had little opportunity to make or sustain close social networks through which to expend capital. His success (in terms of immediate monetary

gains) from offending also made the prospect of legitimate employment less attractive to him.

Anna, 21, persister

Social	Seeking custody of her daughter
Economic	Desire to become a drugs counsellor
Cultural	-
Symbolic	-

Anna's current offending is influenced by both alcohol and friends who are offending; she also has court cases pending as well as the custody battle for her daughter, both of which make planning the future more difficult in terms of capital expenditure. She had been told by the social work department that she would not get her daughter back for at least five years. Meantime, her only responsibility currently is to stay off drugs, so as to prove to the social work department that she is capable of caring for her daughter in five year's time: a tall order perhaps for someone with little other incentive to keep going. Anna would like to move area if and when she gets her daughter back, partly to sever all ties with her ex-boyfriend, but meantime has to live locally to where her daughter is placed in care. Anna suggested that getting her daughter back eventually would be a positive incentive to stopping offending and coming off drugs. In terms of generativity through employment, Anna said that she wanted to become a drugs counsellor in the future, given her own experience of drug addiction in the past.

Derek, 21, persister

Social	Responsibility towards his parents and siblings.
Economic	Investing in a new relationship.
Cultural	-
Symbolic	-

Derek came from a close family background and felt increasing responsibility, as the oldest child, towards his parents and younger sisters as he got older. Although Derek was working part-time for his father, it was casual labour and he would prefer stable employment: 'Earning a wage feels brilliant, man'. However, he suggested that his criminal record was a liability in this respect.

Derek said he needed to control his temper and strengthen his resolve not to 'play the hard man' in order to be able to stop offending: 'I'm slowly but surely getting there, ken... I'm sick of it... I'll get my own flat'. However, the external constraints to capital expenditure were pending court cases, the likelihood of a prison sentence and the lack of full-time employment. He suggested that he could not find employment or his own tenancy until he had 'a clean slate'. He was also, at the time of interview, trying to consolidate a relationship with a new girlfriend and to impress her, thereby expending capital on her, but felt restrained by his lack of income:

I'm trying to get together with a girl now. She's at university and all that and I meet her, ken, and try to put the talk on and that, eh... [Last] Saturday, man, I spent about a hundred quid on the two of us up the town – 'no I'll get it, no I'll get it', ken. So if I've not got the money ... she's got money but I just don't like girls doing it [paying] unless we've been going for a while ... She'd better not just be after my money or I'll crack up.

CONSTRAINTS TO CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Bourdieu has been criticised for being overly-deterministic in suggesting that the habitus, rather than one's capital, defines and delimits one's ability to progress from these to new challenges and opportunities (Jenkins, 1992, although see Fowler, 2000). Whilst the conditions of existence may well be homogeneous, it has been argued by

Bourdieu's critics that individuals have the agency to move beyond or to manipulate those objective conditions (MacRae, 2002; Raffo & Reeves, 2000). Nevertheless, Bourdieu argues that the field one operates within determines the boundaries of the habitus and that when fields are not well-defined entities and two or more fields overlap, a problematic blurring of boundaries is likely to occur:

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or of a set of intersecting fields, the extent of their intersection or discrepancy being at the root of a divided or even torn habitus). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge of *cognitive construction* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 127, emphases in original).

These areas of overlap fit with Bourdieu's term 'intersection or discrepancy' as described in the above quotation. The extent of this overlap between fields results, as this quotation suggests, in a 'divided or even torn habitus', making movements from one habitus to another more difficult to achieve: hence, Bourdieu's contention that such movement may result in failure.

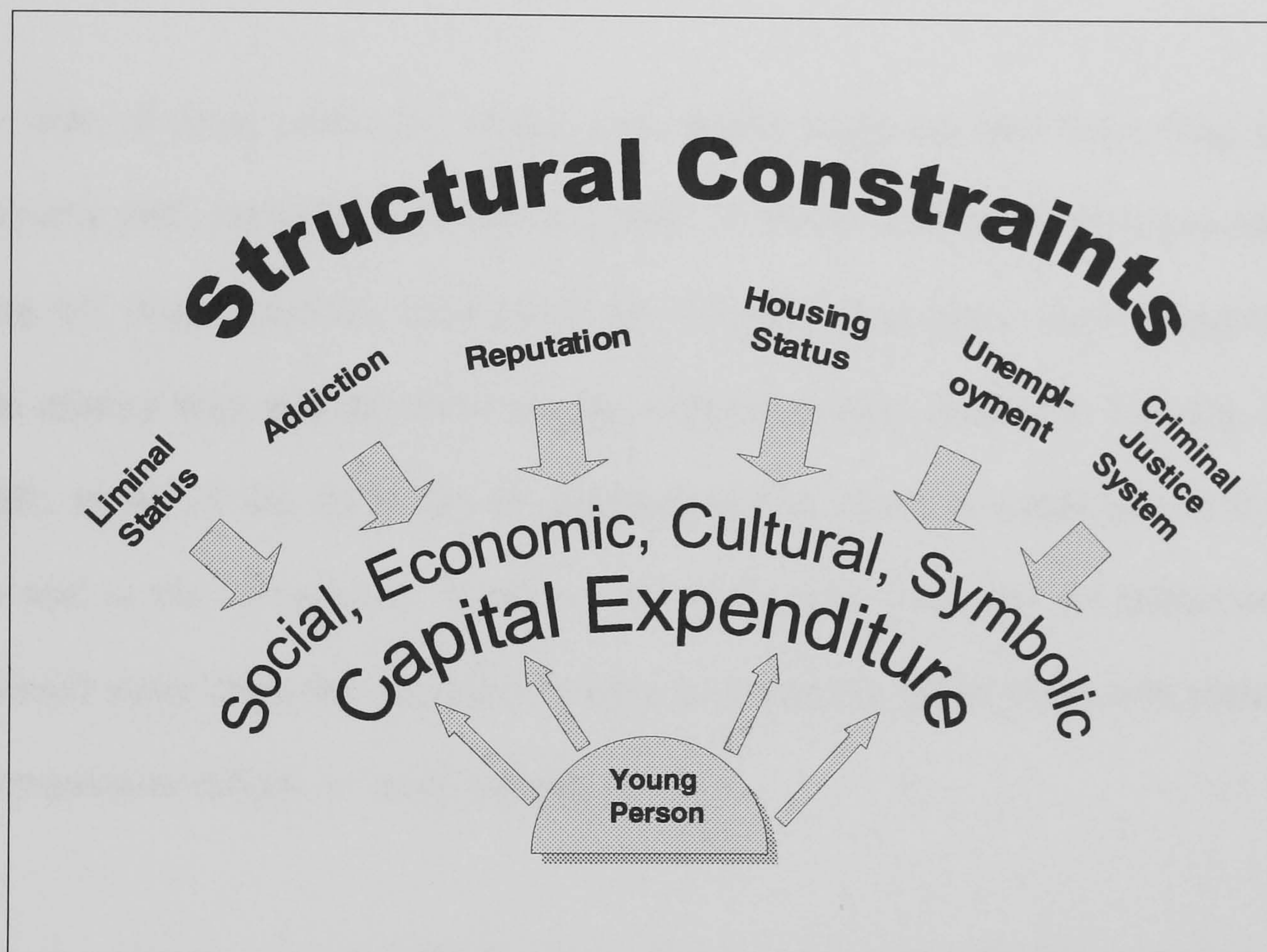
Raffo and Reeves (2000) have suggested that young people can, however, have differing but overlapping individualised social networks that are often fluid and changing. They suggest that the notion of habitus can accommodate dynamic and heterogeneous social interactions, and allow for a smoother transition between and within time and place:

... individualized constellations of social relations are evolving and unique because the changing individual biography of a given individual, at any given time, requires different types of interaction with particular types of individuals (Raffo & Reeves, 2000: 152).

Just as Bourdieu sees class relations as fields in their own right, it was suggested in Chapter 9 that age relations could equally be seen as fields in their own right, namely the fields of childhood, youth and adulthood. Thus, the claim of likely failure in the transition from one field or habitus to another holds some legitimacy when considered in the light of the findings from this research, where young people are moving from the habitus they had developed in the field of childhood, through to the habitus they aspired to in the field of adulthood, via the habitus experienced in the field of youth. The legal and economic constraints imposed on young people by dint of their social status were difficult to overcome in early adulthood without the opportunities for reciprocal relations and responsibilities within the wider society.

As depicted in Figure 10.1 below, the factors that prevented these young people from expending capital could be grouped into six key areas: having liminal status in transition, being dependent on drugs, having a reputation as an offender, not having a house of one's own, being unemployed and being involved in the criminal justice system.

Figure 10.1: Constraints on capital expenditure



The lack of capital for these respondents was apparent not only from their *liminal status* as 'young people', but also because of being marginalised within the labour market and having limited rights as full citizens (Coles, 1995; Jones, 1996). The constraints to them achieving status as 'adults' included the lack of access to either income from employment or state benefits and their limited opportunities for taking on responsibility in the transition period. Whilst they may have had expectations and aspirations which mirrored mainstream norms, these were often denied them because of their status as young people. Those who were denied responsibilities towards their children because of those children being looked after elsewhere were also vulnerable to 'liminality'. Both

Yvonne and Anna, for example, suggested that if they lost their battle to gain custody of their children, they were more likely to re-offend, and more positively, both these women strongly felt that renewing their caring role of their children would have a profound influence on their ability and motivation to stop offending.

In the case of *drug addiction*, many respondents suggested that their drug use was problematic and constrained the development of their social and individual identities. Coming off drugs required heightened self-determination since many suggested that outside agency help was not forthcoming at the time they needed it. Equally, Vic, for example, spoke of the difficulty of stopping heroin when he could access it both in prison and in the community. However, for those who were put on methadone, they were eased away from the financial burden of obtaining illicit drugs and therefore no longer needed to offend to 'feed' a habit.

Having a *reputation* as an offender or a drug user equally exacerbated these young people's capacity to accumulate and expend capital. They spoke either of not being trusted or not being able (through, for example, ill-health resulting from an addiction) to take on responsibility, or of being unable to overcome discriminatory attitudes and practices of potential employers, the police or the local community more generally. For example, Laura stopped offending over three years prior to interview but still felt stigmatised within her local community: 'everyone would look down on me, they still actually do... and names stick... even so now, I am a wee bit scared when I see a police car. Although I know I've not done nothing, I always feel, oh, they'll lift me for something that someone else has done'. Likewise, Vic felt resigned to his reputation, which only served to reduce his motivation to change: '[The police] expect me to do it

cos they're used to what I'm like ... Everybody knows I'm a shoplifter'. Anna felt held back by her reputation as a drug addict locally: 'I'm trying to sort my head out and people aren't giving me the chance, you know. People just see me as a smackhead, down and out, junkie'. Bromley (1993), for example, suggests that developing and sustaining a 'good' primary reputation⁴⁵ requires a social network within which that knowledge of the person can spread and be reinforced. Young people in transition, notably those disadvantaged by a lack of opportunities for social capital, are unlikely to have the social networks that can confirm their changed or developing reputations. And for those like Derek who come from neighbourhoods which expect one to offend or to be 'a hard man', it is doubly difficult to break away from the expectations of others.

Living at home was a financial necessity for some respondents, and several had returned to the family home because of an inability to cope on their own. Jones (1995) suggests that the number of young people returning home following a period of independent living had doubled in recent years, and that young women were more susceptible to such cyclical transitions. Whilst young people generally want to assert their individual identities by becoming independent of the parental home (Jones, 1995), working class young people, in particular, often do not have the financial means to sustain an independent lifestyle away from the economic support of their families. Equally, several respondents felt constrained by the area in which they were living, either because of the adverse influence of local people, because they needed to remain near to their children or because of the lack of opportunities in their local community. For example, Derek

⁴⁵ Bromley (1993) describes 'primary' reputations as being based on first-hand knowledge of the holder of that reputation; whereas 'secondary' reputations are based on hearsay. Hence the importance of the immediate social environment in fostering and disseminating that reputation.

suggested that he would have to move area to keep away from friends who were offending. Although Anna would like to move area in order to avoid the pressure from friends or family who were offending, she needed to remain in her current tenancy to be near to her daughter for access reasons. Finally, Vic was conscious of the fact that his current offending was exacerbated by living in a certain housing scheme: ‘Most people in [area] have got nothing... [The area] is a shambles, a pure shambles’.

Many came from families disadvantaged by poverty and *unemployment*. Coupled with the lack of social capital within the family to aid the transition to employment (Allatt & Yeandle, 1992), the vagaries of the youth labour market meant that few of these young people had experienced sustained periods of employment, which often precluded them from expending not only economic but also social and symbolic capital. And yet many also spoke of their preference for ‘honest money’ through the legitimate means of employment, and certainly many of this sample implied that if they received an income from gainful employment, they had no reason to offend. Pete, for example, felt that unemployment made him vulnerable in terms of re-offending: ‘I’ve got debts with the bank, I’ve got problems with the Housing... [but] that’s through my own fault. So I’m gonna dig myself out that hole and start again, get a job, get money coming in, get everything paid up and clear myself’.

Involvement in the criminal justice system was an impetus to stopping offending, but also a constraint to sustaining a non-offending lifestyle through legitimate means. Coles (2000) has argued that the youth justice system in particular has a poor track record in preventing further offending amongst young people, with over three-quarters of young male offenders being reconvicted within two years of a custodial sentence. The main

problem for the young people in this sample was the lack of opportunities for a ‘clean slate’, exacerbated by having a criminal record and by continued police ‘harassment’ rather than encouragement in the process of desistance. For example, both Anna and Derek had pending court cases and felt constrained as a result in terms of planning their futures. Of the eight male persisters identified through SCRO records in 2002, three of them mentioned at interview that the police harassed them on a regular basis, and Derek suggested that his criminal record and pending court cases prevented him from finding a tenancy of his own and a legitimate form of employment.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL RECOGNITION

The above constraints include both structure and agency, not just the agency of the individual young person but, more importantly, the agency of significant others in the young person’s life. It has been shown throughout the analysis how important other people are to young people in transition and that young people may resort to crime as one means of attaining reciprocal relations and status with others, whether this be with family members, friends or the wider society. Young people from working class backgrounds are often denied access to social networks as well as to the cultural goods, services and opportunities afforded their more affluent counterparts. As Young (1999: 12) points out in relation to young men:

[Young men] are barred from the race-track of the meritocratic society yet remain glued to the television sets and media which alluringly portray the glittering prizes of a wealthy society... Being denied the respect of others, they create a subculture that revolves around masculine powers and ‘respect’.

Young (1999) suggests that the ‘luck of the draw’ mentality in postmodern society – which exemplifies individualism and inequality – is likely to exacerbate criminal activity (ibid: 198). He stresses the need for reciprocity between the citizen and the state.

According to de Vries (1968: 9) reciprocity is:

... a multi-sided active relationship in which the action of any side towards any goal, of itself, promotes and engenders action by the other side towards the same goal... and all contributions give the participants the conviction of equivalence, and... are essential to the action of the organism as a whole.

de Vries cites the discipline of philosophy in asserting that ‘reciprocal relationships are the only durable, satisfying human relationships’ (ibid: 11), and that limited responsibility and boredom, and the resultant hostility and dissatisfaction generated, are obstacles to such reciprocal arrangements. Likewise, Sennett (2003: 219) argues that mutuality requires recognition in order to make giving and receiving a meaningful exchange, and that ‘reciprocity is the foundation of mutual respect’.

The concept of social recognition was described at the beginning of this chapter as the attainment of a combination of accumulation and expenditure of capital that is durable and legitimated. Social recognition suggests that people both recognise the needs of others (generativity) and are concurrently recognised in addressing those needs (responsibility). It is this ‘duality’ of recognition that is crucial in ensuring durability and legitimation.

The secondary analysis outlined in this chapter suggests that persisters lacked opportunities for expenditure and experienced more constraints than desisters in the transition to adulthood. The vast majority of these persisters were experiencing constraints and difficulties in their lives at the time of interview and lacked opportunities for expenditure of capital through conventional means. However, those who had stopped offending seemed to have greater opportunities for expenditure of capital and the majority stated they were *not* experiencing difficulties in their lives currently. However, the secondary analysis was not informed by specific questions at interview, but was developed with hindsight as a result of the findings from the interviews. This analysis is thus tentative but potentially could be very fruitful in understanding, if not explaining, the process of offending in the transition to adulthood.

It is argued here that only with a combination of capital accumulation and expenditure, in a reciprocal and durable dialogue with others, are individuals and groups able to fully reap the benefits of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital, and thus gain access to wider social recognition. Such recognition comes over time: in Bourdieu's language, it is the durability and legitimacy of the capital (its *sustainability* and *social credibility* over time) that creates social recognition. However, for children and young people durability and legitimacy of capital are rarely possible within the liminal transition phase, and such capital can only be sustained within the relative stability of adulthood, when greater opportunities for expenditure as well as accumulation are available to them. Offending in youth could, therefore, be argued to be a substitute for the legitimate and sustainable accumulation and expenditure of capital that comes with the interdependence and reciprocity of adulthood. Willis (1990: 7) also suggests that youth

culture more generally (and this could be seen to include offending behaviour) has often replaced social recognition as a vehicle towards self and social identity for young people in transition:

... the teenage and early adult years are important... because it is here... where people are formed most self-consciously through their own symbolic and other activities... through which they understand themselves and their possibilities for the rest of their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the large number of these young people who had stopped offending before they reached so-called 'adulthood' (10 male and 10 female respondents who had officially stopped offending two years following interview were under the age of 25 (Jones, 1996)), it would seem that offending and desistance are not correlated with 'childhood', 'youth' and 'adulthood' *per se*, but are correlated more with levels of responsibility and legitimacy. Indeed, as highlighted in Chapter 8, the factors most often associated with adulthood – stable employment or one's own home and family – were not achieved in the majority of cases, irrespective of the age at which the respondents stopped offending. This suggests that there are other factors affecting one's propensity or otherwise to stop offending rather than age or adulthood *per se*, and this is where Bourdieu's concept of capital accumulation and its suggested counterpart, expenditure, come to the fore. Whilst many of the desisters were still in the transition phase of youth, they seemed to have already found or been given opportunities to expend as well as accumulate capital. However, from an analysis of the case studies of those still offending, these opportunities seemed at best temporary and at worst non-existent.

Bourdieu (1986: 249-50) has suggested that social capital gained from a network of connections is not 'a natural given... [but] is the product of an endless effort... [resulting in] durable obligations subjectively felt (gratitude, respect, friendship) or institutionally guaranteed (rights)'. The importance of other people in the transition to adulthood cannot be underestimated – family in childhood; peers, partners and professional workers in youth; and family, friends, colleagues and partners in adulthood. They all seem to play a role in enabling children and young people not only to accrue, but also as they get older to expend their various forms of capital.

Being in control is a major influence in one's propensity either to offend or act in a conventional manner. Crime, not least if successful, can give one the air of being in control (Katz, 1991) and suggests competence (Shover, 1996). In relation to desistance, Maruna (2001) and Burnett (2003) suggest that a feeling of personal agency in one's life is helpful in the desistance process and Shover and Thompson (1992: 92) point out, a stake in conformity 'improves the odds of desistance'.

Accumulating certain types of capital can be relatively easy, although not necessarily via legitimate means. In the liminal phase, limited rights and limited access to mainstream opportunities severely restrict one's access to capital, although class inequalities also tend to restrict access to capital more generally within the population. Without responsibility, rights and opportunities, however, expenditure of capital is difficult to achieve, thus restricting one's access to social recognition.

The processes of offending (for those young people that *do* offend) and transition tend to run parallel courses, based not only on age but also on levels of capital accumulation

and expenditure. This parallel course is most apparent for young people from working class backgrounds who have limited access to capital to ease the transition to adulthood. Both offending and transitions are processes that result from a perceived need by young people to develop, experiment, interact with different people at different phases, and to achieve eventual recognition within wider society. It has been argued in this chapter that durability and sustainability, crucial factors in the achievement of social recognition, cannot readily occur during the youth phase, as this phase is seen as transient and lacking in legitimate opportunities for young people. Whilst offending during the youth phase can increase one's short-term accumulation of capital, it is unlikely to address the need for expenditure of capital or for longer-term capital accumulation. However, once young people have access to durable and legitimate opportunities for responsibility-taking and generativity, thereby developing opportunities for expenditure of capital as well as accumulation, it is more likely that desistance will occur.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS

The transition from family to school along with changes in friendship networks as children move into adolescence seems to be a promising area of exploration for criminologists... Similarly, learning more about the transitions from adolescence to adulthood is critical for understanding the development of social ties in adulthood (Sampson & Laub, 1993: 250).

...in so far as youth raises its voice at all, the cry is for jobs, for incorporation; their concern is not to subvert a social order but to join it (Mungham, 1982: 38).

INTRODUCTION

This study set out to explore young people's perceptions of why they start offending, continue offending over a period of time and stop offending, whether there were gender differences emerging from this analysis, and whether there was a common thread between their reasons for starting, continuing and stopping offending. The criminological literature on offending and desistance can suggest no such common thread, other than that offenders age and thus 'grow out of' crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Rutherford, 1986); nor can it account for 'life course persistent' offenders (Moffitt, 1993, 1997). The literature on onset of offending cannot readily explain differences between ethnicity, gender, class and age, nor variations in rates and types of offending over time. Equally, the literature on desistance focuses predominantly on 'trigger points' during the life course which are likely to encourage desistance, but such literature cannot account for desistance where no such trigger points exist. As the opening quotation to this chapter illustrates, Sampson and Laub (1993) stress the importance of the life course and social ties in embedding much crime in the transitional situation of young people. However, even the concept of social ties

has not proved empirically rigorous. Social ties such as employment, school achievement, marriage and parenthood have not always been shown to be associated with a marked reduction in offending (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Leibrich, 1993). Yet, whilst many young offenders, notably those from working class backgrounds, may not have opportunities such as stable employment, a home and family of their own or access to supportive mechanisms of informal social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993), the majority of young people, nevertheless, still stop offending. Equally, many theories of offending focus on a lack of self-control, social control and opportunities that meet young people's expectations for personal identity and social development. However, such theories cannot readily explain cultural, temporal and gender differences, and tend not to relate offending to the socio-legal position of many disadvantaged young people in the transition to adulthood.

One of the contentions of this thesis is that the literature on theories of offending does not adequately differentiate between the two phases of onset and maintenance of offending, and therefore cannot easily account for differences in offending over time. Nor can such literature necessarily set the scene for the potential phase of desistance. Likewise, the desistance literature has predominantly focused on individuals' changed values and perceptions of risk (issues of agency) or on increased opportunities for conventional living (issues of structure), but not in tandem. In addition, the desistance literature cannot easily explain or relate to the phases of onset and maintenance of offending and thereby view offending as a process of change, nor does it give adequate coverage to the socio-legal impact of transition on young people's lived experience of youth.

An additional omission in much of the criminological literature to date, both on starting and stopping offending, relates to youth transitions and their correlation with phases of offending. It has been argued in this thesis that youth transitions are influenced by age-related power imbalances, as is offending behaviour. This study, therefore, drew on a combined set of academic literature, including criminological theories, youth transitions and the concepts of capital, in order to investigate the possible linkages between the onset, maintenance and desistance phases of offending behaviour and those of transition. It suggests that the three phases of offending run similar courses to the phases of youth transition and that offending in the transition to adulthood is one means of gaining social recognition during that liminal period.

THE FIELDWORK AND ANALYSIS

Gaining access to young people who have been, or are, involved in offending is inherently difficult, not only because such behaviour is ‘unconventional’ and illegal but also because their age and status tend to result in a transient, cautious and often erratic lifestyle. Whilst these factors were not insurmountable in gaining access to them, they should not be underestimated. The sensitivity of the research topic and the fact that access was facilitated by a criminal justice agency could well have resulted in a biased, disparate and reticent sample, but as the material presented in this thesis suggests, this was not the case in relation to this study. Not only was I able to identify an equal gender mix of 40 young people and a relatively balanced range of persisters and desisters, I was also able, through the medium of in-depth interviews, to engage fully and constructively with them in a discussion of offending and desistance. The study was also unique in its appropriation of Bourdieu’s theory of social practice and, in particular, his concepts of

capital (1977; 1986) in order to compare offending behaviour with youth transitions. Whilst Bourdieu's concepts of capital have been given little attention to date in relation to the specific situation of children and young people (Morrow, 1999), let alone young offenders, his concepts of capital were 'work in progress' and were not intended to be set in stone, but to be appropriated, modified and extended (Robbins, 2003; Reay, 2003). They were certainly seen in this study to be useful in comparing the phases of offending with those of youth transition.

Bourdieu's theory of social practice (1986), and in particular his concepts of capital, are helpful in examining the imbalances in opportunities and status for young people in transition. His conceptual framework was chosen specifically because it is a dynamic model that gives prominence and credence to the structuring influences of time, space, status and class. It has been suggested here that whilst *sustainable* social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital may be lacking for some young people in transition, not least because of their liminal status in youth, the capital accruing from offending may offer them a valuable source of identity and status in an otherwise potentially marginalizing period in their lives. However, the implied temporary nature of youth transitions and the lack of durability and legitimacy of capital accumulation and expenditure in youth are important factors in further understanding when, how and why desistance occurs.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

The young people in this study were working class, disadvantaged and generally adversely affected by family upheaval, by a lack of stability and continuity in childhood

and by limited opportunities for love, attention and encouragement in the transition to adulthood. The majority tended to start offending as a means of social integration (through 'buying' friends or acquiring consumer goods), although a small minority suggested more personal factors such as latent anger or the need to relieve boredom. On the whole, these young people drifted into offending rather than purposefully wanting to 'break the law'. The perceived outcomes of offending for them were both monetary and relational at first, although it could be argued that monetary gain is in itself a means towards integration with others. Offending offered possible status and identity in moving from the confines of the family into the wider social network of the school milieu. Gender differences in the onset phase were quite pronounced, with the men tending to start offending earlier for reasons more to do with monetary or personal gain (for money and excitement) and the women starting later for reasons more to do with relational gain (for attention, to 'buy friends' or because of a fear of reprisals for not 'fitting in'). Differential association theory seemed to explain the women's propensity to start offending more than it did the men's. The women were also less likely to offend for utilitarian gain until a boyfriend or a drug habit encouraged them to do so and did not comment specifically on the excitement of offending as a reason for starting.

When comparing the reasons, costs and benefits of offending in the maintenance phase with those of the onset phase, the study highlights the importance of differentiating between the two phases. This study is relatively innovative in this respect, when judged against the theoretical input on crime and criminality which rarely examines changes in attitudes, behaviour and justifications of offending over the course of an offending history. Most of the sample overall seemed dissatisfied with their offending behaviour

over time, either because it no longer gave them what they wanted in terms of friends, money or status, or because they became increasingly wary of the consequences of their actions. Sociability and status over time were superseded by necessity, resignation or addiction. Reasons for continuing to offend tended to revolve around a drug habit or a need for, or expectation of, supplementary income from theft. Realization of what they had to lose or the 'hassle factor' also became stronger over time, as did responsibilities towards family members, partners, children or one's own tenancy. In this latter respect, the women seemed to have acquired greater responsibilities at a younger age than their male counterparts, thus questioning sooner for them the value of continuing to offend.

Whilst a positive reputation amongst one's peers was often an incentive to start offending, this was increasingly offset by a negative reputation within their wider social network (both in the family and the community) as they became involved with the criminal justice system in the maintenance phase. Many suggested in retrospect that they knew they were almost immune from punishment under the age of 16, but beyond that age, they became disillusioned and disempowered by the police, the courts, custody and a criminal record.

This so-called 'criminal justice system fatigue' was a commonly stated reason for wanting to stop offending, coupled with a realization of what they increasingly had to lose by continuing to offend. Whilst they may have drifted into offending, the majority made proactive decisions to stop, irrespective of the lack of positive incentives available to them. There were few perceived 'pull' factors involved in their decision to stop offending, with the criminal justice system, a drug addiction, loss of trust within the family and a deteriorating reputation being the main 'push' factors. At the time of

stopping offending, the majority did not have employment or a stable relationship, often seen as the main catalysts to desistance. However, many were encouraged in their decision to desist by the support of friends, family, children and loving relationships (the latter two being particularly relevant to the women). Because the women were more likely to have a drug habit than the men, also being prescribed methadone was a major disincentive to feeding a drug habit through offending. Generally, desistance for the women resulted more from *actual* commitments (to children, partners or parents), whereas for the men desistance was more in preparation for *potential* commitments (aspirations for employment or raising a family).

The majority of these young people were currently or previously experiencing situations of discontinuity, instability and liminality. Many spoke of their childhoods in terms of moving home area, living with differing family members, living with mothers who had several changes of partner and being looked after in residential care. Many also equated these experiences with their propensity to offend, either because of a lack of constant care or because of the emotional disruption caused by a fluctuating and often abusive core family group. Not only did differential access to a constant and stable family and community restrict their accumulation of, in particular, social but also economic, cultural and symbolic capital, it also undermined their attempts at regaining such capital through relatively stable friendship groups. It could be argued that this differential access to significant others both heightened their perceived need to ‘buy’ their friends when such opportunities presented themselves and to ‘fit in’ to such friendship circles in the perceived time allowed. Offending was, to many, an obvious vehicle in the ‘rush’

to make and keep friends. The social identity gained from peers was crucial at a time when other people and situations in their lives were in a state of flux and uncertainty.

The fact that crime is disproportionately committed by males – as well as disproportionately dealt with by the criminal justice system in relation to males – has posed a problem for criminologists since feminist criminology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. However, Brown (1998) questions the ultimate usefulness of a preoccupation with gender in criminology, suggesting that both gender and crime issues are too diverse to be scrutinised hand in hand. Indeed, Morris (1987: 39-40) suggests that criminal behaviour ‘is not peculiar to any particular... sex; the same explanatory principles should be relevant for each’ (quoted in Brown, 1998: 104). In this regard, it is hoped that Bourdieu’s concepts of capital and the emerging concept of social recognition can both transcend and explain differences in gender and crime. From the secondary analysis, it seemed that whilst there were gender differences, these were less significant in influencing criminality and crime amongst young people in transition than their desire for integration and ‘a stake’ within the wider society.

Using Bourdieu’s concept of capital as an explanatory tool, it seemed from the findings that the desire for social and symbolic capital through integration and status was an important factor both in the transition to adulthood and in the process of offending. The concept of capital cut across the boundaries between childhood, youth and adulthood, but the lack of sustainability and legitimacy of such capital in transition made recourse to offending more likely. In addition to utilising Bourdieu’s concept of capital, it has been attempted in this thesis to develop a concept (social recognition) which can better explain the sequence of events and thinking surrounding young people’s offending over

time (albeit with recourse to retrospective rather than longitudinal data) and to combine both agency and structure in the transition to adulthood.

Social recognition has been defined as the attainment of a durable and legitimate combination of capital accumulation and expenditure. Whilst offending enabled the accumulation of capital in the short term, it did not enable the accumulation or expenditure of capital in the longer term. Because of their liminal status, certain young people lack the opportunities to expend as well as accumulate legitimate and durable capital. Desistance did not come with age *per se*, but with increased opportunities to expend capital through generativity and responsibility-taking. The women in this respect seemed more likely to respond to the accumulation and expenditure of social capital (given their emphasis on relational factors) whereas the men continued to seek symbolic capital but were frustrated in this as a result of structural constraints. The women also seemed to have greater access to opportunities to both accumulate and expend capital through conventional means as they grew older. For example, the women were more than twice as likely as the men to have children of their own and their own tenancy. The women were also more likely to have access to formal (professional) or informal (personal) support mechanisms in addressing offending or drug and alcohol problems. Because of the women's more collective and emotional approach (Gilligan, 1982), other people were the most likely recipients of these women's expenditure of capital through generativity and responsibilities as mothers or partners, thereby enhancing their social recognition. The men, on the other hand, being more separatist and individual, tended to have fewer opportunities for generativity and responsibility, thus reducing their opportunities for social recognition through relational

means. This could be a reason why the young women's offending was generally more short-term and less serious than the men's.

There is a seeming convergence of the two pathways of offending and youth transitions in terms of time and space, and these young people's accounts of their recourse to offending strongly suggest that offending is a personal means (capital accumulation) to a social end (integration). The pathways of offending and transitions suggest movement in time and the potential of individual agency and, as such, support the argument here that offending is a transient occupation, its duration dependent not only on external structural factors but also on individual self-determination. What is missing, however, from Bourdieu's theory of social practice is the scope of the concept of capital to include expenditure as well as accumulation.

The phases of childhood, youth and adulthood tend to overlap, as prescribed not only by young people's competences and experiences but also by their staggered access to legislative and other rights in the transition to adulthood. These age-related phases tend more often than not to coincide with the age-crime curve, not least because most crime is committed by young people who start in their teens and cease to offend in their twenties. However, it seems to be *more than* an age-crime curve, one that stresses agency and status as well as maturation or aging itself. *Age per se* is not an accurate indicator of onset or desistance since people start and stop offending at different points in the life course, and such activity may also be cyclical and intermittent throughout life. Not all desisters necessarily have durable, legitimate access to both accumulation and expenditure of capital in adulthood. Nevertheless, conventional opportunities are seen by young people as being more durable and integrative than offending as they

move through the transition to adulthood and, as such, provide a more legitimate means of having a 'stake' in society.

The young people in this study were from disadvantaged, working class backgrounds and were additionally restricted in their access to mainstream opportunities (such as employment, housing and social status) because of their age as well as their class⁴⁶. Because of their transitional situation, many young people lack the status and opportunities of full citizens and thus have limited capacity for social recognition in terms of durable and legitimate means of both accumulating and expending capital through taking on responsibility and generativity.

It is argued in this thesis that offending in the transition to adulthood is one vehicle that disadvantaged young people can use to move from the relative shelter of the family, through the vagaries of youth, to emerge at the ultimate point of societal acceptance, integration and belonging. In other words, offending is a cultural resource or strategy, however temporary or misguided, that young people can draw on to achieve social, economic, cultural or symbolic capital. However, there are other key sources of positive capital which seem to be present in the transition phases. These include the social and symbolic capital of, on the one hand, one's parents, one's own children, friends and partners and on the other, the social and symbolic capital of taking on responsibility for oneself or others. Many of the young people either chose or felt compelled to modify their habitus, and hence their practice, as a result of the learning gained from past

⁴⁶ However, 'class' is a contested concept, since for young people the class of their parents is the usual comparator, whereas Greenberg (1979), for example, would argue that marginalising influences such as compulsory schooling and the labour market place 'young people' lower down in the social hierarchy merely by dint of their age, rather than the occupation of their fathers.

experiences as well as from the expectations and encouragement of those closest to them in the transition to adulthood.

The concepts of capital accumulation and expenditure can contribute towards an understanding of the timing of onset, maintenance and desistance as well as gender differences, and it is argued here that these concepts are more helpful in this understanding than age itself. Accumulation of capital requires, to a certain extent, both responsibilities and access to opportunities; however, children and young people rarely have such opportunities because of their status as 'liminal entities' (Turner, 1969), not least those from a working class background. Jenkins (2003, pers.comm) has described Bourdieu's concepts of social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital as 'imprecise heuristic devices', but their imprecision has enabled greater scope for appropriation and adaptation within this study, so as to be able to more fully understand both transitions and youth offending as processes and phases in the life cycle.

As was suggested in Chapters 2 and 3, there are few criminological theories which a) can account for the three phases of offending in parallel and b) can account for 'false positives' - those individuals who desist from crime against all [academic] expectations. The concept of social recognition has the potential to address a) above, if offending behaviour is explored in the context of the transition to adulthood – one's level of capital accumulation is determined by one's family and social background in childhood, can be augmented by offending in youth (at least until structural constraints such as the criminal justice system take over), and can be supplemented in adulthood through wider responsibilities and social networks. Matza's (1964) concepts of neutralization and will are helpful in understanding children and young people's conscious and pragmatic

search for capital through social integration and status. However, although his concept of drift is a useful metaphor for the onset stage of offending, it is argued here that capital accumulation (however defined) involves greater agency and self-control on the part of individuals during the maintenance and – especially – the desistance phases. Elements of social control and strain theories have influenced the development of the concept of social recognition in that strain (and hence offending) comes from being denied legitimate opportunities for capital accumulation in the liminal phase of transition. Likewise, formal (negative) social control mechanisms (the criminal justice system in particular) tend to constrain the accumulation and expenditure of capital for young people, whilst informal (positive) social controls mechanisms (gained through responsibility taking and generativity, for example) can offer greater opportunities for social recognition.

In terms of b) above - the ‘false positives’ - labelling theory, social control, subcultural and strain theories, for example, have been criticised for not being able to account for desistance which occurs without any obvious changes in structural circumstances. For example, individuals desist from crime without gaining employment, a stable income or a family of their own. Many of the young people in this sample also managed to stop offending, not only in times of poverty and addiction, but also in the face of continued harassment by, for example, the police or the ‘subcultural’ milieu of their offending peers. Thus, whilst still labelled as offenders within their communities, they nevertheless managed to desist from crime. Whilst theories of desistance have explored the *quality* of turning points in young people’s lives which may enable desistance to occur, none have systematically explored the institutional factors that inhibit or enhance

capital accumulation and expenditure, factors which I argue may well affect one's propensity to offend and one's opportunities for social recognition. The following section suggests some ways forward in this respect.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES...

Research on young people, whether this be in relation to culture, transitions or offending, tends to concentrate on moral or individual problems rather than political or collective problems. The notion of young people's *expectations* rarely features in these debates, such as their expectation of eventual conventionality, their expectation of a 'stake' in society as full citizens and their expectation of the opportunities and responsibilities afforded their older counterparts. Political and collective solutions rather than solely an individual or developmental approach need to be more fully investigated in understanding youth offending.

I have within this study endeavoured to use empirical data to better understand key theoretical concepts, but intend to develop and test a more specific theoretical framework through further research. Taking cognisance of Sampson and Laub's opening suggestion to this chapter for further research on the topic of transitions and offending, a further study could explore young offenders' preferences and opportunities for responsibility-taking and generativity throughout childhood and youth and into adulthood, as well as the timing of such activity in relation to their offending during those transitional periods. Such a study would, where possible, allow for the continued involvement of the young people who participated in the present study, thus allowing for a more longitudinal picture to emerge of their own experiences over time.

Social recognition is not a concept easily amenable to operationalism. The operationalization of a concept, according to Bryman (1988), requires a specification of the operations by which scientific theories are to be measured, thus removing ambiguity. However, such measurement tends to apply more to quantitative than to qualitative material. Nevertheless, in this study, certain factors associated with social recognition may be subjected to more quantitative investigation. For example, one could identify certain factors likely to create opportunities for capital accumulation and expenditure (along the lines of Tables 9.1 and 10.1), as well as factors likely to restrict such opportunities (as per Figure 10.1). Equally, factors associated specifically with capital expenditure (e.g., generativity and responsibility-taking) versus capital accumulation could be compared with levels of offending over time for specific groups of people. For example, it would be informative to analyse the offending pattern over time of young carers, who may score highly on capital expenditure, have few opportunities for capital accumulation and have little durability or legitimacy of capital gained from their caring role.

Further research into the differing lengths and qualities of transitions in varying countries compared with those countries' youth offending rates may also shed some light on whether youth transitions *per se* (i.e., across cultures) have a specific effect on offending behaviour. The criminalization of the young indigeneous populations of Australia and New Zealand and the low youth crime rates in Japan would warrant further attention from a social recognition perspective. Whilst the current study utilised a small, UK-based sample, it was able to focus on an equal number of male and female respondents, thus overcoming the gender-blind criticism of much criminological

research. Whether the findings from this study could be replicated in other cultures remains to be seen, but the concept of social recognition offers a potential tool for examining offending amongst other youth populations in other transitional arrangements. It also offers the potential to explain onset, maintenance and desistance through an analysis of the formal and informal social bonds and opportunities for expenditure versus accumulation over time. The concept of social recognition could also be transferable across age, race and gender.

In conclusion, this study aimed to further the debate about the causes and correlates of youth offending and desistance. The voice of the young people in this research, their experiences of marginalization and their expressed desire for integration and conventionality led me to the concepts of capital accumulation and expenditure, and from there to the concept of social recognition. The study explored both young people's experiences of offending as a process of change and the potential of Bourdieu's concepts of capital as a tool to link the phases of offending with those of youth transition. Social recognition is a concept that may further an understanding of youth offending and exemplify young people's wish for legitimate and sustained opportunities within mainstream society. The concept of social recognition also highlights the need for reciprocity, in that the mainstream society also needs to demonstrate the value it places on young people's capacities and responsibilities in the transition to adulthood. Until there is a reciprocal and constructive approach taken by society to the problems faced by its young people in transition, then a greater understanding of youth offending will continue to elude us. The young people in this research demonstrated a common need for interaction, integration, interdependence and trust, a need which, if addressed,

could well alleviate the problem of youth crime. To finish with the plea of one of the young women in this study, Gillian (aged 29): 'Put faith in me. Give me another chance. Trust me'.

APPENDIX 1: Offending histories of respondents and self-reported offences

OFFENDING HISTORIES

Respondent Reference number	Age at interview	Age started offending	Age stopped offending ⁴⁷	Length of offending history	No. of previous offences	No. of previous convictions
Males:						
01 Alec	28	15	24	9	23	11
02 Bob	20	17	N/A	5+	53	30
03 Charlie	21	15	20	5	30	21
04 Derek	21	12	22	10	32	19
05 Eric	21	13	N/A	10+	72	40
07 Frank	22	12	23	11	30	14
09 Graham	21	13	22	9	44	33
10 Harry	26	13	22	9	38	29
11 John	23	12	N/A	13+	54	40
12 Kevin	23	15	N/A	10+	35	21
13 Len	26	8	N/A	20+	81	47
14 Martin	24	18	24	6	18	11
16 Nick	28	8	N/A	20+	51	24
17 Owen	18	11	N/A	9+	14	9
18 Pete	19	10	19	9	22	12
19 David	20	12	N/A	10+	30	18
21 Rory	23	12	20	8	29	22
22 Sam	23	15	23	8	28	17
23 Tom	19	11	20	9	14	11
24 Vic	23	8	24	16	67	46
Females:						
08 Laura	27	12	25	13	46	24
15 Anna	21	14	22	8	38	25
20 Karen	28	21	29	8	26	14
25 Bernadette	23	14	21	7	4	4
26 Diane	21	9	20	11	8	5
27 Marie	21	15	22	7	20	15
28 Nina	23	14	24	10	43	18
29 Alison	20	12	N/A	10+	79	47
30 Paula	27	19	N/A	10+	15	9
31 Janet	21	8	16	8	3	2
34 Carol	29	12	29	17	3	3
35 Helen	20	10	19	9	15	13
36 Sarah	27	16	N/A	13+	15	9
37 Gillian	29	17	N/A	14+	8	4
38 Vicky	27	22	26	4	5	4
39 Rhona	22	9	N/A	15+	24	15
40 Theresa	33	12	31	19	19	12
41 Cathy	23	17	24	7	25	18
42 Avril	18	11	17	6	5	3
43 Yvonne	25	13	24	11	10	5

⁴⁷ This age is based on SCRO records up until September 2002.

SELF-REPORTED OFFENCES (detected and undetected)

Type of offence	No. of respondents
Shoplifting	31
Possession of drugs	28
Breach of the Peace	24
Assault	23
Theft	21
Housebreaking	20
Supply of drugs	12
Fraud	12
Motorbike/car theft	10
Serious assault	9
Vandalism	9
Police assault	9
Road Traffic Act offences	9
Reset	8
Under-age drinking	6
Carrying offensive weapon	5
Drunk and disorderly/incapable	4
Resisting arrest	4
Malicious damage	2
Fighting	2
Attempted murder	2
Grievous bodily harm	2
Trespass	2
Female prostitution	2
Robbery	2
Breaking into cars	2
Handling explosives	1
Car breaking	1
Neglect	1
Solvent abuse	1
Abduction	1
Indecent exposure	1
Indecent assault	1
Fire raising	1
Fire arms	1
Armed robbery	1
Mugging	1
Criminal damage	1
Absconding	1
TV licence	1
Wasting police time	1
Racially-aggravated assault	1
Perverting the course of justice	1
Contempt of court	1

APPENDIX 2: Interview Schedule

Date Time: start:Finish: Place of interview M / F

Demographic information

Age How long lived in area

Who live with No. of children

Qualifications/Attitude to schooling

Employment history/Attitude to employment

Starting offending

1. What do you mean by offending?
2. When did you first start offending [*check detected v. undetected offending*]?
3. Was anything significant happening in your life at that time that may have made a difference?
4. What were your reasons for starting offending?
5. Did you make an active decision to start offending?
6. Did anyone or anything influence you to start? [*do you blame them in particular?*]
7. What were the advantages of starting?
the disadvantages of starting?

Exercise 1: On the timeline, from age of onset, list all offences committed each year, regardless of whether or not caught, and the number of times committed in each year.

Mark convictions with a ©.

Exercise 2: [List all offences committed on separate cards]

8. Group those offences and describe the differences between each grouping.
9. Why did you commit these offences and not others [*probe*] [*refer back to Exercise 2 and ask about each offence individually; check whether and why there are changes in any pattern of offending; check why they may have cut down or stopped offending in the past*].

10. Which of the following categories would you put yourself in now?

A) I am offending as much now as I used to B) I am offending more often now than I used to C) I am offending less often now than I used to D) I have stopped offending completely now

11. Which category would you have put yourself in: - 2 years ago A B C D n/a

5 years ago A B C D n/a

[explore any changes in patterns of offending over the last five years]

Exercise 3: [Draw a graph of High, Medium, Low and No Involvement in offending from age of onset to present]

If persister/attempted desister (A, B, C):

12. What are your reasons for continuing to offend?

[explore how these compare with the reasons for starting and why they have changed, if appropriate]

13. Did anyone or anything influence you to continue?

[explore how these compare with what/who influenced starting]

14. What are the advantages of continuing?

the disadvantages of continuing?

[explore how these compare with the advantages and disadvantages of starting]

15. Do you want to stop offending? *[explore reasons]*

[If yes:]

16. What/who might help you to stop? *[formal v. informal intervention; when?]*

17. What might get in the way of you stopping?

If desister (D):

18. What were your reasons for offending over that period of time? *[refer to Exercise 1]*

19. What were the reasons for you stopping offending?

[explore how these compared with the reasons for starting]

20. Did you make an active decision to stop offending? *[When? How often? Compare with decision to start]*

21. Did anyone or anything help you to stop? *[formal v. informal intervention; explore how these reasons compare with what/who influenced starting]*

22. What are the advantages of not offending now?
the disadvantages of not offending now?
[explore how these compare with the advantages and disadvantages of starting]

23. What might happen to make you start offending again in the future?

General [all respondents]:

Exercise 4: Write down all the important things that have happened in your life (both good and bad) and the people you've known that have affected or influenced your behaviour or attitude (similar to Exercise 1); explain what they meant to you at the time.

24. How have these people/events changed your behaviour or attitude? *[ask for each person/event]*

25. Have any of these people/events made you more or less likely to offend? *[in what ways?]*

26. Do you think there are any connections between your pattern of offending (Exercise 1) and important people events (Exercise 4)?

27. Have any court disposals changed your attitude or behaviour at all *[include IPP project]*?

28. Do you think you currently have, or previously had, a reputation as an offender? *[when? by whom? proud or unhappy about it?]*

29. What have you got to lose by offending now?

30. Are you happy with the way you are now?

31. What have been the major achievements in your life?

32. What would you have liked to have been able to do better?

33. What responsibilities do you have *[for yourself or others]*?

34. What are your goals for the future? *[how realistic and how and when achieved?]*

35. What are the obstacles to you achieving these goals? *[Previous obstacles? Future obstacles?]*

36. What can agencies and other people do to help young people stop offending?

37. How would you help young people to stop offending?

38. Why do you think young people stop offending?
[explore which young people are more likely to stop; check if these reasons are consistent with their own reasons for stopping]

39. Is there anything I did not ask that you think may be important?

APPENDIX 3: Contract between researcher and respondent

INTRODUCTION

I am talking to about 40 young people in Scotland who have been referred to the [IPP] project in the past, because I want to ask their advice about why young people start offending, what types of offences they commit and what would help them to stop offending.

I am doing this research as part of a course at Stirling University. The research is not being done for any agency and I am not getting paid for it.

Your name will not be mentioned in the report I write at the end of the study and the information you give me will be strictly confidential. However, I do not want to know any identifying details about offences you have committed that the police might still be looking into, because I would be under an obligation to pass that information on, so please do not go into detail about anything that might incriminate you.

Equally, if there is anything I ask you that you would rather not answer for whatever reason, that is fine, just say so. And if you suddenly decide that you would rather not be involved in the research, and not be interviewed, you can stop me at any point.

I would like to tape our conversation, but only myself and a typist will have access to that tape.

Finally, I may want to come back to you within the next year or so, if I need to clarify anything with you.

Signed... .. Date... ..
(Monica Barry, Researcher)

I understand the purpose of the research and agree to be interviewed, given the undertakings set out above.

Signed... .. Date... ..

Name [CAPITALS].....

Contact address:

... ..

Tel. No.

APPENDIX 4: SCRO data consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

I REQUEST THAT THE SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT GIVE
MONICA BARRY ACCESS TO MY PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS SHEET(S)
IN MY SOCIAL WORK FILE, FOR THE PURPOSES OF HER RESEARCH
STUDY ON OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR.

Signed... .. Date... ..

Name (CAPITALS)... ..

Address... ..

.....

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