

Voicing Desistance:

Female Perspectives on Giving up Crime

by

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Abstract

Criminological theory and research has historically focused on explaining how people get into crime and much less on how and why they stop, despite the perennial finding that most of those with convictions do eventually stop offending. The very meaning of 'desistance' however has been much contested, yet has broadly been linked with themes such as maturity, adult social bonds, agency, identity and hope (Bottoms et al, 2004). Even more concerning, however, is the further marginalisation of already marginalised groups within the vast majority of desistance literature. The bulk of research in this area can be noted for the salience of the white, male perspective of offending trajectories. By revisiting maturational, social bonds and subjective theories of desistance through the eyes of women traveling desistance journeys, as well as considering current criminal justice approaches, this thesis gives a female voice to desistance research.

The methodology which informs this work is observation research and individual narrative interviews of females with convictions. I argue for a feminist approach to desistance, which recognises that a huge proportion of women in the CJS stem from backgrounds of abuse, economic disadvantage and alcohol, drug and mental health issues. Yet we must move away from the dichotomy of narratives of victimisation and survival and recognise that women have agency. We must challenge the neo-liberal and patriarchal approach to desistance which promotes women's role as care givers and unpaid volunteer workers. Women's desistance can challenge neo-liberal, patriarchal constructs much in the same way that women's offending often does.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of two women who left us too soon – the woman known as 'Sue' in this thesis and my beautiful cousin and friend, Fiona Kelly. We all miss you every day.

Abbreviations

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CJS – Criminal Justice System

CRC – Community Rehabilitation Company

DV – Domestic Violence

HfN – Housing for Northshire

NWSAR – Northshire Women’s Specified Activity Order

PbR – Payment by Results

TR – Transforming Rehabilitation

WC – Women’s Centre

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The studentship through which this thesis was funded originally bore the title: *Young Offenders on the Road to Desistance*. It was not, initially, intended as an exploration of the gendered desistance journey. However, upon beginning the literature review, it quickly became apparent that women's experiences were largely side-lined, marginalised and incorporated within the male-focused explorations of desistance, echoing women's positions within the male-dominated criminal justice system (CJS). For example, one of the first texts I considered was Farrall and Calverley's 2006 *Understanding Desistance from Crime: Theoretical directions in resettlement and rehabilitation*. This book dedicates three pages of 209 to women. Two of these are dedicated to limitations of the study. A book published in 2013 by Sam King, *Desistance Transitions and the Impact of Probation* contained only a single short paragraph about women. Although women's experiences have had some focus elsewhere, women's voices within desistance literature are still marginalised, particularly in England. Therefore, this thesis examines the desistance journeys as travelled by a small group of Northshire-based women. This chapter provides an introduction to this research by setting out definitional issues and setting the context of the emergence of desistance as a separate theoretical concern within criminology. An explanation will be offered for the apparent gender blindness (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988) of desistance research. It will be argued that this blindness is a consequence of a wider insidious gender blindness of criminological research. In response to this, I will present the aims of this research and the questions which this thesis seeks to address. An outline of the chapters which address these questions follows, including some limitations of this research.

1.2 Defining Desistance

Crime and deviance involve normative behaviours, and most offenders do eventually stop offending by travelling along a path of desistance (Barry, 2006). Establishing a definition of desistance is necessary before any measurement or consideration of how desistance 'works' can be established. The exact meaning of desistance, however, is something which has been contested in the field of criminology. Weaver and Mc Neill (2010) note, 'most criminologists have associated desistance with both ceasing and refraining from offending' (p. 37).

It is not assumed that desistance is a simple process which follows a straight and definite line. A consistent, but not unchallenged (for example see Sampson and Laub, 1993 or Giordano et al, 2002), finding in the desistance literature is that there is no specific 'turning point' in time where former law breakers become 'desisters' (Maruna, 2001, Bottoms and Shapland, 2011). On the contrary, desistance has been likened to a zigzag path (Glaser, 1964). Healy (2012) describes

desistance as the area 'betwixt and between' crime. Liebrich (1993) meanwhile refers to the 'curved' pathway of desistance. Matza's (1964) theory of 'drift' suggests that individuals tend to move between conventional and delinquent behaviour throughout the life course and especially in their younger years. Most academics now recognise desistance as a process or a path rather than a specific event. These definitions suggest that a person may go through many periods of desistance throughout the life course, making it difficult to categorise individuals in terms of 'desisters' and 'persisters'. Maruna and Farrall (2004) have differentiated between 'primary' and 'secondary' desistance. 'Primary' desistance can be taken to mean any lull or crime free period in the course of a criminal career. The Stockholm Life Course Project findings have suggested that there are two forms of 'intermittency' in criminal careers, or two forms of primary desistance. The first is when an offender experiences breaks or pauses in offending for various reasons but which are not related to any long-term commitment to change, whilst the second can be understood as attempts to desist where attempts to change are present but for various reasons are not realised (Carlsson, 2012). These may be people who stop deviant or addictive behaviour but for whatever reason return to it at a later date. As the author notes, 'Intermittent offending is the criminal career, because the great majority of offenders, if not all, tend to follow a zigzag path between onset and desistance' (2012: 931).

'Secondary' desistance, on the other hand, can be described as 'measureable changes at the level of personal identity or the 'me' of the individual' (Maruna et al, 2004b: 274). Essentially, secondary desistance involves the casting off of the former 'offender' identity and a move towards generative concerns consistent with a new identity. It can also be known as 'true' or 'complete' desistance. It is worth noting that both these forms of desistance can apply to formerly persistent or serious offenders at different points in the life cycle. More recently, the dual nature of desistance has been called into question. Healy and O'Donnell, in their 2006 study of Irish male probationers found little evidence of agency or generative concerns consistent with notions of secondary desistance in the narratives they collected. Vaughan (2007) has introduced a tertiary and final stage of desistance which suggests a commitment to a new identity so powerful that it is incompatible with any former criminal identity. Runggay (2004) has meanwhile asserted that desistance is better described as a process of maintenance which tends not to emanate from a single event or decision 'but as a process in which skills and advantages accumulate over time, mutually reinforcing each other and progressively the offender's capacity to avoid recidivism' (p.413). Having considered the desistance experiences of the women involved in this study, this thesis adopts Runggay's (2004) definition of desistance as a process of maintenance. As the following chapters, alongside the profiles in Appendix One illuminate, desistance involved a constant process of maintenance; Kelly-Marie's narrative, for example,

highlights this process of accumulation of skills and advantages over time. Desistance can also mean the collection of bricolage as a method of survival and resistance. Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962) describes the bricolage of mythical thought as attempts to re-use available materials to solve old problems. This will be considered further in Chapter 7. In general, however, desistance theories have linked the cessation of crime with factors such as maturity, adult social bonds, agency, identity and hope (Bottoms et al, 2004). These themes will be explored in this thesis.

The study of desistance has emerged from being an afterthought of developmental, life-course and criminal career research into a substantial body of literature in its own right. Life-course studies can be traced back to 1937 in the form of Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck's in-depth social scientific pioneering work, eventually published as *Unravelling Juvenile Delinquency* (1950) which involved the study of 500 juvenile delinquents in order to untangle the causes of delinquent behaviour. The Gluecks linked desistance with the aging process. During this time however, criminology tended to be concerned with the onset rather than the diminishment of criminal behaviour. Gove (1985) in his study of six of the most influential theories of deviance: labelling theory, conflict theory, differential association theory, control theory, anomie theory, and functional theory went as far as to conclude, 'all of these theoretical perspectives either explicitly or implicitly suggest that deviant behaviour is an amplifying process that leads to further and more serious deviance' (p. 118).

A more formal interest in desistance appeared in the 1970s and 80s, influenced by the influx of longitudinal studies which appeared in the 1960s and the emergence in these groups of cohorts of former offenders whose offending patterns began to slow down (see for example, Meisenhelder, 1977). Yet at the same time the 'Nothing Works' agenda was promoting a mood of despondency over probation and offending patterns in general. The 1980s saw a move to the 'What Works' period of community interventions. The positive mood at the time nevertheless reflected few advancements in opening the 'black box' of 'why' and 'how' (re)integration (following prison) and (re)settlement works (Farrall and Maruna, 2004). The 1990s saw the emergence of sociological and developmental interests in both the causes and continuation (or otherwise) of offending behaviour including explanations for the age-crime curve (Moffitt, 1993; Sampson and Laub, 1993). Sampson and Laub have been extremely influential in their linking of turning points such as employment, marriage and desistance. Developmental theorists such as Terrie Moffitt (1993) have suggested that a dual taxonomy can explain the sharp escalation of the age-crime curve during adolescence. Moffitt has proposed that there are two types of offender: life-course persistent offenders who begin their antisocial behaviour at a young age

and continue to offend over their lives and adolescence-limited offenders (the vast majority of offenders) who are involved in criminal behaviour only during their adolescent years. This, developmental theorists have argued, can explain the shape of the age-crime curve which tends to peak significantly during adolescence. However, as Bottoms and Shapland (2011) note, even for the recidivist offender, offending behaviours tend to decline sharply between the ages of 20 and 30.

Up until the end of the twentieth century, criminal career studies had tended to focus on persistence. At the time, Neal Shover remarked, 'for the most part, the desistance literature has been approached inferentially' (1996: 124). More recently, desistance theories have begun to emerge as a topic in their own right rather than an adjunct to life-course studies. We have also seen a move towards a focus on the subjective experiences of the offender themselves, with an emphasis on the individual as an actor and narrative, life-course interviews as the research tool through which desistance is studied (Liebrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Farrall and Bowling, 1999). From here, we have seen a development of cessation of offending studies to include studies on desistance and diversity, for example in terms of gender or ethnicity (Rumgay, 2004; Calverley, 2013; Rodermond et al., 2016) and how these identities can affect the desistance process. Chapter 2 concentrates on these various explanations for the process of desistance.

1.3 Desistance And The (Absence Of) The 'Woman Question'

First however, we must consider *why* desistance theories and practice have neglected the woman question. Why is desistance theory so male and so pale? Feminist criminologists (Smart, 1977; Heidensohn, 1985; Chadwick and Little, 1987; Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988; Stanko, 1998; Carlen, 2002; Heidensohn, 2004) would argue that the absence of the woman question in this relatively new criminological theory is simply a continuation of women's absence in criminological research more generally. Scraton (1990: 18) noted that young women tend to have 'occasional walk on parts' in these kinds of studies and this skimming over of gendered realities should be addressed. Others argue that women's voices are drowned out by men's. Certainly women occupy a marginal position within the CJS in the UK. In 2011, women represented 5% of the total prison population and 15% of the 125,934 offenders under supervision in the community as a result of community and suspended sentence orders (Ministry of Justice, 2012). This semi-peripheral location of women in the system should not, however, justify their lack of voice in research. This thesis suggests that by constantly locating women's desistance journeys as parallel to men's, we replicate the substantive inequalities which often result in women entering the CJS in the first place, in addition to the substantive inequalities

which they then face in a system built by men, for men. Whilst desistance theory has been an illuminating, progressive light within criminological research and practice, it has largely (with a few exceptions) neglected its sisters. This research shifts the focus to the women travelling desistance journeys and argues that the male desistance paradigm is unfit for women. Desistance can mean resistance to gender norms, just as women's deviance often does. Desistance theories which do not account for difference, reinforce the inequalities and repressions which difference, including gendered difference, creates.

1.4 Aims Of The Research

As has been seen, desistance has attempted to explain the process by which offenders come to live life free from criminality and may mean any crime-free gap in a criminal career. Yet as has also been noted, desistance theories are broadly constructed from the hegemonic white, heterosexual, male experience; female voices tend to get side-lined or not discussed at all (Rumgay, 2004). Indeed this suppression of female voice is nothing new in criminological research. Whilst some studies have included the view of desistance from the female point of view (Jamieson et al., 1999; Giordano et al., 2002; Rumgay, 2004; Barry, 2006) the fact that most of the studies are over a decade old is concerning. Recent moves to address this gap have been largely considered outside England (Rodermond et al., 2016). Other than Rumgay's (2004) study, modern research on female desistance has taken place outside the England and Wales CJS – for example both Barry's (2006) and Jamieson et al.'s (1999) studies were based in Scotland. The current changes in probation provision (see Chapter 8) suggest that now is a critical time for research. It is important to study what can be gained from a move towards privatisation of probation as well as what will be lost. Crucially, the amalgamation of desistance theories and criminal justice intervention evaluation from a feminist perspective makes this research original and meaningful both in terms of adding to the academic literature already available and with regard to policy implications for criminal justice interventions.

This thesis will contest the male-dominated narrative by placing females in conflict with the law as protagonists in the desistance paradigm. By doing this, the thesis will answer the following research questions.

1.5 Research Questions

How and why do females desist from offending? What factors serve as barriers to maintaining abstinence? How do criminal justice interventions influence the process of desistance, if at all? Offending is a transient occupation dependent on both individual and structural factors. How do individual and structural factors interact to influence desistance? Are these factors inherently

different for males (as proposed by the desistance literature) and females? What are the linking factors and what are the differences for males and females in the process of desistance?

1.6 Chapter Outline

Following this introduction, the thesis is set out in nine chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of what is currently known about desistance theory from the literature. It explores the three main desistance theories; maturational (ontogenetic), social bonds (sociological) and narrative (subjective) theories as well as examining the link between criminal justice and desistance and the development of the study of desistance and difference, to include what is currently 'known' about female desistance journeys. Chapter 3 offers an overview of the contextual location of the current project, offering insight into both the wider Northshire area and the Women's Centres (WCs) and Housing for Northshire (HFN) Project where this research is situated. An overview (linking with Appendix 1) of the desistance contexts of the women's lives, particularly focusing on the lives of the women caught up in the CJS is given here. Chapter 4 examines the methodology on which this research is based, in particular focusing on the observation experience and the narrative method which was employed for the interviews.

The following chapters offer a critical perspective on the three current explanatory themes for desistance. Chapter 5 briefly examines the ontogenetic perspective, concluding that it offers an incomplete and gender-blind approach to explaining contemporary female desistance journeys. Chapter 6 moves on to examine sociological explanations, particularly focusing on Sampson and Laub's (1993; 2003) theoretical paradigm. The conclusion here is that 'social bonds' theories which do not take account of the gendered inequalities faced by women within and outwith criminal justice contexts are woefully incomplete and often dangerous. Myths perpetuated about the central importance of marriage and employment to desistance, in a context where women facing CJS sanctions are experiencing abuse as well as the structural inequalities of austerity, can be destructive. Alternative and modified social bonds are considered. Subjective theories are examined from a feminist perspective in Chapter 7. It is argued that subjective experiences are crucial in the desistance narratives of women travelling or attempting to travel desistance journeys. Yet subjective processes cannot be divorced from their contexts; hope and self-efficacy are not one and the same. Problematic ideas around stigma and shame as well as identity change (particularly surrounding women's relational identities) will be explored in this chapter, concluding that the double deviance thesis which surrounds women's entry into the CJS cannot be replicated upon its conclusion. Having examined these three thematic explanations for desistance, the thesis then moves on to consider interventions of the CJS (Chapter 8) which to a greater or lesser extent are justified for their desistance-promoting

qualities. In particular, the thesis examines the new CJS paradigm, 'Transforming Rehabilitation' (TR) as linked with 'Payment by Results' (PbR), focusing on their problematic nature, particularly in the context of women's desistance, yet also finding areas for opportunity. Chapter 9 draws the key themes of this thesis together. Finally, Chapter 10 brings this thesis to a conclusion whilst noting the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

1.7 Thesis Limitations

This research does not offer a panacea for everything related to women and their experiences following criminal justice contact. There are certain ideas which require exploration outside the confines of this research.

1.7.1 Crime and its social construction

Lawbreaking is the act of breaking rules. It is not my task in this thesis to debate the relevance of the established rules (yet it is accepted that the rules and the reasons for enforcing them have been created by a patriarchal system that favours particular groups, often to the detriment of women). Rather, the purpose is to explore the women's reasons for breaking these man-made rules, since this is the system in which we all live, and with which most women and men – happily or otherwise – apparently comply.

1.7.2 Desistance of the powerful

Although this research adopts a critique of neo-liberal¹, patriarchal² constructs of crime, deviance and particularly desistance, this research does not offer an examination of the desistance journeys of the powerful. As minorities within the CJS, females who break the law will always be seen as occupying the sphere of the powerless:

'Sutherland asked why some individuals became involved in crime while others did not. My contention is that this is meaningless. Everyone commits crime. And many, many people, whether they are poor, rich or middling are involved in a way of life that is criminal: and furthermore, no one, not even the professional thief or racketeer or corrupt politician commits crime all the time' (Chambliss, 1975: p. 149).

The article by William Chambliss highlights the inherent contradiction in criminology; everyone commits crime. White-collar crime and state crime does not suffer the prejudices of working class crime. Whilst we are constantly bombarded with mediated propaganda surrounding the crimes of the powerless; crimes of the powerful are rarely subjected to the same kind of scrutiny. On the contrary, state crime and white-collar crime tends to be hidden, unchallenged by the state and even on certain occasions, actively encouraged. Neo-liberal capitalism has meant that

¹ By 'neo-liberal' I mean society and government ruled by the forces of the free market

² By 'patriarchal' I mean society and government controlled by men

the crimes of bankers, of war-mongers, of those who create environmental disasters (arguably, the crimes of middle and upper-class Western white men, see for example Harvey, 2003) are not subject to the same scrutiny of the crimes of thieves, robbers or drug dealers. Criminologists are not exempt from this prejudiced focus. The former group are for this reason not encouraged to desist from their crimes, the same penalties and rehabilitation are not offered to support any such desistance and nor are they marginalised to the same extent as the 'common criminal'. For these reasons, this thesis does not focus on the crimes of the state nor the white-collar criminal, important though it is to recognise their actions. Also it is important to note that they, in many ways, shape the landscape walked by women travelling desistance journeys.

1.7.3 The temporal location of desistance

This thesis will argue that desistance is a process and one which requires maintenance and may involve deviations. This thesis does not attempt to locate any apparent 'turning point' in time when desistance occurs. As will be explored further in Chapter 4, this thesis adopts a prospective examination of desistance as experienced by a small group of Northshire-based women.

1.7.4 The intersectionality of desistance

Individuals travelling desistance journeys do so within a matrix of oppression. The women involved in this research are mainly white and working-class. Yet this research also involves women of differing ethnic identities, women of differing sexualities, religions and beliefs. Women did not travel journeys solely as a lesbian, as a middle-class woman nor as a Christian. Women's identities are constructed from a variety of features, just as my middle-class, Irish, student identity does not operate in isolation from my position as a white, adopted-Mancunian, auntie, partner or daughter. Nonetheless, it is recognised that some identities are particularly central to desistance journeys and this research particularly recommends further study into women's ethnically-centred desisting journeys, for example in a similar way to Calverley's 2013 work.

1.8 Conclusion

A recent cross-European meta-analysis of 44 studies on female desistance (Rodermond et al., 2016) found that having children and pro-social, supportive relationships as well as economic independence and agency and an absence of drugs were important for females attempting to travel desistance journeys, much as the literature suggests these factors are for males. Nonetheless, the authors found gender differences in the influence of children (children were more important to women), supportive relationships (relationship dynamics were arguably more complicated for women), employment (studies comparing genders found that employment had a greater effect on males) and the absence of criminal peers (males were more

likely to be influenced by deviant friends). As will be highlighted in the chapters which follow, this research has reached some similar conclusions.

However, this research will trouble this patriarchal idea of women as relational beings. The current research examines whether motherhood has inherent desistance-inducing features or whether women feel compelled to relate their desistance journeys to their children as a result of the social construction of what it is to be female. Additionally, this research highlights the position of women in the CJS as victims of a patriarchal, neo-liberal condition; as victims of rape, domestic violence and childhood abuse, as voluntary or part-time workers within a system which does not reward them as well as their male counterparts yet cuts their services in increasing increments. Yet the research also highlights female desisters as bricoleurs of their own fate, working against the notion of victimhood. Much like Emma Perry, (2013), the current research will question whether within the CJS, the rehabilitation of female 'offenders' continues to be one of conformity to traditional 'feminine' gender norms as well as a desistance from crime within both theory and practice. The research highlights the potentially damaging nature of the CJS. By offering a feminist analysis of desistance, this research sheds new light on previous analyses of why women desist from offending. In order to create such a paradigm, we must first examine what is already 'known' about the desistance process. It is to this overview that the thesis now turns.

CHAPTER TWO: EXPLAINING DESISTANCE

2.1 Introduction

At the July 1997 British Criminology Conference held in Queens University, Belfast, Shadd Maruna remarked, 'few phenomena in criminology are as widely acknowledged and as poorly understood as desistance from crime'. This statement, made all but two decades ago may no longer be a criminological truth. Certainly since the new millennium, the topic of desistance has been given much attention and it is widely agreed that we now understand much more about the road from crime than ever before. At the same conference, Maruna made the observation that desistance theories tend to fall into the dichotomy of ontogenetic and sociogenic explanations. To these positivist explanations we can now add Maruna and colleagues' own explanations which have been formed through the study of the subjective narratives of the offenders/ former offenders themselves, upon which this current study is based. This chapter focuses on the varying explanations and theories of desistance, covering the three theoretical perspectives mentioned above, moving on to explanations for female desistance and the desistance of other marginalised groups. The chapter also considers the role the criminal justice system (CJS) has and can play in the promotion of desistance, as suggested by the literature.

2.2 Ontogenetic Explanations

The first explanation is also the longest-held theory, emerging from the Gluecks' (1950) study of juvenile delinquency. It was here that the link was made between ageing and the decline of criminal or delinquent behaviour. The study concluded that 'ageing is the only factor which emerges as significant in the reform process' (1950: 105). The Gluecks suggested that desistance was a natural process which happened spontaneously and without the influence of other factors. Speaking at the 1997 conference, Maruna described this explanation as 'the most influential theory of desistance in criminology' (published, 1999).

The offending which traditional criminology tends to focus on is usually confined to young adulthood. Illegal warmongers, large scale environmental polluters, corrupt bankers and politicians aside, the offending which traditional criminology centres on tends to be that committed by young adults. As Bottoms and Shapland concede, the 'criminality of even recidivist offenders' declines sharply in the age range 20-30' (2011: 44), and this is true of both recorded and self-reported offending patterns. McIvor et al. (2000) in their study of young people in Scotland, have agreed that offending is usually a 'transitory phenomenon'. Ontogenetic explanations suggest that the age-crime curve can be easily explained by ageing in itself. Desistance therefore is linked to individual biological processes and the passage of time whilst deviance can be explained as something that (most) offenders will eventually 'grow out of'. As

Gottfredson and Hirschi maintain in their *General Theory of Crime*, 'spontaneous desistance is just that, change in behaviour... that occurs regardless of what else happens' (1990: 136).

For the authors, crime is linked to processes of self-control that are related to biological change brought about, for the most part, by the aging process. Gove, in linking gender and deviance made the observation that aging is 'the most powerful predictor' (1985: 1) of the cessation of crime and deviance which involves significant risk and/ or physically demanding behaviour, and this is true across the genders, although more pronounced amongst males. Therefore, Gove (1985) argues, a purely sociological explanation for desistance from crime is incomplete and must incorporate biological and physiological maturation explanations. Gove (1985) explains the rapid rise and decline of deviant behaviour in young adulthood by the corresponding peaks and troughs of physical strength, energy and psychological drive that come with age and the reinforcement effect of an adrenaline high. Desistance, in his view, is a natural 'stage' in the process of human development.

Other theorists, such as Terrie Moffitt (1993), propose a dual taxonomy which suggests that the age-crime curve can be explained by the presence of two distinct categories – 'adolescence limited' and 'life-course persistent' offenders. In this explanation, adolescent limited offenders, the vast majority of offenders and indeed the general population, display offending behaviours in young adulthood which are motivated by the gap between biological and social maturity. Offending here is a response to the demands of young adulthood. Although not strictly falling into the category of ontogenetic explanations for desistance, Moffitt links aging with processes of biological maturity in one of the most influential criminological studies of the link between crime and development (Kazemian, 2010).

This 'aging out process' explanation of offending trajectories has been subject to much criticism in more contemporary desistance studies. Bushway et al. (2001) suggest that whilst it is true that as individuals age, their likely involvement in criminal activities or deviant behaviour decreases, this explanation 'offers no insight into the causal mechanisms that generate these changes' (p. 492 - 93). As Rungay (2004) elaborates, if we are to believe that desistance is a natural process, that is the same as suggesting that external factors are unnecessary to promote desistance and therefore virtually eradicates the need for any form of intervention, whether this is practical or psychological. A worrying consequence of viewing desistance in this way may be the suppression of public support for rehabilitative programmes and re-integrative services (Maruna, 2001).

Maruna (2001) critiques Gove's (1985) view that biological factors can explain the sharp decline by suggesting that testosterone levels actually drop a lot slower than the sharp peak evident in

the age-crime curve, whatever way the curve is plotted (for more see Bottoms and Shapland, 2011). Age not only accounts for changes in biology or physiology but also in subjective beliefs, attitudes, life experiences and social contexts including experiences of social or institutional processes not limited to the CJS (Weaver and McNeill, 2010). Monica Barry (2006) has argued that desistance is not just a natural consequence of the aging process but is a process which is more likely because of the increased opportunities for social recognition through both the desire to care for others in a generative fashion and the responsibility taking that aging offers. As Moffitt (1993) recognises, society does not treat a young person in the same manner as their elders; discrimination against young people is certainly a factor to consider and viewing desistance as a natural process tends to ignore this discrimination. Moreover, the ontogenetic explanation does not account for differences in offending patterns over time, including differences within gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background etc. nor does this theory reveal the underlying sociological processes associated with aging. As Sampson and Laub (1992) maintain, maturational reform theorists fail to 'unpack' the meaning of age.

2.3 Sociogenic Explanations

'Unpacking' the meaning of age is exactly what Robert Sampson and John Laub have attempted to do, bringing forth the next explanation for desistance. In their 1993 quantitative extension and re-evaluation of the Gluecks' (1950) longitudinal Massachusetts study, the authors developed an age-graded theory of informal social control. The authors latterly followed up on the study in their seminal work entitled *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* (2003) which traced local and national death records (through the Massachusetts Registry of vital records and statistics and National death index and Boston Globe obituaries) and criminal history searches (through the Massachusetts criminal database and criminal histories searches with the help of the FBI) for all 500 men in the Glueck's original delinquent sample up until age 70. Importantly, this work also included a qualitative element where the authors carried out 52 detailed life-story interviews with men from the original delinquent sample. Essentially, Sampson and Laub concluded that focusing on desistance as a natural process of aging overlooked the various 'social bonds' which aging accounts for. What was important to the authors was the 'bond' between the individual and society. In their proposal of an organic, relational (McNeill and Farrall, 2012) process of desistance, Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) emphasised the importance of both informal and formal 'turning points' related to social institutions – such as education, leaving home, getting married, becoming a parent and finding employment – that all exert social control on an individual and are inversely related to changes in adult crime.

The authors emphasised the importance of social ties at all ages across the life course and concluded that factors such as job stability and marriage attachment were significantly related

to changes in adult crime. In the retrospective follow up of these original subjects of the Massachusetts study, Laub and Sampson (2003) argued that the men who desisted from crime were embedded in structured routines, socially bonded and virtually supervised and monitored as a result of these social ties. 'Social bonds' such as a good relationship and/ or stable employment can help an individual a.) 'knife off' the past, b.) invest in new relationships that foster support and growth, c.) be under direct control or supervision, d.) engage in routine, conventional life activities and/ or e.) perform an identity transformation (taken from Carlsson, 2011).

Desistance is related to external factors according to sociogenic theorists whilst continued deviance is related to weak social bonds. Two specific 'turning points' – getting married and finding employment have been particularly positively related to desistance and have been the subject of much research. Marriage especially has been described as a 'pretty robust' (Bersani, Laub and Nieuwebeerta, 2009) indication of a reduction in offending. Sampson et al. (2006) found that marriage correlates with a 35% reduction in crime and have linked this with the opportunity for emotional and practical support, a move away from deviant peers, and the routine structure which a marriage can provide. Other academics have positively linked marriage with desistance, particularly amongst male former offenders across both quantitative and qualitative enquiries (Farrington and West 1995; Horney et al., 1995; Healy and O'Donnell, 2006). An early study by Knight, Osborn and West (1977) found that whilst marriage in itself did not reduce criminal behaviour, it had links with reduced anti-social behaviour such as drug and alcohol use. Warr (1988) also found an indirect relationship between marriage and desistance, finding that marriage tends to indicate a move away from prior anti-social relationships and friendship circles, again particularly for men. Nonetheless, marriage for both binary genders was found to have a positive social bond effect, resulting in a move away from offending. The hypothesis that marriage is positively related to desistance has been criticised for tending to apply only to heterosexual males (to date there have been no specific studies into desistance and same-sex marriage or relationships, something which is recommended for future study) and for not being applicable in today's modern society where couples tend to get married later in life, if at all. Sampson et al. (2006) for example, concede that whilst heterosexual men tend to 'marry up', heterosexual women are more likely to 'marry down' in terms of the positive (or otherwise) effects that a partner creates and therefore the 'good marriage effect' may not be a factor in the desistance of female offenders, and instead may have an opposite effect. Male-focused desistance studies which promote the 'good marriage' effect are therefore particularly problematic for women (Stacey, 1998). Co-habitation, a more common event in today's contemporary Western society, has actually been found to be negatively related to desistance

(Horney et al., 1995). The assumption that marriage is a desistance-related phenomenon only for men, and dependent on both time and place was examined by Bersani, Laub and Nieuwbeerta (2009) in a study using data from the Criminal Career and Life Course Study (CCLS) which tracked the criminal conviction histories of almost 5,000 men and women convicted in the Netherlands in 1977. The authors found that the effect of marriage was significantly lower for women than for men, yet was still associated with a decrease in the odds of conviction. The authors also found that the 'good marriage effect' was most salient in the most contemporary context, suggesting that the quality and stability of a marriage is likely to be better in the modern day, with fewer instances of separation evident in the Netherlands at the time. Furthermore, as co-habitation and children before marriage are more likely in the contemporary period, these may reinforce the social bonding and control effects of marriage. The authors also point to economic explanations, suggesting that the increasing strength of marriage is influenced by the strength of the economy in contemporary contexts. It is concluded that there were no significant differences in the effect of marriage across either gender or socio-historic context.

Much like marriage, employment has been linked with processes of informal social control, providing incentives to comply with non-offending behaviour and a decreased opportunity and will to be involved in crime (where a legal source of income is available) and engage with delinquent groups. Employment has been positively linked to desistance by numerous authors (Farrall, 2002; Horney et al., 1995; Carlsson, 2012; Verbruggen et al, 2012). A recent United Kingdom Ministry of Justice document (March 2013) has also linked employment and desistance (although it is ironically concerning that in their study of a 2008 cohort of released prisoners, only 28% had been employed in the two year period following release, indicating that much more work must be done to get former offenders into meaningful employment if it is truly the aim of the Ministry of Justice to reduce offending. Sue Rex (1999) has also found probationers to be woefully underrepresented in employment statistics). Both Healy (2012) and Farrall (2002) have appealed to probation services in Ireland and the UK respectively to provide practical assistance to former offenders in finding employment. Warr (2002) has linked unemployment and subsequent continued association with deviant peers to sustained deviance. Aresti et al. (2010) in their phenomenological interpretation of reformed ex-prisoners' accounts of self-change concluded that employment and new career opportunities can be instrumental in contributing to desistance. Meaningful employment, the authors found, tended to satisfy the need to belong, in particular where there was a strong moral element attached. Employment helped maintain a positive sense of self for the former prisoners and promoted community belonging and acceptance by others. Yet the universality of employment effects on desistance has been disputed; for example Uggen et al. (2000) have found that employment effects depend

on age; as the individual ages consequently employment becomes a more significant factor in promoting desistance.

Further 'turning points' such as completing education, leaving home, becoming a parent, or even joining the army have also been associated with declines in offending (see Maruna, 1999 for a full list). These 'turning points', Sampson and Laub maintain, can often be chance events, arguing that sometimes 'good things happen to bad people' (Laub et al., 1998: 237, quoted in Le Bel et al., 2008). It is not therefore necessary to have a great desire to cease offending in order for offending to be controlled by social bonds nor vice versa. Conversely, advancements on sociogenic theories, including Sampson and Laub's own work (2005) have suggested that the effect of 'social bonds' on offenders is subjective: it is not simply the bonds themselves but what the bonds mean to the offenders, and their effect in supporting informal social control which reduce opportunities and motivations to offend. The authors noted: 'the men we studied in *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives* were not blank slates any more than they were rational actors in an unconstrained market of life chances' (Sampson and Laub, 2005: 42).

It is proposed that individuals are actors who respond to these 'turning points' in various ways, depending on a range of factors. As desires and wishes and the opportunity for offending are dynamic throughout the life-course, it is argued that strong social bonds are required to reinforce the desire to 'stay good'. For example, the positive effect of a marriage is unlikely to be realised in a loveless relationship, it is the strength of commitment that is said to matter and the reinforcement effect such a marriage can have. Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986), in their study of former robbers in Canada, found that the quality of relationship and the criminality or otherwise of the chosen partner tends to be more important than the existence of the marriage in itself. In the same manner, unstable, part-time or non-contracted employment which an individual has no attachment to is unlikely to result in moves towards desistance.

It should be noted that most sociogenic explanations of desistance tend to see these life events or 'turning points' as contributing to the dynamic process of desistance but as not necessarily directly causal of the move away from a deviant lifestyle. As Laub and Sampson (2003: 149) have stated, 'offenders desist in response to structurally induced 'turning points' that serve as the catalyst for sustaining long-term behavioural change'.

Carlsson (2012) argues that 'turning points' are gradual processes which are difficult to capture quantitatively as they tend to appear as bringing about abrupt cessation, yet 'turning points' are useful in bringing clarity in the complex, dynamic life course of any individual and help identify which processes are more or less important in changes in offending. As will be seen in the following chapters, this finding has salience with the current study. For example, gaining

employment may not appear to have a direct, negative impact on offending for an individual but as a person begins to enjoy and find worth in her employment, coupled perhaps with changes in relationship status and a move away from a particular area associated with offending, this may eventually lead to change.

Nonetheless, social bonds explanations have been criticised for numerous reasons. Carlsson (2012) himself, whilst recognising the usefulness of the concept of 'turning points', has criticised Laub and Sampson's (2003) seminal work methodologically. In their interviews with the Glueck men, the authors ask about 'any significant turning points' in their lives. Carlsson contends that with such an interview style, you tend to 'get what you ask for' (2012: 2). The author found that when you do not explicitly ask about 'turning points', desistance appears as a much more gradual process that can include many so-called 'turning points' as well as within-individual stores of human agency that sociogenic theorists tend to ignore. As can be seen in Appendix 4, the current study avoided direct questioning about turning points. Carlsson (2011 and 2012) draws a difference between 'transitions' and 'trajectories' in his work.

Empirically tested studies of desistance have also questioned the importance of 'turning points' in contributing to the cessation of offending. Rand (1987), in a study of male offenders in Philadelphia, found that life transition events such as fatherhood, military service, vocational training and college education had no effect on propensity for criminality. Blockland and Nieuwbeerta (2005), in a study of the developmental trajectories of Netherlands-based offenders tried in 1977, found that such transitions only account for a small amount of the aggregate age trend in offending in young adulthood. Healy, in her 2012 study on *The Dynamics of Desistance*, perhaps quite surprisingly found that high levels of social capital tended to increase, rather than decrease, the likelihood of offending. However, Healy suggests that this may be a result of the dramatic change in social (and economic) circumstances in Ireland at the time. In an analysis reflecting the work of Durkheim and the notion of anomie (1893), as well as Merton's (1957) strain theory, Healy suggests that the interviewees who previously had high levels of social capital may have been particularly vulnerable as they saw their future plans and goals slip away, exacerbated by poor coping skills. However, Healy's (2012) study does indicate that the concept of 'turning points' as desistance facilitators may not necessarily hold true at times of great economic upheaval. Meanwhile, Uggen (1996) brought to light the problematic concept of 'turning points' for practical criminal justice application by stating that treatment programmes designed to test social bonding theories have generally been failures.

Similarly, empirical tests of the influence of marriage have been found to be problematic. Gottfredson and Hirschi in their *General Theory of Crime* (1990) have maintained that men in

relationships are more likely to commit delinquent acts than their single peers. Explanations which surround wives, homes and children, they argue, 'sound nice' but are actually unsubstantiated and tend to not have an impact. Warr (2002) has argued that the influence of marriage on desistance may be due to reduced time spent in the company of delinquent peers, meaning the effect of marriage is not as straight-forward as it first appears. The author, in later work (2005), has argued that the correlation between delinquent peers and delinquency, whilst one of the most well-known associations in criminology, has largely been neglected by the 'turning points' literature, except to acknowledge its secondary influence (for example through moving away from home, getting married, becoming a parent or gaining meaningful employment). West (1982) suggests that although marriage can sometimes have a 'restraining effect' (p.104) on delinquent men, we should not overestimate this effect because of the tendency of offenders to marry females who are also delinquent. Rutter (1996) meanwhile has proposed that the influence of marriage is dependent on a number of factors, not just the person one may marry but also when they marry and the type of relationship achieved. Carlsson (2012) has found that for some offenders and former offenders, conventional relationships can be viewed as a trap. He cites the example of a participant in his study, David, who was initially involved in a relationship characterised by a struggle with attempts to change, but then shunned relationships and other conventional norms, in what Maruna (2001) labels a narrative of being 'doomed to deviance' (more below). Carlsson (2012) argues that desistance studies should be aware of the problems and traps conventional pro-social roles may present for many who are attempting to travel the road of desistance.

The gendered nature of the 'good marriage effect' is something of which opponents of sociogenic theorists are also critical. Additionally, as noted above, 'good marriage effect' studies tend to focus on heterosexual relationships and marriages. For example King et al. (2007), in a quantitative analysis of marriage effects, tend to agree with Laub and Sampson's (2003) statement that whilst men almost always 'marry up', women tend to 'marry down'. To this they add that for females, the effect of marriage on desistance is only significant for those with a moderate inclination to marry. Therefore for women who are less likely to marry, marriage will not have a significant effect on their offending trajectory. Where studies do include females, the data collected may be problematic. For example in Bersani, Laub and Nieuwbeerta's (2009) study of the good marriage effect across gender and socio-historic context, although marriage was found to still have a positive effect on female desistance, it is less prominent than for men, whilst the study was based only on legal marriage and official data in the Netherlands and therefore cannot be generalised. Gender and social bonds will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The influence of employment on propensity to desist has also been criticised. Uggen, (2007) as already mentioned, has found that employment effects depend on age. Carlsson (2012) found that amongst some of his interviewees, there was a tendency to take on employment which made it easy to 'moonlight' in crime, for example by taking on positions which helped individuals further their illegal drug dealing careers. Maruna (2001) also finds gender bias in the employment argument –women are historically (and to this day) underrepresented in both employment and arrest statistics. Again we see a clear bias towards a male perspective in the sociogenic argument, with the pro-social, conventional roles described tending to be ones that favour men.

In fact, the social bonds literature is teeming with gender blindness. Stephen Farrall (2002) has maintained that few social bonds theorists have considered female desistance pathways whilst Graham and Bowling (1995) found that the transition to adulthood was more important for females. They found that whilst transitions such as leaving home and forming a new family were highly correlated with desistance from crime for females, for young males, these social transitions seemed to have little effect on patterns of offending. McIvor et al. (2011) in their study of desistance amongst young people in Scotland, also found that indicators of social development such as leaving school, starting work, getting into a relationship, getting married and having a family were more related to desistance amongst young women than young men. In fact, the authors found that leaving home tended to be an amplifying offending tool for many young men, but not young women. Becoming a parent, the authors found, was a greater factor in the desistance of young women compared to young men. The authors connected this with the fear of loss of children, reflecting again the work of Graham and Bowling (1995). Furthermore, for young men, the entry into a relationship was likely to produce a move towards desistance whilst for young women; it was the ending of a relationship which was more likely to produce the same effect. These gender differences tend to get side-lined in favour of the dominant male perspective.

And it is not just gender differences that the literature overlooks; as Giordano et al. (2002) note, the original Glueck sample upon which much of the sociogenic literature has been based, consisted entirely of white, male offenders who matured into adulthood in the 1950s. Adam Calverley (2013) has maintained that social bonds theorists tend to overlook the experiences of minority ethnic groups. The author claims that access to social capital through the social bonding effects of finding employment, family formation and engagement in social institutions like religion and marriage differs according to ethnicity. We must not ignore these differences in the analysis of desistance journeys. For example, Calverley's (2013) London- based research found that for Indian and Bangladeshi desisters, the route from crime and the CJS was described as a

collective experience involving their families actively intervening in their lives. Contrastingly, black and dual heritage former offenders' desistance was a much more individualistic endeavour. Rebecca Katz (2000), in her study of the desistance of women in America, also found a difference in the processes of desistance between white women and minority ethnic women. White women, Katz argued were more likely than African-American women to associate becoming a parent with a termination in offending. Whereas white women tended to define their worth in terms of relationships, other groups tended to define themselves in relation to their friendship groups, neighbourhood, community and work. In our search for the defining features of desistance, it is important not to perpetuate a hegemonic notion of the white male experience. Sociogenic theorists tend to promote an uncritical, conformist perception of socially constructed institutions such as marriage, employment, parenthood and schooling etc. as essentially 'good' and conversely social resistance as negative. This point is noted by Berger and Quinney (2005) who argue that as individuals experience social structures and institutions differently, their ability to transition 'is highly dependent on their past and present, 'location in social structures of inequality, based on class, race, gender and other social statuses'' (quoted in Carlsson, 2012: 13).

Connected to this, recent studies have contended that sociogenic theorists tend to ignore or discount the subjective experiences of individuals and how these experiences may influence both the reaction to these so-called 'turning points' and indeed desistance itself. Deirdre Healy argues, 'offenders do not simply passively react to social events but, instead take an active role in bringing about change in their lives' (2012: 176). As Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) maintain, 'jobs do not just 'attach themselves to individuals' and 'subjects are not randomly assigned to marital statuses'' (p.188, quoted in Maruna, 1999: 5). Although this was something which Laub and Sampson (2003) did recognise, generally the role of human agency in the promotion of desistance tends to get left behind or included as an afterthought in the social bonds literature. Advances on social bonds theories have therefore noted the importance of social bonds in life transformations but have also linked them to subjective changes in agency and identity. For example, Giordano et al. (2002) note the importance of within-individual change in their subjective-social model of desistance. The authors propose that pathways to desistance begin with a shift in an individual actor's openness to change, this is followed by the presentation of a 'hook' for change (for example marriage or employment) which acts in interaction with the individual's attitude, especially the extent to which it is compatible or otherwise with continued deviance; the subsequent cognitive transformation is particularly focused on internal changes and their relation to delinquency. Similarly, Aresti et al.,(2010) describe the 'defining moments' of desistance as points in time which may lead to a decision to

change, often linked to feelings of loss and struggle and being cut-off from pre-existing social networks and structures of meaning. This may be followed, the authors suggest, by a moment of clarity and self-change, promoting a taking of control and subsequently, new goals and aspirations. The importance of subjective changes underlying external deviations which are often beyond the control of the individual is evident in both of these accounts. There is an emphasis on individuals actively thinking for themselves, both in the reaction to these events (marriage, employment, parenthood etc.) and as influencing factors in the path taken towards them. As Gartner and Piliavin have recognised, within-individual changes 'do not simply accompany changes in the objective sphere of life, but trigger them as well, and determine how external events and physiological states will be interpreted and acted upon (1988: 299).'

LeBel et al. (2008) have attempted to untangle the subjective and objective processes involved in desistance by looking at data collected as part of the Oxford Recidivism Study. The Study involved looking at interviews of 130 male repeat 'persistent' offenders, both prior to their release from prison and 4-6 months following release. The authors found evidence to support a subjective-social model of desistance. It was found that social problems after release have a large significant impact on the probability of both reconviction and re-imprisonment. Yet subjective perspectives were also found to have an impact on behaviour, for example, feelings of hope were shown to have an indirect effect on re-imprisonment. The authors concluded that subjective states have an effect on exterior circumstances and vice versa:

'Positive 'mind-over-matter' helps the individual to triumph over problems and make the best of situations while a negative frame of mind leads to drift and defeatism in response to the same events' (Le Bel et al., 2008: 155).

Maruna (2001) has reiterated this point by drawing upon a well-known probation slogan, 'You rehabilitate yourself.' Clearly, agency is an important factor in social bonding and both elements should be considered as complimentary to each other in a dialectic manner. This point has hugely influenced the life course analysis approach to explaining desistance.

'Significant life events constitute opportunities for change that can be exploited. But desistance does not automatically follow ... in addition to social support, successful change also requires strong reserves of personal agency.' (Healy, 2012: 186)

The next section will consider the subjective thought processes which have been studied by the desistance literature through narrative methods.

2.4 Narrative Explanations

It has been only relatively recently that desistance theorists have considered former offenders as actors themselves. Narrative theories have seen a move away from the exogenous positivist theories of ontogenetic and sociogenic explanations of deviance towards a focus on the

individual and the structural factors which promote or stand as barriers to desistance, crucially established from the subjective narratives of offenders themselves. Whilst positivist theorists have helped us 'understand crime' there is an understanding of the criminal which is absent in these theories (Toch, 1987). As noted by Maruna (1999: 5):

'Essentially, what appears to be missing from both ontogenetic and sociogenic approaches is 'the person' – the wholeness and agentic subjectivity of the individual... we need a literally intelligible sequence or a coherent 'story' of the individual if we want to understand changes in behaviour such as desistance.'

Similarly, Kysvgaard (2003) notes that it is surprising that desistance and criminal career literature generally 'has paid little attention to the subjective aspects of maturation in terms of personal philosophy or one's perception of one's place in the world and the potential connection that such changes might have to changes in offending' (p. 241). Narrative theorists support contemporary trends in criminology which suggest that we need to understand the 'lived-in experiences' of offenders (and former offenders) to understand criminal trajectories (Carlsson, 2011). For this reason, Maruna (2001) has suggested that the narrative analysis approach is the ideal way to understand processes of desistance. Within desistance research, narrative theorists have focused on subjective 'cognitive shifts' (Giordano et al., 2002) in self-identity for the offender. Liebrich (1993) proposed that how offenders interpret their lives can affect the specifics of their life course. Maruna's (2001) seminal study of former offenders 'making good' suggests that desisters must recognise themselves as good and conventional. Maruna (2001) found a difference in the 'scripts' of persistent and desisting/ desisted offenders. Desisters' life-course narratives promoted a view of the former offender as a victim trapped in a cycle of deviance. Maruna (2001) found that these narratives included a crucial intervention from someone who always believed in the offender leading the actor to accomplish what they were 'always meant to do'. He suggested that desistance for these former offenders furthermore included a desire to give something back to society in a generative action. What is central for desistance therefore is the discovery of agency. Persisting offenders on the other hand, were likely to be linked to scripts which promoted a feeling of being 'doomed to deviance' and the individual a victim of life circumstances (Maruna, 2001). The link between offender and victim identities will be further explored in Chapter 7.

Narratives can be described as 'a temporally ordered statement concerning events experienced by and/or actions of one or more protagonists' (Presser, 2009: 178, taken from Carlsson, 2012). The use of personal narratives and/or life-course histories is far from a new phenomenon in criminological inquiry. Ethnographic enquiry and the use of the autobiographical method can be traced at least as far back as the work of Clifford Shaw and the Chicago School of the 1930s and the publication of titles such as *The Jack Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story* ; *The Natural*

History of a Delinquent Career and Brothers in Crime (Shaw, 1930; 1931; 1938). These innovative works were praised for making connections between wider sociological influences and deviance through the use of the stories of individual young people. Nor was Maruna's (2001) seminal work the first desistance study to make use of the methodology, as the author himself notes (1999); works by Irwin (1970); Meisenhelder (1982); Shover (1985; 1996); Burnett (1992), Liebrich (1993) and Graham and Bowling (1995), had been using the researcher as biographer method to explore the links between deviance and change for many years previously.

Narrative theories are particularly useful in developing accounts of personal change from the point of view of the individual actor themselves. Even Laub and Sampson (2003) agree that narratives help unpack mechanisms that connect important life events. Projects such as the 'Liverpool Desistance Study' (Maruna, 2001) and the 'Stockholm Life Course Project' (Carlsson, 2011; 2012) have been hugely influential in the criminological world, promoting a move away from (or at least an additional element to be considered alongside) positivist, natural science, quantitative methods towards giving of voice to the (former) offender themselves. Narrative research is concerned not with the meaning academics place on the processes of individuals lives, but also with the meaning they themselves attach to events, journeys, relationships and subjective thought processes. This means that we are not just concerned with the processes in themselves but also the 'meaning' that the individual actor attaches to them. Narrative theories are concerned not just with what the individual did/did not do but also the reasons or reasoning behind it. Narrative stories can be collected, content-coded and analysed for patterns in tone, theme, plot, roles, value structure, coherence and complexity (Maruna, 2001). Narrative research will be examined further in Chapter 4.

Stephen Farrall (2002) has proposed that this kind of qualitative research can help overcome the 'black box' syndrome which much criminological quantitative research of sentence outcomes has suffered, where the outcomes are 'known' but the precise sequence of events and processes involved in their production has been left unexamined. Narrative research and qualitative inquiry meanwhile helps to 'open' the box by collecting the views and experiences of those directly affected by the CJS. Farrall (2002) effectively utilises the narrative method in his interviews with young people, attempting to consider why young people start, continue and/or stop offending behaviours. Similarly, Carlsson (2012) has argued that much of the data collected surrounding criminal trajectories is unlikely to answer the question as to why people stop offending (see also Gadd and Farrall, 2004). Therefore, we should turn our attention instead towards the context of the surrounding processes of which desistance is part, with narrative analysis often the most productive and interesting way to do this. As Carlsson notes, 'we must acknowledge that these processes often should be seen as a whole, that we must study the

desistance process in such a way that its dimensions, taken together, become the 'story of the road taken to it' (2012: 12).

Bottoms and Shapland (2011) and LeBel et al. (2008) tend to agree that narrative analysis helps to disentangle the 'chicken and egg' of subjective and social processes involved in the beginnings and maintenance of desistance from crime. Additionally, it has been suggested that narrative methods can be a cathartic experience for those involved (Farrall, 2002; Maruna, 2001). Here we can see that the narrative method may not only be beneficial to the researcher but also, importantly, the researched. The advantages and disadvantages of using a life-history narrative approach will further be explored in the methodology section of this thesis.

Due to the nature of research undertaken, where the focus is on the individual themselves, narrative research into desistance has tended to bring to light the subjective factors involved in interpersonal change. As Monica Barry (2006) has recognised, offending is an ephemeral profession, dependent not only on objective structural factors but also on individual self-determination. Whilst it is recognised that individuals differ in their ability to structure and be structured by their surroundings, those who are/were involved in offending behaviours are more than passive reactors to social events, instead they 'take an active role in bringing about change in their lives.' (Healy, 2012: 176). Obviously these statements imply a certain amount of agency on the part of the individual to turn their life around, something which whilst certainly being a factor for a number of former offenders, can be contested in the context of the power structures in which women tend to live their lives, particularly following contact with the CJS. Nonetheless, these statements also highlight the importance of within-individual cognitive processes which can be central to the routes towards self-change. LeBel et al. (2008) identify four interrelated subjective-level themes which they contend emerge as most buoyant in the desistance literature: Hope and Self- Efficacy; Shame and Remorse; Internalising Stigma and Alternative Identities. These subjective factors were found to have salience within this study also.

Hope and self-efficacy are factors which LeBel et al argue require both 'the will and the ways' (2008: 136) to initiate self-change. This means that both the perception of the ability to succeed in achieving one's goals and also the belief that there are successful pathways available to achieve these goals. The role of hope has also been noted by Maruna and Burnett (2004) and Farrall and Calverley (2005) amongst others. Self-efficacy seems to be something which is one step further than this feeling of hope, suggesting a belief that a goal is achievable, and takes into account 'the ways' in addition to 'the will' to change. Self-efficacy is related to agency which can determine how individuals respond to these 'hooks for change' (Shover, 1996) Self-efficacy is a

factor which Rungay (2004) has recognised as being prevalent in her analysis of female former offenders' successful accounts of desistance, and as something which is necessary to maintain this desistance. The author notes that these feelings can be promoted and reinforced by involvement in conventional roles. Bottoms and Shapland (2010) have proposed that self-efficacy is central to views about future offending. Furthermore Aresti et al. (2010) note the centrality of feelings of hope and self-efficacy in their accounts of former prisoners' experiences of self-change particularly during 'defining moments' where there is a moment of clarity leading to a taking of control following a period of loss and struggle and being cut off from existing social networks. Burnett (1992) highlighted that offenders' post-custodial intention to go straight was not enough to bring about desistance following release, but those who were most confident and optimistic about their ability to be law abiding had most success in doing so. For these authors, hope, and more importantly, self-efficacy are built upon by positive experiences and the social bonds which Laub and Sampson (2003) espouse (meaningful employment, a family etc.). Yet feelings about the possibility of achievable goals can be destroyed by the negative experiences which are all too common following criminal justice contact, bringing to mind the feelings and experiences of 'doing time after time' which Aresti et al. (2010) describe. Maruna (2001) for example, maintains that former prisoners tend to lack such agentic feelings due to negative experiences and therefore the resultant narrative is one which appears 'doomed to deviance'. Often an individual's sense of hope can be trampled by the CJS and, where this hasn't occurred, the experiences former offenders have in the outside world (for example following release from prison), effectively destroy any chance of hope of a different life. Le Bel et al. (2008) conclude that hope (or lack thereof) can have an impact on social problems which can in turn have an effect on re-conviction. On the other hand, promotion of human achievements and positive mental well-being require 'an optimistic sense of personal efficacy' (Bandura, 1989: 1176, quoted in Le Bel et al., 2008). The authors found this to be the most important subjective factor in the process of desistance.

The role of agency and self-efficacy nonetheless should be recognised in the context of power structures. For many former offenders, and particularly for women and other marginalised groups involved in the CJS, the well-known probation tagline 'You reform yourself', may not be as simple a statement as it first appears, as this is linked to feelings of self-efficacy which are in turn affected by power structures. As a result of the patriarchal society in which we live, built on unjust power structures and reinforced by institutionalised prejudices, often even where there is a 'will', there is not always the 'way'. These issues will be further explored in Chapter 7.

Shame and remorse are the next factors which Le Bel et al. (2008) have linked to processes of desistance. This suggests that feelings of regret for previous behaviour and a revised perspective

of youthful activities is an important cognitive factor in any move towards desistance. This finding is evidenced by Shover (1996) and Giordano et al. (2002). Furthermore Julie Liebrich (1993) reported that shame was the 'primary reason' her participants reported for giving up crime. Conversely, Healy and O'Donnell (2006) found that a tendency to externalise blame for past behaviours was linked to a continuity of these behaviours. This proposal of the centrality of shame and remorse is linked to a theme which Aresti et al. (2010) found in the scripts of the former prisoners whom they interviewed; the authors found that the desisting men expressed a preference for their new non-offending life whilst describing their previous (offending) lifestyles as meaningless. Shame does not necessarily, Le Bel et al. (2008) are quick to note, have a direct, inverse relationship with recidivism. In fact, feelings of shame may be linked to feelings of depression and powerlessness and the 'doomed to deviance' scripts which Maruna (2001) proposes. Linked to feelings of shame and remorse, the internalisation of this stigma is the third subjective factor which Le Bel et al. (2008) have recognised as salient amongst the desistance literature. The authors make a distinction here between re-integrative shame (Braithwaite, 1989), where the criminal act is regretted but the internal self-worth of the individual is preserved, and stigmatising shame, where both the act and the actor is degraded. Whilst the authors maintain that re-integrative shame can have positive effects in the move towards desistance, stigmatising shame can lead to defiance and further recidivism. Uggen et al. (2004) for example suggest that the stigma of a criminal conviction and especially of a prison sentence can be extremely severe and is likely to have an effect on employment and therefore a negative effect on desistance. Here we see links to Howard Becker's (1963) labelling theory which suggests that the behaviour of individuals is influenced by the terms which are used to describe them, even if these terms come from internal processes. For women involved in the CJS who are certainly no strangers to feelings of shame, often labelled as 'doubly deviant' (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 2012; Worrall, 1990; Leverentz, 2014) by a CJS which condemns them for breaking not only 'socially accepted' norms but also their own gender contract, stigmatizing shame can be particularly damaging, even when not associated with continued deviance. Certainly this was a prevalent theme in the current research.

Subjective factors however, do tend to be transient. What a person 'feels' on one day may be completely different to how she is feeling the next and the literature suggests caution should be taken in placing too much emphasis on these subjective factors which are influenced by mood, thought and interpretations, both on the part of the interviewee and interviewer (LeBel et al., 2008). Also, what a person wants, desires and wishes for changes with the passage of time (Carlsson, 2012) and these goals are related to cognitive factors. Nonetheless, according to subjective theorists, emotions, internal thought processes, static subjective level feelings and

cognitive changes are important in the processes of self-change. Desistance is a journey which must be travelled as much internally as externally. Therefore, the cognitive resources of those who come into contact with the CJS should be promoted (Healy and O'Donnell, 2006; Farrall, 2002). Ignoring the narratives of those who have been affected by the CJS will only serve to further marginalise their experiences and not fully address the issues former offenders face. Matthews et al (2014) have convincingly argued that more attention must also be paid to emotional issues such as trust, guilt, shame, hope and self-esteem in the desistance literature.

The final subjective-level theme which LeBel et al. (2008) recognise as central to the process of desistance is the subject of alternative identities. The authors noted that amongst the male former prisoners they studied who successfully desisted, the development of a new pro-social identity was part of the process. These men were able to deflect the stigma of the past through the taking on of new roles such as that of a 'good parent', 'provider' or 'family man'. These new pro-social identities enabled the men to 'work indirectly through re-entry problems by actually causing these problems not to occur for individuals' (2008: 153). Whilst gender role stereotyping is very evident here, those who have studied female desistance, such as Rungay (2004) have also noted this attraction to convention amongst transformed women, whether this new identity is realised through a new label such as that of a parent, employee or churchgoer. Although global change is not always possible and personal identity must be adapted to the social context in which barriers to change exist, Rungay (2004: 408) has recognised that the 'recognition of an opportunity to claim a valued pro-social identity, during a period of readiness to reform, marks the beginning of active attempts at personal change. Moreover, to the extent that the offender attaches importance to the decision to change, invests personal effort in reaching her resolution and is confident of its rightness, motivation may be reinforced'. According to these authors, new identities can help maintain and reinforce the attraction of non-offending lifestyles whether for men or women. As these identities are reinforced, the pall cast by the past tends to contract (Healy, 2008) enabling the individuals to move on with their lives. Maruna (2001) found that these kinds of identity changes were reflected in a reconstruction of one's internalised self-narrative.

Matsueda and Heimer (1997) also link desistance with a change in the reformed offender's sense of self through taking on conventional roles and positive social bonds to result in a law-abiding individual (Aresti et al, 2010). As previously noted, Maruna (2001) supports the theory that desistance requires a shift to a pro-social identity and argues that this is evident through the reconstruction of an individual's internal narrative where the past becomes interpreted to conform with future aspirations; where former offenders suggest that the past has shaped them (for the better) into the person they currently are. In many cases, Maruna (2001) suggests, this

will lead to the assumption of generative roles, all made possible by the agency of the individual. It may seem obvious to note that desistance is deeply connected to identity transformation. Vaughan (2007) has argued that desistance is a moral and cognitive process where the desister must realise that their former self is morally incompatible with who they want to be. As noted by Aresti et al, 'in definitional terms, by its nature criminal desistance or the long-term abstinence from crime involves self-change' (2010: 170). However the concept of identity change is not as simple as it at first may seem and may involve a holding on to some part of the previous self.

Amongst the narratives of the five male participants who are the focus of their attentions, Aresti et al (2010) note a recurring theme of the 'conflicting self'. Desistance amongst these men involved a subjective change of self from 'offender' to 'reformed offender', where their behaviour moved correspondingly from criminal to conventional/socially acceptable and the old self was rejected (see the section on shame and remorse above) whilst connections with society were made. This identity change was a long drawn out process which was wrought with tension with the men's sense of self, especially when performed before the eyes of an often sceptical audience. Aresti et al (2010) support Maruna's findings of generative concern amongst desisters, however, the authors are keen to point out that whilst for some the 'ex-offender' label can be instrumental in maintaining this positive sense of self and remaining an inspiration, for others, the label had negative connotations, both personally and in terms of societal reaction, and tended to be rejected for these reasons. The authors set their findings in a social identity theory framework. They found a fear of prejudice and discrimination amongst these individuals which tended to remind them of earlier experiences of social exclusions leading to a desire to be accepted and belong – either by rejecting the 'former offender' label or by encapsulating the new identity within the old, through maintenance of a positive sense of self. This is similar to Maruna's (2001) notion of the 'professional ex' who develops according to different social contexts. Through this analysis, Aresti et al (2010) bring to light the multi-layered, dynamic and relative nature of identity. Other authors such as Healy and O'Donnell (2008) found that the narratives of the Irish male probationers who were the subject of their research did not tend to have evidence of generative concerns in their desistance stories, nonetheless the authors attributed this to the fact they were in an earlier stage of the desistance process than those involved in the Liverpool Desistance Study (Maruna, 2001).

Other researchers have further questioned the extent to which this identity change process is a conscious conversion. Whilst Maruna and Farrall (2004) maintain that identity change involves agency and a will to alter oneself, Bottoms et al. (2004), alongside Healy and O' Donnell (2008), have questioned the extent to which the individual is aware of the process of change. As

conceded by the Irish study, however, this difference in the role of agency may have much to do with the point at which the process of desistance is viewed. When studied prospectively, Burnett (1992) has suggested that desistance appears as a process that is full of uncertainty, relapse and hesitancy. The opposite may be said to be true for accounts that are studied retrospectively. As Weaver and McNeill suggest, these accounts 'may be susceptible to cognitive rationalizations that place undue or unrealistic emphasis on the role of agency' (2010: 61). We should not however underestimate the effects of 'role strain' (Carlsson, 2012) which suggests that even when agency and a strong will to change are present, a person may experience difficulties in conforming to a conventional life associated with desistance, and these difficulties are situated within the power struggles of conventional society. Nonetheless, there is a general agreement amongst desistance academics that by its very definition, the process of desistance from crime involves an identity change, whether influenced by a conscious decision or not.

As important as an individual's identity as an 'offender' or 'former offender' is, their gendered identity prior to, during and post deviance is equally important. As previously noted, in the patriarchal society in which we exist, female offenders are often judged, by the CJS and wider society, as being 'doubly deviant' (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 2012) whether overtly or covertly. For this reason, their desistance pathways are often described as being even more arduous and demanding than those of their male counterparts (Rumgay, 2004). In the eyes of society, not only have these women broken the supposed social contract, but they are also in violation of the gender contract to which every woman is an automatic signatory (Worrall, 1990). Not only have female offenders broken the law but they have committed the crime of abandoning the roles assigned to them by breaking the stereotypes of 'women' which are structured around notions of family and femininity. Compounding this, Rumgay (2004) notes that the life histories of many female offenders include victimisation, parental neglect, incomplete education and lack of access to economic and social capital, effectively limiting their ability to sustain an alternative conventional identity. Whilst the same can certainly be said for male law breakers, the process of restoration which desistance involves therefore can be tremendously difficult in a society laden with stereotypical ideals of a woman's behaviour. Unfortunately due to the dearth of research into female desistance, desistance academics, especially within the UK, have been relatively quiet on the linking of gendered identity and the process of desistance. However, Rumgay (2004) has argued persuasively that due to women's unequal role in society, female desistance scripts not only involve the opportunity for reform, self-efficacy and identity transformation that are found in male scripts, but also involve a strong sense of resilience. Identity change for these women effectively must involve a challenge to female stereotypes. Matthews et al (2014) found that for female prostitutes, part of the desistance process involved

a disassociation from the previous self, contrary to Maruna's (2001) findings. Matthews and colleagues have suggested therefore that female desistance is likely to be different from male desistance in that their narratives of offending are not consistent with gendered expectations and therefore their move to desistance may involve a denial or disassociation with this offending past. Qualitative research, and life-course narratives in particular, can provide an ideal platform for exploring this link between gender, identity and desistance. As Christopher Carlsson (2012) succinctly notes, 'to channel individuals away from crime, policies need to focus on individual biographies and the structural constraints within which these individual biographies unfold' (p.931).

Gender and desistance will be explored elsewhere in this chapter but for now it is sufficient to say that to understand individuals we must understand their socially constructed identities, particularly when these identities are created in an unequal power arrangement. Life-course narrative research, which brings forth subjective thought processes and reactions to objective events, provides a useful methodology from which to carry this out. For this reason, narrative research forms the basis of the current research.

2.5 Combining Explanations

Whilst it can be seen that the study of life-course narratives tends to provide an extremely effective method through which to study desistance, more and more recent studies have suggested that desistance cannot be explained without reference to subjective level thought-processes explanations, sociogenic explanations and ontogenetic explanations combined. Graham and Bowling (1995) have argued for example that 'growing up' requires attitudinal change and vice versa. Similarly, in their attempt to unravel 'The Chicken and the Egg' of subjective and social forces on the process of desistance, Le Bel et al. have had to concede, 'it might be reasonably argued that a quest to identify the sequencing of cognitive and external influences is both impossible and pointless because these operate through dynamic, interactive processes' (2008: 153).

The authors here have recognised the inseparability of cognitive and social forces; their differential impacts are equally required for desistance to occur. As Christopher Carlsson (2012: 925) notes, agency and social control 'should be thought of as dialectic, where both elements can inform one another'. Carlsson here is aware of the dynamic nature of agency as desires and wishes tend to change with the passing of time, requiring the reinforcement of a good job or stable relationship and vice versa. Giordano et al. (2002: 992) recognise that social control theory is 'important but incomplete', arguing that 'hooks for change', 'will serve well as catalysts for lasting change when they energise fundamental shifts in identity and changes in the meaning

and desirability of deviant/criminal behaviour itself'. They argue that combining social control and symbolic interactionist perspectives provides researchers, practitioners and offenders with a 'more complete conceptual toolkit than either perspective on its own' (ibid). Uggen et al. (2004) likewise present their symbolic interactionist perspective which recognises both the role of age-graded social bonds and the social-psychological processes underpinning these related role transitions. However, even where there is a desire to assume pro-social roles, there can be societal obstacles in terms of lack of resources, (including a lack of political will to expend social resources) and/or a lack of social relationships which are central to supporting these new identities. The authors therefore reinforce the importance of societal reaction in supporting desistance. Roger Matthews and colleagues reiterate this sentiment in their 2014 study of women exiting prostitution; desistance, they argue will be achieved not only by the provision of drug or housing services but also by emphasising the importance of emotions and identity formation. Stephen Farrall (2002) has also suggested that desistance must be explained by a fusing together of individual cognitive abilities and changes in social contexts. He therefore suggests that criminal justice agencies and wider society in general should combine the building of individual agency and cognitive ability with a strengthening of access to systems of economic and social support.

In their work published in 1999, Farrall and Bowling have further attempted to bring together the three strands of desistance theories – maturational, social bonds and narratives to present a developmental theory. In this, the authors propose a process of desistance which is produced through individual choices, relationships and external social forces such as institutional and societal forces outside the individual's control. It is the agency and power of the individual which influences the 'timing and pace' (Weaver and McNeill, 2010: 261) of the desistance process, according to this research. Bottoms and Shapland (2010) in their prospective mixed-methods approach study of the desistance pathways of a group of non-occasional offenders at the apex of the age-crime curve, similarly found a desistance process in these maturing young adults which seemed to tie together the above mentioned explanations for desistance. Their results (The Sheffield Study), they argued, presented 'a complex picture of the continuing importance of criminal history and habits, and the desistance-inducing potential of fresh employments and personal ties, but all held together by the individual agent, who must attempt to negotiate a new way of living, breaking with the habits of the past with the support of whoever is willing and able to act as a 'significant other' ... all within a surrounding social context' (2010: 69). The importance of the combination of the positivist ontogenetic and social bonds theories and life history narratives in explaining pathways to desistance has been articulated by Fergus McNeill in his attempt to reconcile probation practice with what we know about desistance.

'Desistance lies somewhere in the interfaces between developing personal maturity, forming new or stronger social bonds associated with certain life transitions, and individual subjective narrative constructions which offenders build around these key events and changes' (2003: 151).

Whilst each of the three explanations have their strengths and weaknesses, it appears that through combining the theoretical underpinnings, we begin to realise how through their different influencing dynamics, maturational factors, sociogenic factors and subjective narrative level influences may exert a variety of forces on an individual to travel the road to desistance.

2.6 The Criminal Justice System (CJS) And Supporting Desistance

Until relatively recently (Rex, 1999; Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Maruna, 2004; King, 2014) the links between desistance and contact with the CJS, especially the probation service, were insufficiently examined (Weaver and McNeill, 2010; King, 2014). This had been the case particularly within the UK, where links between the 'What Works' agenda and desistance literatures had been few and far between (Maruna, 2001; Maruna and Immerigeon, 2004). Both the 'What Works' paradigm and the desistance literature methodology can be criticised; the former for its (over)reliance on official records analysed quantitatively to a conclusion of either success or failure and the latter for its tendency to ignore difference, including gender difference. Yet Farrall (2002) has suggested that the failings of each can be overcome by combining the methodological and substantive insights of life course research with the rehabilitation literature.

Studies which have begun to make links between desistance and criminal justice contact have had some positive findings. Rex's (1999) attempt to bring together the 'What Works' literature and desistance studies through accounts of a group of 60 probationers and their supervisors, found that 68% asserted that they were less likely to re-offend as a result of the supervisory experience. This finding was not the result of direct questioning but emerged naturally and spontaneously through the service users' personal narratives. Nonetheless, as Rex notes, this was a prospective study and there was no way for the participants to know the circumstances in which they will or will not offend in the future. McIvor et al. (2000) found that in circumstances where it was perceived that the CJS has treated individuals fairly there is a greater likelihood that the individual will comply with the law. Conversely where it was found that an individual had been treated unfairly by the CJS, the individual was more likely to reoffend (McIvor et al., 2000).

Other research which has examined the links between criminal justice services and desistance has concluded that contact with the CJS can actually have an adverse, or at the very least, not a positive, effect on the process of desistance. Criminalisation, in these cases, can act as a barrier

to desistance (Matthews et al., 2014). This has been found to be especially true for young people for whom 'at-risk' identification and early contact with the youth justice system has led to labelling and stigma (McAra and McVie, 2010; McIvor et al. 2000), yet the same can be said for older offenders, particularly for those who have spent time in prison (Aresti et al., 2010). In order to avoid this labelling process, Bottoms and Shapland (2011) state that the CJS must not label those who could currently be described as being on the desistance journey as 'high risk' individuals. The authors argue that instead of existing simply to stamp on crime, criminal justice personnel should be involved in the celebration of conformity that the process of desistance entails, by celebrating not only a crime free life but also the movement towards a crime free life. Carlsson (2012) similarly appeals to probation services to be aware that the road from crime can be recognised by periods of intermittency. Therefore, the structural impediments which hold individuals back from fully disengaging from delinquency must be recognised and jointly overcome.

In one of the first studies linking probation and desistance, Liebrich (1993) found that for 48 New Zealand based former probationers who had remained crime free for three years, only half found probation useful and few mentioned probation to have been a factor in desistance. Following interviews with 200 male and female probationers, Farrall (2002) concluded that no specific probation interventions were associated with successful desistance. Whilst probation in general was found to be useful and indeed successful in promoting desistance, this was often in an indirect manner. Following from this, it can be said that any criminal justice intervention can at the worst be said to have an adverse effect on desistance, and at the best be said to have a limited positive effect. Yet criminal justice interventions are a central consequence of certain law-breaking activities which happen to be caught. For the purposes of this thesis which considers criminal justice interventions at a community level, and given the fact that criminal justice intervention is a feature of the narratives of the women studied, what can probation and the wider world of social services learn from the desistance literature? How can what we know about the road from crime translate into policy and a move towards a 'desistance paradigm' (Burnett and McNeill, 2005)?

As previously noted, theories which suggest that the ageing out process is the key to desistance have little to offer the CJS in terms of policy. These theories (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Gove, 1985; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) suggest that external factors or personal reserve are for the most part unrelated to desistance; desistance, they argue is a process which is equivalent to biological aging and consequently does not require intervention including rehabilitation or re-integrative programmes (Maruna, 2001). Therefore, it is to social bonds and life-course theories that we must turn if criminal justice policy is indeed to be influenced by desistance research.

McCulloch (2005) conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with probationers and probation officers in Scotland, and concluded that probation officers did in these cases give significant attention to service users' social circumstances. However, the author noted that in common with previous studies, the participants reported limited success in assisting probationers to overcome social problems. This research was carried out in response to work which suggested that community based disposals do little to address the social contexts and obstacles which probationers face. McCulloch asserts that this may be a result of criminal justice policy relying on 'effectiveness research [which] is not well known for its attention to the social and cultural contexts of individual offending behaviour' (2005: 9) as it tends to place an emphasis on psychological perspectives on crime and criminology. The author therefore argues for a broader conception of 'effectiveness' which takes into account the individual's social context and particularly the factors which can be 'reasonably linked' to offending behaviours such as peer association, family dynamics, education and employment (Andrews, 1995).

This idea has recently been proposed in Weaver and McNeill's 2014 account of the life stories of a friendship group of men who offended together in their youth. The authors note the importance of the moral engagement with the reconnection of the individual to social networks alongside the typically individualised concerns of correctional practice. Probation officers need to concern themselves with the problems probationers truly face on a day to day basis. These sentiments are echoed by Bottoms and Shapland (2011) who are particularly concerned with community based interventions helping probationers find a means of legal income especially for those who commit crimes which bring in income. Furthermore King (2014), in the linking of New Labour probation policy and desistance journeys found that whilst the probation context of England and Wales in the early 21st Century was likely to assist the promotion of agency which in turn promoted desistance in the form of confidence, motivation, decision-making and a future-orientation, 'this is, somewhat, effaced by the lack of support in relation to individuals' broader contexts' (2014: 177). The social context of desistance, academics have suggested, should not be ignored. Farrall (2002) has continuously asserted that criminal justice interventions must work at providing individuals with employment. For example Farrall (2002) found that the greater assistance the probation officer provides in tackling employment and relationship issues, the greater proportion of probationers solved these issues. In terms of providing assistance with employment, Healy (2012) has suggested that this may mean tackling employer and wider societal attitudes together and providing access to support even after the sentence has been completed. Haines (1990) has further recommended the provision of these 'after-care' services. After all, social problems do not tend to disappear after the completion of a given probation programme; in order to help with desistance maintenance and strengthening,

access to support must always be available. Another interesting link between social factors and desistance is provided by Matthews et al (2014) in their study of exiting prostitution. Whilst the authors found that there was a limited deterrent effect of criminal justice interventions, the forced change in lifestyle through the intervention often provided the 'turning points' towards desistance by offering personal and social space.

Often, building the social capital of probationers is not a straight-forward task. As Rex (1999: 368) found in her study of 60 probationers, over a third had experienced at least three areas of difficulty in the following areas: unsatisfactory/ unstable accommodation; shortage of money and/or debt; addiction to alcohol or drugs; mental health; and relationships. Yet it has been noted time and again that these are exactly the social circumstances which are conducive to criminal behaviour. Without intervention in these areas, criminal justice institutions cannot be said to be adequately tackling desistance. As Farrall comments 'just as seeds thrown on stony ground will not take root' (2002: 208), probation programmes which take place in contexts of deprivation, where an individual is not adequately 'bonded' to society, will have little to no effect. Criminal justice policy can therefore be involved in the reintegration of former offenders into society by tackling the structural obstacles they face in their attempts to do this. As Carlsson (2012: 933) notes, 'changing trajectories of crime must come through policies that facilitate integration into the conventional social order, not through policies which foster isolation, exclusion, or punishment'.

As recognised by McCulloch (2005), 'effectiveness research' and probation policy have tended to emphasise the importance of cognitive rehabilitation in promoting desistance. This would suggest that life-course research, which takes into account the lived in experiences and cognitive developments of former offenders would have much to offer the tradition. Liebrich (1993) for example found that amongst her participants, 'talking methods' was the most frequently cited approach to addressing social problems. Rex (1999) subsequently found that probation officers should offer guidance on problem solving and talking through alternatives to offending by improving reasoning and decision making, which they tended not to do in the cases she found. However, Rex has remarked that this means that there is a delicate 'balancing act required of probation officers in seeking to secure changes in people in whom they were simultaneously supposed to be encouraging a sense of responsibility and self-reliance' (1999: 379). Probation should therefore be seen as a process which enables individuals to help themselves, for example by helping with self-management strategies (Rumgay, 2004). Farrall's (2002) study found that those individuals who were most confident about their ability to 'go straight' were the most likely to resolve the obstacles which stood in their way, suggesting that this confidence building could be a factor which probation services could address. King (2014), in a study of 25 male

probationers, argues that community supervision should not be directed towards enforcing compliance but instead should focus on individuals' reserves of personal agency and be directed towards enabling individuals to ensure longer-term compliance themselves. This, King argues, is not possible under policy frameworks that limit the actions of individual practitioners whilst diluting discretion and autonomy. Healy (2012) similarly suggests that probation services in Ireland require a new agenda to address the cognitive factors which might influence offending and desistance. She stated that there is a need to work on offenders' beliefs and attitudes as it is here where 'genuine change' may occur. Yet cognitive change must also be backed by practical and substantive change in former offenders' lives; probation officers must be careful to recognise the limitations of their probationers' lives. As elaborated by Rex, 'one should not exaggerate the 'choice' confronting these probationers; Giddens' (1991) 'dazzling diversity of options and possibilities' is hardly the vision conjured up by the grim reality of many of their lives' (1999: 379).

Therefore, it is the area in which life-course and sociogenic theories intersect that can arguably offer the best guidance to criminal justice policy. As previously noted, Stephen Farrall's (2002) study of English probationers did not yield particularly positive results from a criminal justice perspective. In fact, desistance was attributed to specific probation officer interventions in only a handful of cases of the 200 individuals involved in the research. However, where probation intervention was said to have a positive influence, it was the cases where assistance was given in mending damaged family relationships and identifying employment opportunities. It is therefore important, Farrall (2002) proposes, that probation programmes not only address the cognitive factors which symbolise desistance but also the social and personal context in which desistance occurs. Indeed, without addressing these contexts, it is unlikely desistance will take root. Matthews et al (2014) make a similar case for promotion of exiting prostitution which they argue must include emotional, peer and community forms of support alongside drug treatment and housing provisions. Similarly, within Rex's (1999) sample of probationers, those who were successfully desisting attributed 'their avoidance of crime to their probation officers' guidance over their personal and social problems as least as often as to reasoning about their behaviour' (374). When probation officers do intervene in personal and social obstacles to desistance, the result is likely to be a positive one according to the literature.

In a chapter of a book co-edited by Stephen Farrall, Bottoms and Shapland (2011: 70) make the case that the 'lived experience of desistance is primarily a process of learning new ways of living in the community'. As noted above, the authors use the analogy of an offender whose crimes are primarily, or even partly, a way of bringing in income (burglary, drug dealing, theft etc.) The researchers argue that a significant part of the individual's desistance will involve acquiring new

or increased methods of legal income or learning to do without as much money. This is an area where it is easy to see how probation practice may combine cognitive programmes with practical support and assistance. Bottoms and Shapland (2011) note however, that providing assistance with such practical problems has not been an approach which has been recognised as valuable in probation service rhetoric in England and Wales in contemporary times. The authors recognise that the current political climate³ which is distinguishable by the focus on what Garland (2001) has termed the ‘culture of control’, particularly evident in the approaches of the ‘What Works?’ agenda, has meant that offenders are consistently viewed as being less deserving of help than their law-abiding counterparts. This factor, the authors argue, has led to the diminution of practical social, economic and relationship assistance provided by criminal justice interventions and a tendency to focus on cognitive intervention. This problem was also recognised by Sue Rex as far back as 1999 in the acknowledgement that although probation officers tend to be in a position to offer practical support and guidance, there existed an unfortunate likelihood that ‘probation officers may be hampered by their own tentativeness about engaging probationers fully in the making of plans to tackle the issues underlying their offending’ (p. 380). Therefore, even where there is a will to offer the practical support which is central to desistance, the political climate has ironically hampered probation officers to the extent where they are often reluctant to provide it.

Even where a cognitive-behavioural approach is favoured, academics have warned that behavioural approaches alone will not result in desistance. For example, Lsel (1995) concluded that, ‘it is mostly cognitive-behavioural, skills orientated and multi-modal programmes that yield the best effects’ (91; quoted in Farrall, 2002: 14). Whilst cognitive-behavioural programmes are crucial in criminal justice desistance promotion, the value of multi-modal programmes which include practical assistance, particularly with education and employment, is echoed in the quantitative research conducted by Lipsey (1995) and (Farrall, 2002). The cognitive-behavioural method should therefore form part of a holistic approach which recognises that informal sources of support and personal resources play a crucial and central role in desistance alongside professional treatment. Access to systems of economic and social support should be a key consideration of the CJS in the promotion of desistance in combination with the building of individuals’ cognitive resistance (Healy, 2012; Runggay, 2004).

The issue of the lack of practical support currently offered by community disposals in England and Wales is a current topical issue within the CJS and particularly under the Transforming

³ Published in 2011. Arguably this rhetoric has become even more widespread since the coalition government has become more entrenched (and following the election of the Conservatives in 2015) in combination with the advent of privatisation. See Chapter 8 for more

Rehabilitation (TR) agenda. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8. If the CJS truly desires to promote desistance (as indeed the argument has always been), the evidence suggests that this must be through tackling social and practical issues, by assessing what people require to stop offending, in addition to cognitive therapies.

A further lesson which the CJS can glean from the desistance literature is related to the importance of significant relationships in promoting desistance. Social bonds and life course theorists alike (Sampson and Laub, 1993, 2003; Farrington and West, 1995; Warr, 1988, 2002; McIvor et al. 2000; Maruna, 2001) have long espoused the importance of significant relationships in the promotion and maintenance of desistance. Often however, the centrality of the relationship between probationer and probation officer (or indeed any criminal justice or social work practitioner and their service users) is ignored or marginalised in both criminal justice policy and practice and the desistance literature. For some academics, the professional relationships which the CJS helps to construct are no match for individual's own resources and social networks. Hill (1999), for example, in a study of the problems young people face and the kind of help they wish to access to tackle these problems, found a general mistrust of professional individuals and concluded that problems are often best solved within young people's own social networks. Problems of mistrust were also noted in Matthews' et al 2014 study of exiting prostitution. Furthermore, others have questioned the importance of good probationer-officer relationships in the promotion of desistance. Farrall (2002) for example, found that amongst the 200 probationers he studied, the extent to which the probationer and officer worked together seemed to have no effect on resolving obstacles. Help in avoiding obstacles in this study appeared to come from probationers themselves or from the social contexts in which they existed. The author recognised however that at times the connection between officer and probationer was ineffective at resolving certain issues, not because of the quality of relationship, but because of the motivation of the probationer or as a result of adverse social and personal circumstances.

Despite these reservations, it is generally accepted, by academics and often amongst practitioners themselves, if not by policy makers, that the relationship between officer and (former) offender is something which is central to the reformation and desistance journey of any probationer. The changing place of the officer-offender relationship in criminal justice policy has been summarised by Burnett and McNeill (2005) who have argued that the marginalisation of the relationship has not always been a feature of probation policy in England and Wales. The Morison report, for example, which set out policy in the early 60s, espoused 'the creation and utilisation, for the benefit of an individual who needs help with personal problems, of a relationship between himself and a trained social worker' (Home Office, 1962: paras 54-56).

Writing in 2005, Burnett and McNeill argued that there was likelihood that the group work programmes and case management approaches which overtook this relationship-focused policy and have been the focus of modern probation practice, looked likely to be diminished in favour of the reinstating of the officer-offender relationship at the time of writing. However, the related circumstances which led to the depletion of the relationship element in the 1980s and 1990s could be argued to be reoccurring currently. The authors state that the factors which have driven modern probation policy are the managerialism arising from Thatcherism and the target driven approach to budgetary restraint, 'just deserts' punitive penal policy and a renewed optimism about probation (Burnett and McNeill, 2005). These factors (especially with regard to the former two) appear to be current penal policy influencers, and are especially evident in former Justice Secretary Chris Grayling's 'Transforming Rehabilitation' offender engagement programme which has been taken up by the following two Justice Secretaries, Michael Gove and Liz Truss. This agenda has unfortunately meant that it is unlikely that the centrality of the relationship element will be reinstated by policy any time soon (for more, see Chapter 8). The human element in modern supervision is often overlooked, with policy preferring to be centred around ensuring the completion of programmes X, Y and Z. McNeill (2003) has argued that this lack of relationship promotion will mean probationers' needs are side-lined: 'we need to learn from them [probationers] about what might persuade them to desist and about the support they need to see their decisions through' (160).

Nonetheless, the relationship between officer and offender has been a constant in probation practice if not in theoretical rationale. Burnett and McNeill (2005) have contended that whilst the decline in importance of the relationship element has been a result of the circumstances noted above, probation officers are, in practice, recognising the importance of the officer-offender bond. Despite the fact that both NOMs policy and the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda rarely mention the relationship element, and frontline staff are actively discouraged from becoming involved in and committed to cases, in practice 'offender managers' do actually go beyond the boundaries of their roles. For example, Robinson and McNeill (2004) found that in Scotland, criminal justice social work has retained its ties with other aspects of social work, which retains the importance of the practitioner-service user bond within policy. 'In the past, when probation officers were actively encouraged to build a working -relationship with their clients, the qualities of warmth, empathy and genuineness were, consciously or otherwise, able to flourish' (Burnett and McNeill, 2005: 232).

However, if the relationship element is not translated into policy, it is in danger of getting ignored. The consequences of encouragement (and lack thereof) of the relationship element are well documented within the desistance and best-practice literature. Asay and Lambert (1999)

for example, found that a third of the success of probation was due to the therapeutic relationship between officer and probationer. Rex (1999) also noted the importance of this 'assisted desistance' amongst 60 probationers studied in England. The author maintained that an active and participatory supervision relationship which shows personal and professional commitment and reasonableness, where an officer was deemed to be fair and encouraging, displaying an interest in the individuals well-being and offering guidance on personal and social problems, is the most likely to encourage desistance. Rex (1999) found that the type of relationship which was most conducive to desistance however differed from probationer to probationer; whilst empathy, listening and understanding skills were found to be necessary generally, some participants also stated that they appreciated the more formal relationship aspects of the relationship whilst others found a certain amount of distance helpful. The literature suggests that probation staff therefore should be adaptable to the needs of their clients. Rex (1999) found that generally probation staff should be more confident in their ability to incite change and a positive moral influence. It may be likely that their reservations stemmed from the lack of encouragement of a meaningful relationship in probation policy. Rumgay (2004) has furthermore noted the importance of validation and the explicit endorsement of a newly forming conventional identity that probation officers may provide to help with the maintenance of this identity. Healy (2012) also found the probationer-officer relationship to be pivotal in desistance promotion. However, the author has recognised that the relationship should extend beyond the completion of a programme. Healy (2012) has suggested that beyond probation programmes, officers can use the established relationship to extend reintegration into the community, for example by working with sheltered employers, helping build pro-social networks or helping offenders engage in generative, structured activities outside of the confines of probation supervision. It is clear that a desistance paradigm when applied to criminal justice practice would have to entail the strengthening of the officer-offender relationship in rhetoric as well as practice.

There are some important factors which criminal justice policy can absorb about diversity and inequality from the desistance literature. The probation service and criminal justice institutions in general must be open to the varying needs of different groups whether these are based on ethnicity, gender, religion, class, sexuality or so on. Adam Calverley (2013) for example, has highlighted the importance of the community in promoting redemption amongst many ethnic minority groups. Therefore, community must be a central factor in criminal justice desistance promotion in a CJS truly located within the community. Females, who are notoriously underrepresented in the system generally, are amongst the most overlooked groups within the CJS. McIvor et al. (2000), in their Scottish based study looking at offending amongst young

people, found that boys and young men were more likely than girls and young women to have had some contact with the police, whilst more female than male respondents were likely to have had social work involvement. Although male and female 'persisters' were equally likely to report having appeared before the courts, young men were more likely to have been incarcerated as a result. The authors, in their 2011 follow-up which examined the differences in desistance patterns for males and females, questioned whether there is a 'chivalry' factor inherent within the system, although they also questioned whether social norms have led to females 'downplaying' their involvement in the system and in crime generally. Either way, the fact that women are less represented in the CJS has meant that, arguably at least until the publication of the 2007 Corston report, the CJS has been a system built for men by men.. For example, writing in 2006, Monica Barry deplored the lack of women only probation services (although this is now beginning to change). Rungay (2004) has also made the case that the prioritisation of male needs must stop. The author has argued that the social histories of many female offenders include victimisation, parental neglect, incomplete education, domestic violence, self-harm and so on. Female offenders may experience material deprivation, social exclusion and psychological vulnerability (Rungay, 2004). Reports since Corston nonetheless have not been positive (Hardwick, 2012; MoJ, 2013; Prison Reform Trust, 2014)) and TR is likely to further entrench the marginalisation of women and create desistance barriers (Broad and Spencer, 2014; Annison and Brayford, 2015). If these factors are ignored by the system, it will limit the female offender's ability to sustain an alternative conventional identity.

2.7 Female Desistance And Feminist Theories

Throughout this literature review on desistance, I have touched on the issues of identity and difference. In this section, I will explore the myriad explanations for women's desistance evident in the life-course and desistance literature. Although in many ways, women may follow a similar desistance pathway to their male counterparts, there are key factors that have gender implications. Female pathways out of crime have largely been overlooked in the desistance literature (Rungay, 2004; Matthews et al., 2014). Scraton (1990) has argued that women tend to have 'occasional walk on parts' in these kinds of studies. Preferring to focus on the largely white male perspective of offending trajectories, the desistance literature has tended to ignore marginalised standpoints. Referring to the obstacles that individuals must overcome on the path towards 'desistance', Weaver and McNeill argue, 'to focus solely on overcoming these obstacles at the individual level runs the risk of accepting the world as it is, thus colluding with the social structures and attitudes that diminish the resources for desistance available to marginalised groups' (2010: 71).

By not studying desistance in a manner that also challenges forms of oppression that devalue certain identities whilst over-valuing others, oppression is reinforced. Although there are many ways in which this can be overcome (by looking at ethnicity, sexuality, social class, disability etc.), for the purposes of this thesis, I will focus on the intersection of gender and desistance. Whilst the methodological difficulties of gaining a viable sample of women who are not well represented in the CJS are well documented (Maruna, 2001; Barry, 2006; Healy and O'Donnell, 2006), it is extremely important that as a result women's experiences are not overlooked. It is also imperative to note that female incarceration rates in the UK are hugely on the rise with a 115% increase in those entering the often revolving door between 1995 and 2000 (womeninprison.org.) Contact with the CJS generally has also been on the up for females (womeninprison.org). A meta-analysis of 'What Works' research conducted by Dowden and Andrews in 1999 found only 26 studies that solely (16) or predominantly (10) involved female offenders. Although desistance remains a topic with a largely male face, since Rumgay's (2004) assertion about the absence of the female voice in desistance literature, there have happily been some movements in the area (Barry, 2006; Giordano et al., 2006; Mclvor et al., 2011; Sapouna et al., 2011; Carr and Stovall Hanks, 2012; Matthews et al, 2014; Leverentz, 2014, Rodermond et al., 2016).

Research that has focused solely on female offending patterns and on both male and female offending patterns has indicated that the process of desistance from deviance experienced by females is often a similar process to that experienced by the male offending population. Bersani et al. (2009: 6) for example have stated, 'specifically, desistance appears largely to be a non-gendered process'. Baskin and Sommers (1998) in a study of 30 female desisters, found that reasons for 'maturing out' of crime were similar to those found in male studies. Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) also found similarities in the desistance factors experienced by men and women.

Mclvor et al. have noted that 'offending is essentially an age-related phenomenon and most young people eventually 'grow out of crime'' (2011: 181). Asquith and Samuel (1994) note that there is a similar relationship between age and incidence of offending for men and women even though women's number of convictions is lower. Crime is a youth-related phenomenon for males and females. Although there are variations evident in the male and female offending trajectories when plotted in an age-crime graph, it can be fairly reasoned that across-gender offending is predominantly reserved for young adulthood (for an alternative view, see Carr and Stovall Hanks, 2012, who use life course perspectives to explain the pathways of late-onset female offenders). It could be argued therefore that ontogenetic explanations for desistance are

applicable to both males and females, and any differences may be explained by differences in maturation rates.

In terms of sociogenic explanations, there has also been a concordance evident in the purported social bonds factors influencing desistance. Bersani et al. (2009) for example, highlight that studies which have examined the link between gender and desistance, have found more similarities than differences in the social control factors that promote desistance (Baskin and Sommers, 1998; Leverentz, 2006; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998). The authors go on to argue that the social institution of marriage in particular reduces the odds of offending, regardless of gender, and this is particularly true in the most contemporary contexts. Positive relationship experiences and particularly marriage therefore tend to represent 'turning points' in the lives of both male and female former offenders. Similarly, parenthood has also been noted to be a factor in male desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2003) as well as female desistance (Graham and Bowling, 1995). Another factor which has had salience in the sociogenic literature is the effect of employment on offending trajectories. Whilst it is well noted that offenders are extremely marginalised as a result of economic and social constraints particularly following a period in prison, this is true for both male and female offenders (Laub et al., 1995). Indeed it could certainly be argued that female offenders are doubly marginalised economically, as a result of being both a woman (see for a further explanation Pat Carlen's 'feminisation of poverty' thesis (1998)) and a former offender. Although females are more likely to be employed on a part-time or temporary basis than their male counterparts, research has nonetheless found that this employment can pave the way to an offending free lifestyle regardless of gender (Giordano et al., 2002). McIvor et al. (2011) have found that the move away from delinquent peers as a result of marriage, parenthood or employment can be a desistance promoting factor for males and females.

Giordano et al. (2002) whilst noting that differences in desistance patterns for females as compared to males are important, have conceded that their qualitative life-history interviews revealed that 'the repertoire of hooks for change men and women elaborate, the language they use and the descriptions of the entire change process overlap to a considerable degree' (p. 1052). McIvor et al.'s 2011 work, which focuses on the experiences of young people, also found a commonality in the experience of desistance that transcended gender and age, concluding; 'attempts to reduce or stop young people's offending might usefully focus on achieving both attitudinal, and more particularly, behavioural change' (2011: 195). Perspectives that focus on cognitive changes, including changes in identity, have found there to be a correspondence in the experiences of male and female desistance. Maruna (2001) for example, could find only 'few differences' (p.175) in the narratives of desisting men and women. Moreover, a combination of

maturation, social forces and cognitive shifts in identity appear to be important in cross-gender desistance stories. McIvor et al. in their 2011 follow up to their work of the previous decade which examined the experiences of young people in Scotland, this time focusing on gender, concluded: 'In many respects the process of desistance may be similar for young men and women, with the familiar themes of maturation, transitions, changed lifestyles and relationships being pertinent for both groups' (p.194).

Differences, nonetheless, have been evident in the desistance experiences of females as compared to males throughout the life-course literature. For example, a recent American quantitative study which examined the similarities and/or differences in female and male offender groups found that whilst there was an overlap in theories which could be used to explain both female and male desistance (age-graded theory, differential association/ social learning theory and deterrence/ rational choice theories), 'researchers studying desistance cannot assume the generality of effects of variables across gender' (Gunnison, 2014: 86). Gunnison found support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) age-graded theory of social control yet also found that marriage was found to have a more significant desistance effect for women than men. Additionally, a high likelihood of punishment was likely to have predicted desistance for females to a higher degree than males according to the author.

Gender has consistently been referenced as one of the biggest predictors of offending patterns (Gendreau et al., 1996; LeBel et al., 2008). There has been much interest in the differing reasons why males and females may begin offending and various debates about the gendered pathways into crime (Chadwick and Little, 1987; Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007). Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1996) for example note that women engage in deviance often as a direct result of emotional attachments to boyfriends, spouses and pimps. Rex (1999) meanwhile notes the peak of male offending in England and Wales is 18; whilst the female age-crime is different, with fewer embarking in offending careers but also flattening to something approaching a plateau at ages 16 before slowly declining. McIvor et al (2011) stress that there is a perception amongst police officers, teachers and social workers nonetheless that girls were increasingly becoming involved in offending. The authors found that these individuals tended to partly attribute the supposed rise in violence amongst younger girls to media influences whilst young women's offending was blamed largely on drug addiction, with young women being introduced to opiates and to offending through their relationships with young men. Less attention however has been paid to female desistance. Giordano et al (2002) reference the literature on female pathways into crime which suggests that the context of female offending may differ (Daly 1994; Maher 1997; Maher and Daly 1996; Ogle, Maier-Katkin, and Bernard 1995; Tripplett and Myers 1995), and argue 'the

notion that there may be gendered pathways into crime leads us to assume that there may be gendered pathways out of crime as well' (p. 996).

Certainly there can be little doubt that the process of maturation for an individual can be closely linked with desistance. However, ontogenetic explanations must be aware of gender differences involved in the process of maturation. Research has indicated that the well-known maxim that girls mature faster than boys has found to be replicated in terms of criminological trajectories. Graham and Bowling (1995) for example note that young women appear to desist earlier than their male counterparts and link this to early maturation amongst females. Females, they propose, are more likely to take advantage of life transitions. McIvor et al. (2011) similarly note that females 'grow out of crime at an earlier age than males' (p. 10).

Ultimately women and men, by virtue of their socially-constructed genders, experience life differently. Women and female offenders are subject to different and varying levels of inequalities, prejudices and abuses compared to men and male offenders, therefore they have different life experiences (and therefore different offending experiences) than men. Disadvantages in external life are likely to contribute to difficulties in reform processes, and this obviously means that social control explanations have consequences depending on gender. Underrepresentation in employment figures has not however been linked to greater involvement in the CJS amongst women (Maruna, 2001). Nonetheless, it could be argued that the reason employment has a less tangible effect on desistance for females is precisely a result of this historic underrepresentation, where former offenders are less likely to miss what they have not experienced. The material deprivation, which is the common female former offender experience, cannot be overlooked. A 2015 study into employment outcomes for women following short-term prison sentences found that employment outcomes are three times worse than for men; fewer than one in ten women have a job following release (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). According to the literature, that which contributes to a weakening of social bonds cannot be conducive to desistance (Rumgay, 2004; Farrall, 2002).

Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) note that females are likely to attach greater importance to intimate relationships than males, which they argue often results in female law breakers being introduced to offending by a delinquent partner. Whilst marriage for males has often been linked to desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Farrington and West, 1995; Horney et al, 1995; Healy and O'Donnell, 2006), for females the same cannot be said (Sampson et al., 2006; King et al., 2007). These authors have suggested that men tend to 'marry up', whilst females with an offending background are more likely to 'marry down' and therefore the 'good marriage effect' cannot be replicated amongst female offenders. Even where marriage has been found to have

a positive effect for female offenders (for example, Bersani et al, 2009), there is a significantly lower effect for women, and marriage has been found to be more beneficial for men. Even here, the authors note that the positive effect of marriage on offending patterns may be spurious. There is a suggestion that married women are likely to be treated differently and more leniently by the CJS (especially if the woman has children) and so this supposed 'good marriage effect' for women may actually be representing the effect of gender. Mclvor et al. (2000) also found that the end of a heterosexual relationship was more likely to be associated with a move towards desistance for females rather than the beginning of one. Bersani et al. (2009) admit that for women parenthood seems to be the determining relationship-related desistance factor, a conclusion which has much research backing (Giordano et al., 2002; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Uggem and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Mclvor et al., 2011). Rutter et al. (1998) for example found that contrary to popular belief, teenage motherhood in particular may facilitate desistance. These studies have indicated that motherhood, like fatherhood, is associated with less opportunity for criminal offending. Graham and Bowling, (1995) for example found that if parenthood is accompanied by leaving home for women, it is particularly predictive of desistance whilst the consequences of criminal behaviour are more salient for mothers (Graham and Bowling, 1995). Giordano et al. (2002) have noted that women are more likely to assign prominence to both parenthood and the socialising effect of religious transformation in their desistance stories whilst men were more likely to focus on prison or treatment or family in a general sense. Katz (2000) is careful to note however that women's desistance may be culturally determined; she found that becoming a parent was most likely to be associated with desistance amongst white women whilst minority ethnic women were more likely to define themselves in relation to kinship networks, neighbourhood and work.

Social control mechanisms have been found to have a positive effect on female desistance in the sense that awareness of peer, familial and societal disapproval (Weaver and McNeill, 2010) is felt to a greater extent by females than their male counterparts, arguably when the 'gender contract' has been damaged (Worrall, 1990). At the same time, as argued by Weaver and McNeill (2010) men's involvement in crime is shaped by social discourses and expectations of what it is to be a 'man'. Some researchers, for example, have linked male criminality to difficulties establishing masculine identities in a changing economic context (Mclvor et al., 2000). It is clear that the social inequalities, prejudices and abuses suffered by both males and females can be said to have an effect on their offending trajectories. However the social control mechanisms experienced by female offenders may be felt in quite the opposite way to those experienced by their male counterparts.

Life course and symbolic interactionist perspectives which by definition consider personal identity changes have largely neglected the consideration of socially constructed gender identities as desistance promoting or otherwise. Yet as Maruna et al note, structured self-images are 'not created in a vacuum, they are socially shaped and individually constructed' (2004: 274). Mc Ivor et al. (2011) highlight the significance of gendered assumptions in the reasons young people attribute for their 'decisions' to desist; young women tended to attribute their decisions to desist to the assumption of parental responsibility whilst young men focused on personal choice and agency. This notion of agency is an important one in the desistance literature generally but has particular manifestation in the gendered accounts of desistance (Giordano et al., 2002) and feminist literature. Giordano and colleagues (2002) found for example that whilst men were more likely to explain desistance in utilitarian terms, women often mentioned the moral dimensions of the offending or non-offending behaviour. As Deitz and Burns (1992) note, a display of human agency requires the availability of at least some choice and some amount of power. When considering the position of offenders, and particularly female offenders, the issues surrounding choice and power are crucial. Giordano et al. (2002) concluded that their research highlighted that it is in situations of particular disadvantage that huge reserves of agency are often not enough to incite change; it is the relatively disadvantaged individual who most requires strong reserves of personal agency. The authors argue that 'on a continuum of advantage and disadvantage, the real play of agency is in the middle' (2002: 1026). Furthermore, McIvor et al (2000) find that for the young women involved in their research, desistance was more likely to have a moral element attached whilst males were more utilitarian in their reasoning. This meant that women were more likely to come to the conclusion that offending was 'wrong' whilst males were more worried about 'getting caught'. Sommers et al. (1994) similarly found that 'shame' was a more significant experience for females as compared to males, again highlighting societal gender expectations. McIvor et al. (2000) suggest that the fact that females were more keen to be viewed as desisting than males further galvanises the role of gender expectations in offending trajectories. The social construction of female offending is central to the female experience. McIvor et al. quote a Scottish Office document that reiterates this point, 'Whilst offending may be a socially inclusive experience for many men and they may gain prestige amongst their friends for their criminal behaviour, this is rarely the case for women and this may be a partial explanation of why so few women offend' (Scottish Office, 1998: 6 taken from McIvor et al., 2011: 195).

Graham and Bowling (1995) have argued that for many, gender expectations have led to a denial of the offending behaviour of women. However, as the identity literature has noted, in order for desistance to occur, the offending behaviour must first be recognised (Maruna, 2001; Graham

and Bowling, 1995). It is proposed by researchers who find gender differences in the desisting scripts of former offenders, that for men (especially younger males), the beginning of offending can be a socially inclusive and relational experience, whilst the opposite may be the case for women. Paradoxically, desistance for men is an individual experience which draws on reserves of personal agency; whilst for many women, desistance has a 'relational dimension' (Gilligan, 1982) where the individual is either 'shamed' into desistance (as a result of the breaking of the gender code) (Sommers et al, 1994) or is welcomed back into society as a result of the acquisition of a socially desired and approved identity (McIvor et al., 2011; Runggay, 2004; Maruna, 2001).

Runggay (2004) has argued persuasively that female offenders' processes of desistance are rooted in recognition of an opportunity to claim an alternative, desired and socially approved personal identity. For example, the identity of a mother may provide a 'script' by which to enact a conventional, pro-social role to enhance the individual's confidence in their ability to enact it successfully, which in turn assists in perpetuating the newly acquired identity. As noted by Giddens (1991): 'A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though it is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going' (p. 54). Runggay (2004) suggests that coping strategies are of particular importance to female offenders who are likely to experience material deprivation, social exclusion and psychological vulnerability. Runggay suggests therefore that the 'scripts' must be accessible so that the offender is able to fulfil the requirements of the new identity and avoid being set back on the offending pathway. Social reaction is therefore essential and wider societal recognition that these scripts may take time to have an effect may for an essential desistance element. Runggay (2004) argues that these scripts can build up self-efficacy and control through increasing participation in conventional roles and relationships. Positive reinforcement of the script can reinforce resilience and survival. Much like Carlsson (2011 and 2012), Runggay (2004) notes that relapse can actually signal desistance each time it is lessened. As a society therefore we must be patient with female offenders in particular as they become masters of this new 'script'.

Summarising the differences between male and female desistance pathways, Matthews et al. (2014) note that there are four factors which can explain the difference. Firstly, informal relations and supports are more important for women. Women are also more likely to seek conventional roles of a partner or parent. Thirdly, women are more concerned with seeking roles with social approval. Finally, women appear to be able to change their lifestyle more quickly than men. These ideas will be explored in this thesis.

What implications does the literature on the unique experience of female desistance have for the CJS and the new probation system under the TR Agenda in particular? As has been

recognised, the CJS must be exposed as a system that has prioritised male needs (Rumgay, 2004). This factor was recognised by the Corston Report, published in 2007, following the tragic death in 2006 of six women at Styal prison, yet many recognise that there has been little improvement in the treatment of females within the CJS since Corston's publication (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). The probation service in England and Wales has tended to give prominence to treatment programmes that appeal to a cognitive deficit model of offender's competence in reasoning, yet one of the only UK evaluations to consider the impact of cognitive skills programmes on female prisoners was undertaken in 2006 found no significant differences in the one- and two-year reconviction rates for the offenders researched (Cann, 2006). The literature suggests that cognitions can never be enough (Carlsson, 2012; Farrall, 2002). A recent House of Commons Justice Committee Report (2013) has also argued that the TR reforms have been designed with male offenders in mind. The reforms appear to reinforce the loss of funding to women's community centres and make unavailable strong data about what is effective for women offenders to enable new providers to make informed and sensible decisions (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). The fact that women offenders have different needs to men and these needs are unlikely to be met in the CJS was recognised by an American study by Bloom et al. (2004). The global prioritisation of male needs has led commentators such as Weaver and McNeill to argue that there needs to be a 'provision of services (for women) that take into account the realities of their lives, of what is important to them and the social demands placed upon them... [addressing] housing and financial problems, assistance with child care, access to meaningful education and employment opportunities and support to strengthen social and familial support networks' (2010: 66).

The literature suggests that we must recognise females affected by the CJS as not falling into the binary categories of offenders and victims. This thesis will argue that women who travel desistance journeys are much more than survivors. The system must support the escape from victimisation to allow these women to realise their own potential for desistance and survival in high risk environments (Rumgay, 2004). This should include social and economic support (Rex 1999; Farrall, 2002; Weaver and McNeill, 2010) but also recognition of the structural inequalities which shape women's everyday lives. Support should also extend beyond the completion of a programme, as desistance is often a relational experience for women and requires constant 'script' maintenance (Rumgay, 2004). Steps towards desistance should be recognised and celebrated, whilst 'relapses' recognised as part of the desistance process; desistance is a process which takes time (Rumgay, 2004; Carlsson, 2012). Some researchers (Weiner, 1989) have argued for example that women desist from crime at a higher rate than males. Crucially, the CJS should

not be in denial about female's capacity to offend and most importantly, their ability to reform (Rumgay, 2004; Graham and Bowling, 1995).

Yet researchers and practitioners alike must be careful to avoid inappropriately universalized or stereotypical assumptions about female desistance, particularly in consideration of their relational concerns (Barry, 2007). As with all those affected by the CJS, convicted women must be recognised as individuals with their own unique stories and experiences. People do not easily fall into categories and their experiences tend to overlap (Giordano et al., 2002); in promoting desistance care must be taken not to marginalise the already marginalised.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the myriad theories which exist to explain the complex process of desistance for both females and males. The chapter has argued that the desistance literature has offered insight into the how and why of the end of offending, particularly through three separate but interlinked theoretical perspectives. Ontogenetic and social bonds literature initially offered positivist explanations of the process of desistance. Maturation theory argued that desistance involved a 'natural' process of getting older. Sociogenic theorists felt this was incomplete and argued that 'social bonds' to conventional life, particularly gained through the processes of finding employment and getting married, indicated moves to desistance. Using narrative methods, subjective themes such as hope, self-efficacy, shame, stigma, remorse and identity change were examined by the final group of desistance theorists. Yet most theorists now argue that these theories are connected. Additionally there have been attempts to combine desistance theory with the 'What Works' research to provide insight into best practice. More recently, theorists have examined the impact of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda.

Throughout the literature there has been a lack of female voice. The following chapters will explore whether desistance theory as examined here can explain the journeys of Northshire women convicted of diverse offences, particularly following the pathways of sixteen women interviewed throughout the course of 2014 and 2015. To do this I will examine the maturational, sociological and subjective theories in the context of these women's narratives. I also examine the role of the CJS, particularly examining the community contexts of the aforementioned journeys. The next chapter provides the situational backdrop, with an overview of the location of desistance journeys for these women.

*Throughout this chapter the words 'offender' and 'former offender' have been used as these are words used in the wider literature. In the following chapters I will argue a move away from

this discourse to describe women who have been affected by the CJS as such. (For more see Chapter 7).

CHAPTER THREE: SETTING THE CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

Why do I wake up every morning to it all? You can't shake it off can you? (Anna, Age 36)

This chapter sets out the context of the research which follows by examining the setting of desistance journeys travelled by the women involved in this research. Firstly the overall setting of Northshire will be examined with brief overviews of the social and economic make-up of the five areas where the research took place; Southton, Easton, Weston, Central Town and Northton. The link between place, community, citizenship and desistance has been well explored in the literature (Farrall et al., 2011; Caverley, 2013). What follows is a brief overview of the five Northshire areas in which the women around which this project is based live, work, raise children, attend probation and generally live their lives. Next I will discuss the two community justice projects, Northshire Women's Centres (WCs) and the Housing for Northshire (HfN) Project, which formed the backdrop for this research. An overview is simply provided here whilst Chapter 8 analyses these projects and their link with desistance. The desistance contexts of the women who took part in the in depth narrative interviews will then be considered, with reference to the profiles provided in Appendix 1. It is important to provide the structural and social contexts in which offending and desistance trajectories are trekked because narratives of offending and desistance do not happen in the absence of relational, social and structural contexts.

3.2 Northshire

The research for this project took place over five different areas in Northshire where the WCs and the HfN Project were based. Interviews took place across Southton, Easton, Central Town and Northton; no interviews were conducted in Weston. In 2011, the usual resident figure for broader Northshire was just under 1.5 million. This represented a population growth rate of 3.3% since the last census in 2001. In terms of Gross Value Added, the rate of growth of the Northshire economy has for a number of years lagged behind the national rate of change. Average (median) gross weekly earnings are noticeably below the average in Britain. Whilst life expectancy continues to improve across all parts of Northshire; in some of the Northshire local authorities, male and female life expectancy at birth rates are amongst the worst in England and Wales. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average (Public Health England, 2014). Deprivation is higher than average and around one in five children live in poverty. Whilst the county is home to a number of universities, the overall outturn appears to suggest that Northshire needs to increase the proportion of its residents qualified to NVQ level 4 in order to be on a par with the national average. This starkly highlights the inequalities in the

area. Within the county, there are pockets of severe social and economic deprivation, including a high proportion of 'hidden' and long-term unemployed with low levels of basic skills. At the national level in February 2014, the claimants of working age benefits amounted to 13% of the working age population, whilst within the Northshire area, the rate was noticeably higher at 15.4% (Northshire.gov.uk⁴). Northshire's population is largely white (90%), the black and minority ethnic group makes up 10% of the population, the majority of this group were Asian/Asian British (2011 Census). Northshire county council's slogan is '*A place where everyone matters.*' This slogan will be considered in this thesis. In particular this slogan will be considered as part of the discussion in Chapter 9.

3.2.1 Southton

Southton, where the Tulip Centre is based, experienced population growth of almost 7% between the 2001 and 2011 census, a percentage point under the national average. More recently, Southton was the only Northshire area which saw a yearly population increase in excess of the national average in the mid-year population estimate between 2012 and 2013. Its central population is approximately 40,000 with approximately 110,000 in the greater Southton area (Mid 2012 Estimate, ONS). In 2014, *The Telegraph*, used economic, health and crime statistics gathered from the 2011 census, average weekly household net income in an area for the period April 2007 to March 2008 and official police statistics for the period May 2013-June 2014 to rank 7,137 areas of England and Wales (the best place to live was rated no.1.) Central Southton was rated 5,063, with poor ratings on crime and income. The inequality in the greater Southton area can be noted in the fact however that other areas within the Greater Southton area were rated 3,510, 408 and 104 out of 7,137. Whilst this source is not without criticism - not least that a proportion of the data is 8 years out of date - this does give a good indication of the comparative deprivation of the area. Overall, deprivation is lower than the England average in Southton; about 14% of children live in poverty, according to Public Health England (2014). In the case of the five Northshire areas studied for this project, Southton could be described as the least economically disadvantaged. There are lower levels of unemployment and working age benefit claimants than the rest of England. Nonetheless, gender inequality is evident, with life expectancy for women a year lower than the England average at 82 years, whilst for men the life expectancy is consistent with the England Average at 79 years (Public Health England, 2014). In the 2011 census, 97% of those living in Southton identified as White, with 2% identifying as Asian/ Asian British and 1% Mixed/ Multiple ethnic group.

⁴ The source for these statistics is hidden for the purposes of anonymization. Sources are available on request but anything related to place is anonymised for ethical purposes.

3.2.2 Easton

Easton is home to the Rose Centre and also the home of Rebecca Brown's Housing for Northshire project. The 2011 census noted that the usual resident population had fallen since the 2001 census by almost 2,500 people or almost 3% in Easton. The census estimate for 2011 was 87,057 usual residents. Easton was the 21st most deprived local authority area in 2010, rapidly rising from 31st in 2007. The Telegraph's 2014 survey rated Easton 7019 out of 7137 areas to live in in England and Wales, with just over 1% of areas scoring lower. Easton's 'desirability factor' was particularly low on crime, income and also economic activity and health. Easton has some of the lowest property prices in England and in 2010 it was reported that the town had the highest number of burglaries per head according to the NPIPA Local Crime Mapping System (2010). A former mining town, Easton was hit badly by the pit closure of 1981. However, it has now been the site of multiple high profile regeneration schemes which have resulted in high end manufacturing remaining strong in the town. According to Public Health England nonetheless, the health of people in Easton is generally worse than the England average. Deprivation is higher than average and about 27% of children in Easton were living in poverty in 2011. Overall unemployment rates and claimant count of Jobseekers Allowance were higher than average in England. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average at 75.7 and 80.5 respectively. Drug misuse and alcohol-related hospital stays are amongst the highest levels in England and levels of teenage pregnancy, GCSE attainment, breastfeeding and smoking at time of delivery are worse than the England average according to the 2014 report. In 2011, 87% of Easton's population identified as White, with 11% identifying as Asian/Asian British and 1% as Mixed/Multiple ethnicity.

3.2.3 Central Town

Central Town, where the Daisy Centre is based, was one of the only Northshire areas to see an increase in population between 2001 and 2011 (along with Southton). In this period, there had been an increase of over 10,000 people and the 2011 population numbered approximately 147,000 in the Greater Central Town area. Central Town has faced a number of social and economic challenges both historically and more recently. The Telegraph's 2014 survey listed Central Town as 7115 out of 7137 places to live in England and Wales with scores low across crime, income, economic activity, health and home ownership. Much like Southton, Central Town is an area of contrasts with inequality evident, whilst the suburbs contain some of the wealthiest areas in Northshire. Deprivation nonetheless is higher than average and about 25% of children live in poverty. In the 2010 indices of multiple deprivation, Central Town was ranked as the 28th most deprived area in England and Wales. Total unemployment rates and the number of working age people on benefits are well above the national average. Like Easton, the health

of people in Central Town is generally worse than the England average. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average at 76.5 and 80.9 respectively. Drug misuse and alcohol-related hospital stays are higher than the English average according to Public Health England (2014). There is also a high rate of suicide within the area. Compared with other areas in this project, Central Town had a relatively lower number of respondents to the 2011 Census identifying as White at 69%; 28% of respondents identified as Asian/ Asian British and 1% identified as Multiple/Mixed Ethnicity. Central Town has the third highest proportion of Muslims in England and Wales outside London.

3.2.4 Northton

Northton, where the Daffodil Centre is based was one of the smallest areas studied with a 2011 population of 35,000. It also rated low on the Telegraph's scale at 7037 out of 7137 places to live. Northton scored particularly poor on crime, income and also economic activity and health. Northton is a former centre of the cotton and textile machinery industries. Northton is part of a larger district, Hilldale, where there has been a deteriorating economic profile over the years. Hilldale has an approximate population of 81,000 people and this population had remained almost static between the 2001 and 2011 censuses. The total proportion of jobseekers allowance claimants is above both the England and Northshire averages. There is distinction in Hilldale as a place to work and a place to live; average earnings were low in 2013 when measured by place of residence but local employment strength has meant that earnings are comparatively high when measured by place of work, indicating that there was a draw to Northton and surrounding areas by those living outside the area. Hilldale has a similar ethnic profile to Easton with 88% of Hilldale's population identifying as White, 11% as Asian/Asian British and 1% as Mixed/Multiple ethnicity in the 2011 census.

3.2.5 Weston

In Weston, where the Iris Centre is based, the 2011 census population was 142,000, a very slight decrease of just over 200 people on 2001. Weston has the fourth largest population density outside Greater London in England and Wales. In 2010, the English indices of multiple deprivation named Weston as the most deprived local authority in the county, and the 10th most deprived in the country, rising from 18th in 2007 (www.Northshire.gov.uk). Weston was rated 7107 out of 7137 paces to live in England and Wale's in the Telegraph's 2014 research, meaning it was 30 in the worst areas to live. Whilst ratings were very low on crime, income, home ownership and health, economic activity was rated relatively high, due to Weston's standing as a tourist town and popular holiday destination. The population is biased towards people of retirement age. Deprivation in Weston is higher than average and 31% of children live in

poverty. The seasonal nature of tourism in Weston has meant that there are quite high unemployment rates in the winter months. Even at the height of the tourism season the unemployment rate in Weston is usually well above the county and national averages. Income level was the lowest in Northshire in 2014. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths in 2012/13 was 46% in Weston, below the Northshire average of 60%. The health of people in Weston is generally worse than the England average, with life expectancy for men and women at 74 and 80 respectively. The rate of alcohol related-hospital stays was much higher than the England average as was the rate of self-harm hospital stays, smoking-related deaths, excess weight and smoking rates according to Public Health England (2014). In 2011, 97% of Weston's population identified as White, 2% as Asian/ Asian British and 1% of Mixed/Multiple ethnicity.

Overall, Northshire is a place of deprivation relative to the rest of England and Wales. Within Northshire however there were pockets of affluence and extreme deprivation both within the county generally and within the smaller areas researched. Inequality has been linked with both high rates of crime and punitive justice policies (Pickett and Wilkinson, 2010; Dorling, 2015). It is argued within this thesis that these high rates of inequality do not provide a useful desistance backdrop. To zoom in on the 'desistance scape' it is necessary to consider the contexts of desistance promotion which the next section attempts to do by providing a descriptive account of the justice provision within the WCs and HfN Projects.

3.3 Formal Desistance Settings

3.3.1 The Women's Centres

During the time of my observations at the Women's Centres (WCs) from March 2014- May 2015, the WCs provided a 'one stop shop' for women entering the criminal justice system (CJS) as part of the Northshire Women's Specified Activity requirement (NWSAR). They provided these services by way of a contract won through Northshire Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). Mary, a staff member at the Women's Centre provided a useful overview of the services available for these women.

We don't say we're specialists in everything, we're not specialists in domestic abuse, drug services etc. but we do provide counselling and one to one support and assist with them accessing that. So under that umbrella where you say 'one stop shop' kind of thing you might get a woman who has an alcohol problem but doesn't quite feel ready... it's like, what do you address first? And it might be that you address some of the issues and then if they're ready to go into alcohol treatment and then for that afterwards. (Mary, Criminal Justice Project Manager at the Women's Centre).

As part of the project women are referred from the police, courts, probation and other parts of the CJS. The women spend ten weeks attending weekly two hour sessions at the various centres,

with the first two weeks taken up by a one on one induction then eight weeks of group work sessions and a final conclusion session on the last week. At the time of my observations the topics offered in the group work sessions were Substance Misuse Awareness; Health and Wellbeing; Housing and Money Management; Community and Citizenship; Employment Training and Education; Thinking and Behaviour; Victim Awareness and Family and Relationships. As can be seen these follow many of the similar themes found within the desistance literature. For example, the themes covered by McIvor et al (2004) in their study of youth offending and desistance in Scotland were education; employment; use of leisure and lifestyle; drug and alcohol use; offending; relationships with family, friends, and partners; neighbourhood, community, and society; values and beliefs; victimization; identity; and aspirations for the future. As will be elaborated in Chapter 4, these also reflected the topics covered in the interview schedule. It must be noted however that in 2015, the NWSAR was undergoing change including condensing the eight sessions into six and giving more sway to using the sessions as introductions to the 'add on support' that women may need. In the introductory one on one sessions, women are given information about the 'one stop shop' project and asked to sign a contract relating to their behaviour at group sessions including discussing their offences, taking part in sessions and respecting others. In reality, the women were not forced to reveal their offences at any time during the groups I attended. Groups may be as big as ten people or as small as a one on one session. My experience of both projects is discussed further in Chapter 4.

3.3.2 The Housing for Northshire Project

Rebecca Brown's Housing for Northshire Project was opened in September 2014. Rebecca describes the project as a 'supportive, abstinence-based housing project' which is divided into services for women and services for men. Rebecca started the project as a service for women but with help from her partner Paul, has developed a parallel service for men.

So we offer a shared accommodation within community housing so that could be 2, 3, 4-bedroomed units. And for people of no fixed abode. So it is primarily people from prison, it's not... we're coming from a community standpoint and we're about community regeneration rather than it being a project for people from prison which is why the CJS is not mentioned in any of the project vitals. So whilst primarily it is women from CJS, and with men from the CJS, it's not something that is effectively designed towards that. (Rebecca, Project Manager, Housing for Northshire).

Rebecca describes the project as having a 'peer-led, co-operative structure.' Women and men from the CJS are referred to the project from police, prison and various probation services whilst non-criminal justice referrals are often self-referrals. Whilst the focus is on housing, Rebecca and Paul also refer women and men into counselling, domestic violence services, health services, employment and training etc. Rebecca's office has an open door policy and she herself is

available to be contacted at any time. The houses are not set up as permanent accommodation for the women and men but as a stop gap with a view to enabling people to become “responsible functioning members of society with a view to getting back to work”. Ironically, in the early days of the project, Rebecca was approached by Christine Smith, CEO of the WCs who asked her to provide the project under the Women’s Centre premises. Whilst initially positive about the idea, Rebecca decided she did not want to be employed by the Centres, preferring to offer it under her own service and focus on housing.

3.4 Participant Profiles

Neither offending nor desistance are carried out in a vacuum. To understand the desistance process we must understand the context-specific circumstances in which offending and change in offending take place. Appendix 1 includes brief profiles of the sixteen women affected by the CJS who undertook at least one interview with me between summer 2014 and spring 2015. All the women served or were serving a sentence for an offence committed. Although other women’s narratives will be included in this research including staff members of both the WCs and the HfN Project as well as additional women affected by the CJS who attended WC group meetings, much of the analysis is based around the sixteen women who are included in Appendix 1. An overview of their key information is provided in Figure 1 below. The women’s narratives include everyday stories of everyday lives and backgrounds as well as stories of horror and victimisation but above all the narratives contain stories of resilience and hope, often against all odds.

Figure 1: Sixteen women interviewed for this research

Name	Age at first interview	Most recent offence	Originally contacted through	Based
Sue	40	Drink driving	Women's Centres	Southton
Paula	36	Theft	Women's Centres	Easton
Katie	60	Benefit fraud	Women's Centres	Northton
Grace	31	Growing cannabis	Women's Centres	Northton
Heather	24	Benefit fraud	Women's Centres	Northton
Bridget	27	Drug dealing	Women's Centres	Northton
Ruth	31	Non-payment of housing benefit overpayment	Women's Centres	Southton
Karen	36	Burglary (joint enterprise)	Women's Centres	Southton
Anna	36	Burglary (joint enterprise)	Women's Centres	Central town
Marie	40	Handling stolen goods	Women's Centres	Easton
Holly	23	Shoplifting	Women's Centres	Easton
Julie	59	Tax fraud	Women's Centres	Easton
Shelly	53	Assault on a prison officer	Housing for Northshire Project	Easton
Michaela	34	Shoplifting	Housing for Northshire Project	Easton

Kelly-Marie	48	Violating terms of probation after shoplifting offence	Housing for Northshire Project	Easton
Rebecca	46	Credit card fraud	Housing for Northshire Project	Easton

The women were interviewed at a variety of ages and at a variety of points on their desistance journeys. As evidenced in the profiles, women’s offending is situated in contexts of abuse, relationship problems including separation from children, material deprivation, poverty, mental health issues and drug and alcohol dependency. The women’s offences differ in consistency, frequency and severity. However it could be argued that the women’s offences are relatively low level; none of the most recent offences were violent and most could be described as acquisitive crimes. Neither of these findings are new, and as noted by Baroness Corston:

‘I consider these women in terms of their ‘vulnerabilities’, which fall into three categories. First, domestic circumstances and problems such as domestic violence, child-care issues, being a single-parent; second, personal circumstances such as mental illness, low self-esteem, eating disorders, substance misuse; and third, socio-economic factors such as poverty, isolation and unemployment. When women are experiencing a combination of factors from each of these three types of vulnerabilities, it is likely to lead to a crisis point that ultimately results in prison. It is these underlying issues that must be addressed by helping women develop resilience, life skills and emotional literacy.’ (The Corston Report, 2007)

The lives of women in the CJS, whether they are serving community sentences or have experienced time in prison have changed little since Baroness Corston’s 2007 report. Whilst these ‘vulnerabilities’ are often the factors which lead to offending, they often still remain, as has been seen in Appendix 1, during the course of desistance journeys.

Each profile in Appendix 1 deliberately starts with the offence each woman has been charged with. Yet the offence is rarely the pivot around which the woman’s life has turned. Often the offence committed is arguably a normal consequence of the personal, social and structural inequalities faced by the women. As will be argued over the following chapters, the promotion of women’s desistance must not ignore these inequalities but work to eliminate them. The academic world and the justice system must recognise the strength and resilience of women as highlighted in so many of these narratives above and must work to build upon this resilience where it is present. Yet we must not further demonise women nor reinforce the structural inequalities which they face by doing so.

3.5 Conclusion

It is important to note the context of women's offending and desistance pathways. Desistance does not happen in the absence of other factors and this chapter has attempted to highlight the importance of space and place in desistance journeys. Additionally, this chapter has briefly highlighted, in collaboration with the profiles provided by Appendix 1, the social and structural 'vulnerabilities' or inequalities which so often provide the backdrop to both offending and desistance journeys. As the following chapters will argue, without addressing these inequalities, desistance will be a much more arduous journey for women. Additionally, by promoting desistance which reinforces and even promotes these inequalities, desistance will be unlikely to occur. These issues are particularly explored within Chapter 6.

In order to examine the desistance narratives of these particular women, within this particular area, I conducted a year's observation at the Northshire WCs and carried out narrative interviews with women affected by the CJS who were undertaking specified activity requirements in the WCs as well as women who were living in the HfN Project following a prison sentence. This methodology will be explored further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

‘Women are rarely credited with having any real knowledge, even knowledge of themselves. People in conflict with the law are rarely granted credibility. On these two counts, female lawbreakers have been silenced.’ (Sommers, 1995: 3)

The research presented in this thesis is based on observations conducted from Spring 2014 to Spring 2015 at five Women’s Centres (WCs) located across Northshire as well as 23 semi-structured interviews with women with recent convictions (n= 16) and staff members (n= 6)⁵. These women with recent convictions were either part of the Housing for Northshire (HfN) Project or were completing/ had recently completed Specified Activity Orders at Northshire WCs. This chapter describes and reflects upon the methodology which was implemented for the purposes of the research. I will begin with a description of the research journey, describing issues of access and setting to provide the research context. The overall qualitative strategy employed will next be examined. Justification is provided for the methods chosen. As no methodology is without limitations, these will also be discussed at this point. Throughout, I will refer to methodological findings and reflections. This chapter refers to the ethical considerations of employing this methodology to ensure professional and overt research, before finally coming to a conclusion.

4.2 The Research Journey

Initial contact with gatekeepers was made through the university which had links with the Probation Trust who eventually put me in contact with Northshire WCs. Mary, the Criminal Justice Project lead was the first contact I made. I met Mary on a cold February in 2014 at Easton Woman’s Centre. My immediate impressions were of a ‘warm and bright’ centre. The centre was busy with women coming in and out. In all my time in the WCs I only met one man, a plumber who had come to fix the toilet. On my first visit to Easton, I had a chat with a very friendly woman on the desk who made me tea. They sold brightly coloured jewellery, hats and scarves behind the desk. Mary later told me these were made at the WC’s popular craft courses. Mary showed me around the centre which was a three storey building with lots of little rooms. She showed me to the room on the first floor where group sessions would normally take place, a purple toned room with six to eight chairs and a flip chart with large windows which lent a brightness to the room. There was a crèche downstairs which was also used for the craft class and counselling sessions when the other rooms were in use. Rooms within all WCs were multi-purpose. Upstairs, staff and volunteers had an open plan room with four computers. This was a

⁵ One of the women, Rebecca, had both a recent conviction and was also a staff member at the Housing for Northshire Project. Two of the women, Julie and Katie, were interviewed twice.

busy room with telephones constantly ringing. Mary and I discussed my research plans here and arranged for me to shadow a case worker, Jenny, beginning in Southton, the nearest location for me on the train, in the following weeks. Mary also offered advice on conducting research, noting that I should read out consent forms before asking women to sign them as some women had literacy issues. This was not something I had previously considered but was advice I took on board. Sanders (2006) for example notes the importance of adapting research practice throughout the process. Over the next year I attended seventeen observations of group sessions in Easton and Southton as well as Central Town, Northton and Weston.

Although Jenny worked in all these areas running group sessions, I began to also attend group sessions led by other staff including Mary as well as Eileen, Claudia and Maria⁶. I also met various volunteers throughout the year. Jenny in particular became a friend; she was a similar age to me and we had similar interests, often spending time after and before sessions talking about her work and mine. Ann Oakley (2015) considers the importance of friendship in the research relationship and this was certainly a prominent theme within this research. The group leaders all had different styles of leading the group sessions and adapted the sessions according to the number of women in attendance, removing roleplays, adding quizzes etc. In many ways the sessions reminded me of criminology tutorials I have taught and the participants of my students, although sometimes more involved in the sessions, sometimes less. Each of the WCs were arranged differently but the rooms in which the group sessions took place were variations on the same layout and colour scheme of the first one in Easton. Northton WC was the largest centre and was also used as a citizen's advice centre, although again I only saw women in attendance. In most centres there was a crèche. Northton was very busy, with women coming in and out of the bright reception centre from the busy high street seemingly non-stop. Group meetings took place on the top floor in a large room with a big table in the middle, around which the group sat. Southton on the other hand, was a small centre, very much resembling a house. There was no reception but a dark, living room style waiting room, with no windows but comfy sofas surrounding a coffee table with the ubiquitous leaflets and posters that were a feature of every WC offering information on physical and mental health, domestic abuse, childcare as well as local events and meetings. There was also a small office and kitchen on the ground floor. The group meetings took place in one of the two rooms on the first floor, which seemed to have been former bedrooms; the room looked out onto the street below. In this case women sat on

⁶ Eileen and Mary were both interviewed as part of the research alongside Jenny, Christine, Josie and Rebecca as staff members. However due to practical issues and time constraints Claudia and Maria were not.

chairs in front of the group leader who used a flipchart and pens at the front of the room. In these rooms, I usually sat making notes to the side of the room or behind the women.

Before group sessions, in most centres, women freely made cups of tea and coffee and went outside for a smoke. I often felt being a non-smoker somewhat disadvantaged me from making initial connections. Calverley (2014) for example also notes this challenging insider/outsider research position. Sometimes I would help the WC staff arrange the room before a session. In Weston, one week, the group room had boxes and boxes of children's clothes which Maria told me were donated for those in need. I helped move these into the offices. Before most sessions began however, I had the opportunity to chat to the women who arrived early. I would always explain about the research so as to ensure informed consent. For the most part service users, volunteers and staff were interested in my research and often talked about their own university or college experiences. Most of the time however we talked about children, the weather, television programmes (Breaking Bad was popular at the time and Jenny and I were watching it at the same time, many of the women also were), holidays and local events. Once, the Queen had visited Central Town on the morning of an afternoon visit to Central Town WC. As an Irish woman with a Catholic, Republican background, I had to admit I was unsettled by the omnipresent Union Jacks. At times I was unable to contribute to the talk about local news and events and my position as an outsider was clear. Outside of the WCs, my position as an outsider was abundantly clear; in a Northshire train station, buying a cup of tea, the café owner said, "You're not from here are you?" I told him I was not and we chatted about my work. He said, "Oh, we get a lot of criminals in Northshire but not many criminologists." Most of the time however, I was very relaxed and enjoyed attending the sessions and exploring the Northshire towns; meeting with Jenny felt like meeting an old friend and she would introduce me to other staff and service users in a way that meant I did not feel like an intruder. The potential worst experience of the WC I had was when my connecting train to Easton was very late one morning and I arrived at the session 30 minutes late. I did not want to interrupt the session so waited in the waiting area. Eileen was not leading the session but was in the centre. She kindly brought me into the group which was led by Claudia, whom I had not previously met. Claudia was extremely welcoming and said the session was about to come to a break anyway. All the women in the group immediately made me welcome. It was from this session that I made contact with Marie, Holly and Julie for the first time; these women were all were central to this research.

Having made contacts at the WC, conducted observations and begun interviews, it became apparent that I would need to widen the research scope to boost interview participants. Many women who took part in the observations did not want to take part in the interview portion and whilst some gave me their contact details, I was not surprised nor offended when they declined

further participation or did not reply. It was at this time when I came across Rebecca Brown on Twitter. Before carrying out any interviews, Rebecca allowed me to interview her as a pilot interview. This interview took place at Easton WC. We immediately chatted about my work and she told me about her HfN Project, inviting me to come to have a look and meet her clients. I went to her Easton office for the first time in Winter 2014. Her office was a shared Volunteer Centre with a reception room covered wall to floor with the ubiquitous leaflets on health and wellbeing, abuse, money management, local events and activities etc. Although the downstairs was a mixed gendered area, Rebecca's office was largely female only, although Rebecca's partner, Paul, who ran the male side of the project, was also around. On my first visit I interviewed Shelly and Michaela at a nearby café where they were well known and indeed where Michaela hoped to volunteer and work in the near future. On my second visit I interviewed Kelly-Marie, as well as Josie, a project volunteer and Rebecca herself, this time as a formal interview. Around this time I also interviewed WC staff. This was the context of my research journey. The following sections provide a deeper exploration of the justification for the particular methods used as well as the ethical issues and limitations of the research.

4.3 Methodological Approach and Justification

'Research, which has so far been an instrument of dominance and legitimation of power elites, must be brought to serve the interests of dominated, exploited and oppressed groups, particularly women'. (Mies, 1983: 123).

The association between feminist and qualitative research is not new. Researchers such as Oakley (1981) have claimed that research methods such as qualitative interviewing help women's voices be heard. Sommers notes that the rhetoric of objectivity within quantitative research 'has concealed the fact that, until very recently, most research has been male centred... women's experiences have been interpreted through a masculine filter, which has been concealed by the rhetoric of objectivity' (1995: 8). Yet the dichotomous quantitative/qualitative divide in feminist research has since been called into question (Westmarland, 2001). What is of more interest to feminist researchers is the concept of power. For example, Jones (1996) noted that a feminist methodology must involve a levelling of any potential (not only gendered) power imbalance between the researched and researcher. One way to pursue this is through the use of narrative interviewing styles which enable the researched to give voice to their own experiences and stories, using their own language and with their own emphases and omissions. This chapter will explore narrative techniques below in the section dedicated to the interview technique.

4.3.1 The Role of the Researcher

Within this thesis, the levelling of power balances was not always possible. As a middle-class student with no direct experience of the criminal justice system (CJS) and minimal local connections, I was acutely aware of my status as 'outsider' both throughout interviews and observations. Nonetheless there were many 'everyday' connections, which somewhat negated this problem, not limited to my gender but also my relational identity as an auntie and my national identity, where common connections were made. These power differentials within identity features are important when conducting feminist research. Erin Saunders, although employing a feminist methodology in her research on sex workers, noted that there was still a power differential in her research. 'I am not sure that it is ever possible to overcome the power imbalance in the research relationship, especially when I, as a 'White' 'Western' women research an 'Other'. From an ethical perspective, it seems to me that the research relationship fosters an exploitative relationship in a number of ways, and I will have to seriously consider how (or if) I can avoid this in future' (quoted in Bryman, 2012: 397). This issue was something I faced throughout my research journey, not least when Rebecca noted that:

And obviously what's happening, like with any other private sector, is that they're bringing in sort of... women shall we say... Right I'm going to say it, white, middle-class women, who actually look down about, "what these poor people need." And I find that actually, not even insulting, I find it an utter travesty. (Rebecca, Age 46)

These features of my identity are something that I cannot change. Like Saunders however, the recognition of this power differential was something which I noted throughout my research and did not restrict me from employing a feminist methodology throughout the fieldwork and interpretation of the observation and interview research. For example, during the research process, women would ask for advice on, for example, their relationship with their housing agency, I was very clear that I was not in a position to offer advice and whilst directing women to agencies which could help, was clear that I hoped this did not prevent them from becoming involved in the research process.

This insider/outsider status was clear throughout the research process. As noted above, the incident at a Northshire train station very much highlighted my 'outsider' position; yet my 'insider' position was evident in the friendships I made both with staff and service users, our complaints about our partners and our sharing of pictures of our nieces and nephews. Rose (2001) for example argues that the hybrid insider-outsider position can have the advantage that the researcher has partial shared understandings with the subject but is unthreatening and presents herself as genuinely wanting to learn something about her culture of origin. This was certainly true of this research and both the 'insider' and 'outsider' positions presented both challenges and advantages.

Qualitative methods have informed this research with particular homage paid to feminist and narrative styles. Semi-structured, qualitative interviewing has informed the bulk of the research whilst observation has also been employed as a method, in addition to providing a useful introductory route into the research. I will first discuss the methodological issues raised by the observation method before moving on to the semi-structured narrative interviews.

4.3.2 Observation Research

‘Truth is never pure, and rarely simple.’ (Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Act 1)

The above quote highlights the problem faced by social researchers of all fields. However, it is an observation which is especially true for qualitative researchers who choose observation techniques as their method of inquiry; there are multiple levels of subjective interpretation between the researched and the researcher. Nonetheless, observation can have many advantages to the researcher and indeed those who are being researched. Overt consensual observation formed the initial method of data collection for the purposes of this thesis. As noted above, I attended group sessions for women who had been sentenced with a Specified Activity Requirement or referred by their offender managers. Group sessions were constructed around eight different themes as constructed by the probation service in conjunction with Northshire WC; Substance Misuse Awareness, Health and Wellbeing, Housing and Money Management, Community and Citizenship, Employment Training and Education, Thinking and Behaviour, Victim Awareness and Family and Relationships. I attended at least one of each of these sessions. Service users also attended introductory and conclusion one to one sessions although I did not sit in on these sessions on Mary’s advice. The aims of the observation sessions included scene setting, observing relationships and various activities and discussions as well as providing an introductory platform to the research and particularly to recruit for phase two of the research (see Appendix 4). Mental notes and jotted notes (both on paper and on my smartphone ‘notes’ section) were gathered during the observations and elaborated upon on the train ride home. Once home/ at university, field notes were typed up with full information about events, people and conversations, as well as initial understandings about interpretation, impressions and feelings. As will be discussed in the ethics section, verbal and written informed consent was always given by those who took part. Throughout the observations, only two of 37 service users chose to opt out. There were as little as one and as many as six service users in each group. Often WC volunteers and trainee group leaders were also in attendance alongside employed group leaders. Staff members also gave their informed consent during these sessions.

There were many reasons why observation techniques formed a basis for this thesis. As noted by Atkinson and Hamersley, ‘all social research is a form of participant observation because we

cannot study the social world without being part of it' (1998: 111). Although not an immersive ethnographic study, this phase of the research can be viewed as a mini ethnography. Reinharz (1992) sees feminist ethnography as significant as a representation of women's lives and activities once seen as subsidiary to men's, as a way of understanding women through their own perspective [through mitigation of power differentials] and as an understanding of women in context. The use of observation/ ethnographic fieldwork avoids divorcing individuals from their social and historical circumstances.

The women involved in this research had an opportunity to get to know the researcher and the research project to a certain extent even before observation began. Waiting areas of the WCs provided an opportunity to engage with service users. Women often knew each other from previous weeks and mostly there were good relationships clearly evident between them. Most weeks however saw a new face so I was often not the only new person to the group. Connections were particularly formed in the discussion of children and Irish backgrounds. As Sarsby notes, (1984: 96) 'being in the right place at the right time and striking the right note in relationships may be just as important as skill in technique.'

One of the potential strengths of observation research is the concept of non- interference. The focus of observation research is on the natural behaviour of the service users and staff; behaviour is not modified by the researcher in the way that for example structured interviews only focus on subjects chosen by the researcher (Adler and Adler, 1994). Nonetheless it is recognised that my presence in the meetings was not without influence on behaviour and speech, both on the part of the staff and service users. An additional strength of observations is that there are no constraints placed upon those who are being studied. Service users and staff did not have to give up their time to fill in a questionnaire or take part in an interview, for example, they simply carried on with their weekly session, and those who did not want to take part in the second phase of the research project could still be a part of the research (or not as they choose). Furthermore, observation research meant that the researcher was also located within the context being investigated, which can lead to enlightening incidents or meaningful encounters. For example, the observation research revealed that many of the women involved had been victims of domestic violence, something which was not directly questioned in the interviews. The decision not to include a question on domestic violence was conscious, instead women were asked about their experiences of victimisation (See Appendix 4). As will be seen in the following chapters, this question nearly always elucidated stories of abuse. Additionally the observation research highlighted many of the issues the women had with their offender managers, something which tended to be discussed at length with group leaders.

As I was not relying on second hand accounts of behaviour, data were not subject to the sources of error which interviews or questionnaire surveys etc. are, including the unconscious motivations of respondents to tell the interviewer what they think the interviewer wants to hear or memory effects. Nonetheless this was somewhat constricted by the necessity of informed consent; without doubt there were modifications to behaviour because of my presence, with group leaders joking with service users; "Make sure you say you enjoy it now in front of Una." (Claudia, Group Leader, Rose Centre). On the other hand, observation data can benefit from the advantages of the use of research styles which Glaser and Strauss believe empower researchers to reclaim their craft from the 'great men' (Weber, Durkheim, Marx etc.) who, it was once believed 'had generated a sufficient number of outstanding theories on enough areas of social life to last for a long while' (1967; 10). Research in this case was conducted without preconceptions in an organic manner.

However, we must also be aware of the limitations and weaknesses of observation data. I found it difficult to observe everything that was occurring around me. In fact, it is impossible to do so (Adler and Adler, 1994). It was often remarked at the end of a session that I must have sore hands from writing so much. This meant that anything which was observed was done so selectively. Lapses in concentration and distractions certainly have negatively affected the reliability of my observation. I was often drawn into group discussion or asked to take part in role plays. Whyte (1979) argues that observations should be constructed in a collaborative manner. My participation in group activities was part of this collaboration and enabled trust to build. Nonetheless this interrupted the notetaking process. More importantly, my research was an intrusion into the lives of the staff and the service users and the relationships formed (for this reason recording devices were not used). This intrusion was controlled by the researcher (and to an extent the staff) and as Stacey (1988) notes, the researcher also has control over when to leave. Skeggs (1994) conversely suggests that this type of viewpoint constructs women as victims and overstates the power of the researcher. Skeggs argues that women are able to resist exploitation and 'the feminism of the research has provided a framework which they use to explain that their individual problems are part of a wider structure and not their personal fault' (1994: 88). The women enjoyed the research and frequently remarked on this, found it cathartic and illuminating, and hoped it would give voice to their experiences as well as improving the lives of others. Although the former two benefits were resigned to the interview research, certainly the latter point was a motivation for many women taking part in the observation research, and enabled them to do so in a less intrusive setting.

Selectivity was also affected by physical barriers such as the availability of seats and space. We always observe for an eventual audience, in this case I was observing for those who will read

this thesis, whilst at the same time attempting to 'give voice' to the experiences of women travelling desistance journeys. Jack Sanger notes 'the process of planning, selecting, ordering and eventually recording events may determine what we see in the first place' (1996; 4). Although attempting to reclaim from the 'great men', my research was informed by what I already 'knew' from the great men (and women) of desistance theory. For example a woman's declaration of attempts to 'give up drugs' may have nothing to do with the process of desistance, but because this is the area I am conducting research into, I will naturally view it as so (see below for justification of the choice to follow the theories through the analysis.) It was difficult to know what I was looking for at the beginning, especially on my first visit to the WC, where I tried (and failed) to observe everything. However as my research became more focused, so too did my data collection which became more structured. Nonetheless, my observation research was inductive; I did not use systematic coding sheets to record observations unlike, for example, the courtroom observations of Kathy Mack and Sharyn Roach Anleu (2007). I made notes according to what I found important on the day and built upon themes which began to emerge in my notes as well as the wider reading. This inductive method also fed into construction of the interview schedule.

Goulding (2000) notes the problem of the degree of chance occurrences in comparison with real behaviour. Perhaps when I observed a woman complaining about her probation officer this had been the result of a wider problem, for example in her relationships or financial situation. I was furthermore constrained by time and practicality issues; for example, my own inability to drive and being reliant on public transport. I have gone some way to eliminate these weaknesses by the use of multiple observations and by conducting multiple observations across various conditions (Goulding, 2000). I did this by attending each of the centres more than once and observing the same sessions led by different group leaders at different times and places. Finally, there is a gap of interpretation as what I perceive behaviour to be may not actually be correct. Service users were additionally being observed by the staff and so, for example, the stating of their intentions to 'go straight' may be viewed in this light. The inclusion of semi-structured narrative interviews arguably enabled me to overcome this barrier.

4.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the central research method used in this thesis. At the end of observation sessions, I would explain to the women the second stage of the research project. I would ask women who were interested to provide me with contact details (a phone number or email address) where I could contact them to arrange an interview at a time and place convenient for them. I explained that there were no monetary incentives but I offered to buy the women lunch or a coffee/tea as a thank-you for their participation. 57% (n=21) of the WC

service users agreed to interviews. 57% of these (n=12) actually took place. Four WC staff members also agreed to be interviewed. The staff interview schedule was very similar to the service user schedule, with some additional questions on the end, specifically regarding their work (see Appendix 4). As previously noted, I used a snowballing technique following a recruitment process on Twitter to make connections with Rebecca and the HfN Project where I interviewed three service users and two staff members. Again the same interview schedule was used for the HfN cohort. The total number of women interviewed was 21, with two follow-up interviews (at least 6 months following the first interview; time constraints meant this could not be completed with many participants) meaning the total number of interviews was 23. Much like in the work of Evelyn Sommers (1995) I found that some were concerned with what benefit they would receive through participation but were satisfied when I said I hoped they would come to a better understanding of themselves. Others agreed to be interviewed to “help others going through similar things”. Kelly-Marie and Katie’s feedback following the interviews was typical.

UB: Have you talked about your life like that before?

Kelly- Marie: Not really, no. Because you get your psychiatrists and whatnot and they go about it a totally different way and things like that. I have looked at me life and done a map of my life, do you know what I mean? Done it on programmes and things. But to actually sit down and go from A to B to end up at C and finish at D, no I haven't.

UB: How did you find it?

KM: Like I say, I found closure on some things and some things are still a bit raw. But nevermind. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

I'm glad I've helped, I'm really glad I've helped. And I hope it helps somebody else, I really do.... thank you very much for letting me speak about it, it does help, you know talking to somebody about it and I'm just glad I've helped you. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Additionally it was apparent that some of the women did not have friends to talk to or found the experience cathartic.

It was fine; it was like talking to a friend, it was lovely... You know, I mean Rover's [Julie's dog] lovely but he doesn't answer back, well he doesn't answer (laughs). (Julie, Age 59, first interview)

I knew it had to be talked about... well I think I probably needed to offload it anyway. (Karen, Age 36)

Interviews took place between August 2014 and April 2015 in the various Northshire WCs, the HfN offices, women’s homes including in Karen’s communal ‘Housing for Ex-Offenders’ accommodation and local and chain cafes. I met family members and pets, walked to the post office and admired gardens. I laughed and cried with the women. Without exception, the women involved in this research were extremely welcoming and generous with their time. Often

busy cafes created problems and interviews needed to be replayed several times whilst transcribing due to background noise. Pets also were problematic here. Staff interviews were interrupted by colleagues but content was not compromised. Interviews took, on average, 50 minutes and were recorded following consent and transcribed verbatim and coded using N-Vivo software. Following transcription, interviews (alongside observation notes) were coded and analysed for patterns in tone, theme, plot, roles, value structure, coherence and complexity (Maruna, 2001). 'Nodes' (themes) were constructed using reference to the wider literature as well as to the themes which were salient throughout the women's narratives and during the observation stage. Following analysis, it was clear that many of the findings reflected the themes of traditional desistance research. Here there was a deliberate choice to follow the theories through the analysis in this thesis. The reason for this is that traditional desistance literature has for the most part neglected the female voice. Whilst women's narratives contain many of the themes of traditional desistance approaches, the nuances of these themes of maturity, social bonds and cognitive-level changes appear gendered. These nuances will therefore be explored in the following three chapters.

The interviews were based on 'life-course narratives'. A life-course perspective provides 'the most compelling framework [by which to study the process of desistance] and it can be used to identify institutional sources of desistance and the dynamic social processes inherent in stopping crime' (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 1). Topics that interviews covered included youth, education, offending, experience of probation and the CJS, identity, substance misuse, accommodation, finance, lifestyle, relationships with family, friends and partners, neighbourhood, community and society, emotional well-being, values and beliefs, health, victimisation and aspirations for the future. These topics were influenced by the research of Jamieson, McIvor, and Murray (2011). Questions around identity and victimisation were particularly illuminating and the answers to these will be explored in more detail in Chapter 7. McAdam's (1995) life story interviewing template was also used for reference in terms of structure and content of the schedule.

In his exploration of doping narratives within the world of sport, Majid Yar (2014) notes that Clifford Shaw's, 'The Jackroller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story' is often cited as the first, significant landmark criminological work to use an offender's self-narrative as a source of data. The accounts of why the offender acted as he did are taken here at face value and placed on a par with other criminological methods to understand the how and why of crime. This narrative approach spread throughout the discipline, and emerged particularly as a tradition within desistance with Maruna's (2001) publication of *Making Good*. Within these approaches, Denzin notes, 'the storyteller should be considered both the expert and authority on his or her own life'

(1998: 59, quoted in Yar, 2014:13). The narrative methodology nonetheless presents the researcher with a number of issues, not the least of these being that human beings are likely to misattribute causes and contexts of desistance (in this example). Certain actions, events or life changes may be seen as having a larger effect than they actually did or similarly, true causes or contexts are skimmed over. As Hunter (2009) notes, as narratives are subjective, this means they do not provide the kind of objectivity central to positivist research. Yet this subjectivity also makes them valuable. Sommers argues;

‘If we are to uncover real knowledge of women in conflict with the law, we must cut through both the irrelevant templates constructed by experts and the prejudices held by society... There is a tradition in social research of emulating the methods of natural science. In practice, this has produced uncomfortable unions between notions of rigour adopted from the natural sciences and the complex and highly contextual nature of objects under investigation in the social sciences. One fundamental notion of the natural sciences, objectivity, is particularly problematic. The notion of objectivity implies... that the observer is somehow removed from his or her historical context and able to make observations that are independent of his or her bias or subjective interpretation’ (1995:8).

The subjective texts which result from this form of interviewing are sources of criminological data as they offer insight into the cognitive processes which inform (or otherwise) desistance (as in this case). I was not therefore interested in whether the women were bending the truth or ‘not remembering correctly’; what I was interested in was what was important to them, travelling or attempting to travel desistance journeys. As Yar (2014: 13) in his study of high profile doping narratives offers, ‘I do not wish to offer assessments as to their ‘truthfulness’ in the sense of corroborating evidence... Instead, my interest lies with how these claims (about what happened, why the individual acted as they did, how they felt about it, the consequences they experienced and so on) form a part of a narrative strategy that the story-teller uses...’. Chesney-Lind and Morash (2014) make the case that feminist researchers believe that research subjects can contribute intrinsic information on their experiences, that their truths are important and must be understood in the context of patriarchy. Narrative methods sit well within the feminist tradition as they offer individuals the opportunity to tell their stories, in their own words and from their own subjective perspective; narrative methods give voice to those who are often voiceless, particularly within the patriarchal⁷, increasingly neo-liberal⁸, justice system.

Yet narrative research can be problematic. As Sommers (1995) has noted, the position of the researcher is also subjective and situated within power hierarchies. Even the attempt to level

⁷ For definition see Chapter 2

⁸ Ibid

the playing field by an elaboration of my research for example may result in research participants 'telling me what I want to hear.' Moreover, how one responds to questions about desistance is completely subjective on a number of factors; not only who is asking but what has happened that day, week, month; where they are being asked etc. Here I can draw parallels with my PhD journey. Much like when I was asked, during the course of the PhD, how the research was going, my supervisors may have received a different answer to my partner, my parents a different answer to my brother. The answer would have also depended on the time of year, for example in April 2014 the observation research element was going well, whilst in July 2014, the issue of participation was becoming a clear problem. If I had a particularly bad day this would be reflected in the answer. Similarly, when participants were faced with questions like "Where do you see yourself in five years' time?" or "Describe your current significant relationships," these questions are highly subjective. This does not render them invalid however, provided they are treated precisely as subjective and situated forms of sense making (Yar, 2014). Furthermore, although I reiterated throughout that I did not have connections to either project nor the wider CJS, women may still have self-censored particularly relating to past and present criminal activity; 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1961) or a 'denial of the deviant self' (Yar, 2014) may be employed. Additionally, staff may be reluctant to critique their working practices for fear that this may reach their colleagues or bosses. There is little remedy for these issues within qualitative research excepting repeated studies. I did not for example check official records to corroborate women's narratives. Indeed this kind of 'verification' would have contradicted the narrative method principles which guided this research. These methodological dilemmas must be viewed in the light of feminist objectives of giving voice to the powerless. My aim was not, as I have noted, to reach some objective form of 'truth', but to understand desistance from those actually travelling, attempting to travel, or enabling, desistance journeys.

4.4 Limitations

In addition to the above weaknesses of observation and narrative techniques, there are general limitations of the methodology which will now be explored. The most obvious limitation here is the relatively small sample. As well as the personal limitations of time and money, women make up only a small percentage of the criminal justice system (CJS). On top of this, the shame which can be prevalent in women's experiences of the CJS and the ramifications of the 'double deviance' thesis (which will be explored further in chapter 7), meant that women were unlikely to self-identify as 'good' candidates for study. When asked about the second stage of research, women were often heard to say, "I would have nothing to say", or "I'm not really a criminal." The self-selecting nature of the study obviously therefore had implications for the generalisability of the research. Additionally, it must be questioned whether the women

observed and interviewed are representative of women travelling/ attempting to travel desistance pathways. The women had limited ranges in their offending backgrounds – a very limited number of the women encountered throughout had been sentenced for violent crimes for example. There were a similar (small) number who had white-collar crime convictions. Additionally, the women shared many of the same socio-economic background or ethnic background features. For example, all the interviewees, and a majority of those observed, were white. Nonetheless this reflected the makeup of the female CJS population within Northshire. Non-white women within the CJS are further marginalised by the nature of their minority position within it as well as their wider subordinations as women, ‘offenders’ and members of black and minority ethnic communities. This thesis recommends further study into intersectionality within the female desistance journey in a similar manner to Calverley’s (2013) study of desistance and diversity in the male experience.

Furthermore, this research did not have any guidelines for measuring desistance quantitatively. It was for this reason that for the majority of women, follow up interviews were unnecessary. It was not the aim of this research to plot an exact map of desistance, with a starting point indicated. This thesis does not attempt to measure any part of desistance but takes a view that desistance involves a process of maintenance (Rumgay, 2004) which may involve intermittency (Carlsson, 2012) and various stages (Maruna et al., 2004b). Farrington (1986) has contended that even a five or ten year follow up does not guarantee desistance. For this reason, a critique offered could be that without a quantifiable description, desistance here has little meaning. Yet all the women involved (staff and service users alike) described desistance-like processes, whether these were subjective changes, social influences or simply maturational processes. However it must be questioned: are these progressions described prevalent as a result of the filtering process, which means that those interviewed are more likely to be successful desisters? After all, women were contacted through agencies (the Women’s Centres and the HfN Project) whose aims included desistance encouragement. Women in these agencies were confronted with their moves towards desistance (or lack thereof) directly in these institutions. For this reason, were those who volunteered for interviews and observations more likely to be those who have successfully negotiated or begun to travel desistance journeys? Again, this is certainly a valid critique of the generalisability of this research.

The above issues are important because they raise questions about who is involved in this research and what effect this may have on the outcomes. Many of the questions raised, however, can be answered by the stipulation that this is a qualitative piece of research into the subjective experience of desistance rather than a quantitative exercise into *who* is likely to desist or persist. Although it is difficult to argue for generalisability with small-scale samples, this

argument should not be used to undermine their importance. Because of the close researcher involvement, arguably I can move towards gaining an insider's view of the field. This allows the researcher to find issues that are often missed (such as subtleties and complexities). Thick descriptions, such as that contained in this thesis, can play the important role of suggesting possible relationships, causes, effects and dynamic processes, adding flesh and blood to social analysis. With reference back to the aims of the study discussed in the introductory chapter; this thesis is concerned with the *how* and *why* of desistance as experienced by females and compared to the hegemonic male experience. There is no claim within this thesis that the women interviewed speak for *all* women within the CJS. On the contrary, it is hoped that the voicing of the often-neglected narratives of this small group of Northshire-based women will light and guide other desistance journeys, both female and male, particularly the areas of their journeys which were obscured both in past literature and practice.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Throughout this research, ethical implications were kept at the forefront. As noted above, before the interviews commenced with the WC participants, we had been introduced. Again before the HfN interviews took place, an introductory meeting was held where full disclosure about the research aims was provided. It was important to stress throughout that the research was separate from any CJS intervention and completely voluntary, to ensure informed consent with no possibility of coercion. Before interviews took place there was a signed agreement by the interviewer and interviewee to give the right to withdraw at any point (See Appendix 2 and 3). All participants were also provided with an information sheet which helped to answer questions and concerns as well as providing my contact information and the right to withdraw (see Appendix 2 and 3). These issues were also confirmed verbally and any additional problems or concerns addressed.

Calverley (2013) has noted that we must recognise the non-neutral position of the interviewer. As noted above, as a white, middle-class student interviewer with no criminal career, I may have been viewed as an 'outsider'. Nonetheless, feminist research strives to be empowering and inclusive. Certainly in-depth, narrative interview techniques allow for subjective, emotional issues to come to the fore, breaking the barriers of the public/private divide. On a practical level, steps such as making the participant feel comfortable and not under obligation to participate or divulge any information that they were not comfortable with also helped achieve this aim. Additionally it was the decision of the women who were interviewed where the interview should take place, whilst many chose relatively 'neutral' places like local cafes or the WCs; others chose their own homes, perhaps closing the power-relationship gap slightly. Staff interviews all took place at the places of work of the staff. From a researcher's position, the interviews did not feel

like formal work, from the comments of the participants detailed above, neither did they for the researched (Oakley, 2015). Importantly, I was aware of the organisations that could offer help and advice if the respondent became upset through the process. Due to the narrative style of the interview, this was often the case; interviews were full of emotion and often brought up troubled pasts as well as hopeful, and not so hopeful futures (Ibid). I provided the contact details of Northshire WCs to all participants, on the advice of staff there. I also provided my contact details should the women want to contact me to withdraw at any time or simply to chat. It is true to say I became friends with many of the staff and service users I interviewed (Ibid).

Protecting the anonymity of the participants was of paramount importance throughout the process, particularly due to the sensitive nature of the research topic and the narrative interview style. As noted above, participants were assured that they would not be pressed for information on past offences and it would be their prerogative to divulge information. The centrality of this ethical consideration became apparent particularly during Julie's second interview. During this interview, Julie spoke about a previous conviction for arson which she had not raised in our first interview (for more see Appendix 1). This revelation also indicated that Julie was becoming more comfortable with our relationship and the trust between us had grown. Julie's story also indicated the importance of multiple meetings. Potential sample lists and interview transcripts were encrypted with passwords and any hard copies locked away. All participants and places mentioned in this thesis have been given pseudonyms.

Throughout this research I was acutely aware of the problems of 'speaking for' the women I was researching. I often questioned myself, 'what right do I have to speak for these women?', cutting and moulding their narratives to fit into the themes raised both by previous research and my own deductions. As noted above I do not share all their experiences; thankfully I have not experienced the CJS first hand nor have I experienced domestic violence or abuse. Yet as Emily Luise Hart (2014) notes, I share an important feature with them; my gender. Other overlaps in identity surrounding age, nationality and day-to-day experiences were important also in this research but the fact that as a (relatively) powerful woman I can share the experiences of other women effectively justifies the voicing of their experiences through this thesis. Even if we do not accept this argument that shared characteristics allow us to 'speak for' certain groups, an alternative justification can be considered. Letherby (2001) notes that white middle-class feminists often consider the problematic notion of speaking for an 'other'. Yet, by the very fact of aiming to speak for an 'other' we are reinforcing this 'otherness'. Nonetheless, speaking *only* 'for' ourselves enables and forgives the marginalisation of these less powerful voices. This is something which this thesis therefore seeks to redress.

4.6 Conclusion

The qualitative research methods employed by this research are purposely inextricably linked with feminist and narrative methods and aims. Both observation techniques and narrative semi-structured interviews allow for the levelling of power structures (to some extent) and are central in giving voice to the marginalised. Reinharz (1992) notes that ethnographic fieldwork relationships may sometimes seem manipulative but a clear undercurrent of reciprocity lies beneath them. The researcher may help or offer advice to her research participants or she may be giving a public airing to marginalised voices. In this project both were true, particularly in relation to the latter. In regards to the former, within many of the women's justifications for getting involved in both stages of the research, there was an understanding that they wanted to share their stories to 'help others', for others again; the process was more individualised and cathartic. Whilst there were limitations with the observation method initially employed by the research, these were largely overcome by additionally engaging the semi-structured interviewing technique. The use of narrative techniques as per those employed by Maruna (2001) is particularly salient with feminist methodologies and aims as it enables the researched participant to give voice to her own experiences, feelings, inner thoughts and truths. This provided a particularly illuminating method of discovering the how and why of desistance.

Nonetheless, there are various limitations which can be linked with this research; my participant sample is limited in range and depth, there are power differentials between the researcher and the researched and any interpretation of qualitative research is subjective to some extent. Yet, this research does not attempt to describe desistance as experienced by all women. Instead, this thesis aims to give voice to the subjective desistance journeys experienced by a small group of Northshire women whose voices have been marginalised. In doing so, the research highlights the areas past desistance literature and practice has neglected. By shedding light on these areas, the research provides a new female-focused desistance paradigm which can have cross-gender implications. The next chapters explore some of the findings from this methodological approach, beginning with an examination of the place of maturational theory in women's desistance journeys.

CHAPTER FIVE: MATURATIONAL THEORY

5.1 Introduction

“I’ve just got to grow up really, more than anything.” - Marie

This chapter critically explores the ontogenetic theory of desistance from offending as put forward by authors such as Glueck and Glueck (1950) and Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990). These authors suggest that offending is a behaviour that most individuals will ‘naturally’ desist from. As a starting point, it is worth considering the average age of the women interviewed as part of this study. The average age of the women interviewed was 39 at the time of first interview and the vast majority of these women were convicted of a crime in the two year period prior to interview. The average age of last offence was therefore 37. Whilst sampling issues for this study are explored in the methodology, it can nonetheless be immediately surmised that for the women involved in this study, offending was not a behaviour limited to adolescence. Certainly for these women age was not the most powerful predictor of the end of offending (Gove, 1985). It may reasonably be suggested therefore that these women form part of Terrie Moffit’s (1993) ‘life-course persistent’ offending group. Yet as will be seen, the women in this study highlight a variety of offending trajectories. For example, there are women interviewed who had only ever committed one offence, women who confined their offending to later in life and there is some qualitative support nonetheless in some of the women’s narratives for the power of aging and the passage of time.

5.2 Support For The Ontogenetic Theory

Some of the women interviewed followed a ‘typical’ offending trajectory of offending during their late teens and early twenties followed by a decline into adulthood. In particular, the narratives of Holly, Anna and Grace who were 23, 36 and 31 respectively at the time of interview reflected this pattern. For Holly, ‘deviant’ behaviours began in high school.

UB: And what were you like when you were at school?

Holly: I got kicked out in year 10

UB: What happened?

H: I got excluded for fighting with some girls, me and my best friend. So we both got excluded at the same time

UB: And did you go back after that?

H: No we got kicked out permanently; I didn’t go to another school after that

UB: What were your first experiences of offending?

H: Skiving

UB: When did that start?

H: Year 9

UB: And why was that?

H: It were 'cause everyone else were doing it so I followed into their footsteps. And most of my friends from where I live had been excluded so I think it were just the normal thing. (Holly, Age 23)

Holly notes that at the time being excluded was not something she worried about, indeed she notes that she felt "Happy at the time 'cause all my friends were excluded... but I regret it now." From here there was a period where Holly remembers being regularly cautioned by the police for "just bits and bats and stuff like criminal damage and drunk and disorderly, just little bits like that". Holly relates offending during this time to her friends and the area in which she lived where the behaviour was routine and normalised. However, whilst for Holly's best friend Ciara, becoming a mother signalled a turning point, Holly carried on offending once her friend had desisted and when she became a mother to her own four year old daughter.

She got pregnant and that, settled down and stuff, she stopped doing everything and I still carried on. (Holly, Age 23)

Recently however, Holly has expressed a desire to stop offending and "settle down" herself. This process began with giving up smoking cannabis when her partner, Nick was released from prison recently.

'Cause like everyone around me were, my cousins and my friends and that, everyone were smoking it so, I was just doing what everyone else around me were doing. But then he'd stopped when he were inside so I stopped smoking 'cause he weren't and we were on two different levels so I've cut everything out now, I just smoke tobacco. (Holly, Age 23)

Whilst stopping smoking cannabis, just like becoming a mother, did not automatically lead to stopping shoplifting for Holly, she has since moved in with Nick. They hope to regain custody of their daughter from Holly's grandmother soon and look forward to a "stable" future. At the time of interview, Holly had not shoplifted nor otherwise offended for "five or six months". Holly notes that amongst her peers, "everyone is growing up a bit now." In particular, Holly makes reference to her older brother who has followed a very maturational (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) desistance pathway with elements of the social bonds thesis (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

He were getting into crime at one point. He got sent down, he got sent down for like three and a half year... it was like for fighting and stuff, he were always lashing out at people. And then he met a really nice girl and she works at the chemist round there near Rivertown and he's got a job now, he works doing boiler installations and he's got a kid on the way so it's right good. She's only seven weeks so they're right happy. He's settled down now. He hasn't been in trouble for a few year now. (Holly, Age 23)

Bringing together Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of developmental self-control, Laub and Sampson (2001) for example argue that, 'traits like self-control can change over time as a consequence of changes in the quality or strength of social ties' (p.7). Holly's brother certainly

appears to follow this trajectory in Holly's subjective narrative. As a female with a history of domestic abuse, mental health issues and self-harm as well as being a mother, Holly's own desistance journey will arguably require more support than her brother's journey. Her journey will not only involve looking to the future but also recovering from past victimisations (these themes will be developed in the following chapters.) Yet it is clear that for Holly "growing up" naturally involves a move away from offending. Just as the beginnings of offending were a natural process for Holly once her peers began offending, attempts towards desistance have now also been normalised as part of the process of 'growing up'.

For Anna, offending also began at an early age. Spurred on by the encouragement of her older brother and sister and the naivety of her parents, Anna misbehaved in school, taking drugs and alcohol.

Anna: I were really good, really really goody two shoes until about 11, 12... And then I remember going to high school, and starting to be a bitch. And learning the ways, as you do, to manipulate the system and all that. Yeah, and come second year at high school I'd become a real pain in the bum; I was taking trips, I was smoking, drinking. I always got home on time 'cause my dad, he were pretty ruthless with them rules. He seemed to think everybody dropped their knickers after the age of 10 (laughs). Honest! So yeah, we still followed the rules and managed to get away with it because my mum and dad didn't drink or know about drugs so it was quite a while before they knew about it. So, yeah... the teachers went mad because I could have done really well, I had the brains, I just didn't want to do it. I was working nights part time during my exams and to be honest with you, my dad went to prison around the time of my exams so it kind of like blew me into a world of criminality to be honest with you because he'd went down for guns. They'd made him out to be some big gangster as well, the papers. Aw yeah, it spiralled, my life, out of control 'cause then you get all the naughty ones coming forward then it's like, "oh guns"! It's like a big thing.

UB: So that ...

A: ... attracted the wrong kind of people yeah. And obviously I was at an age where I was attracted to the wrong kind of people. So yeah, life were rough. (Anna, Age 36)

For Anna, early offending (which nonetheless involved relatively heavy drug use) was amplified by her father's criminal background related to gun ownership and production which in turn attracted "the wrong kind" of peers. This heavy offending continued into Anna's late teens and mid- twenties.

If you'd have caught me ten years ago, I would have deserved everything. I were a proper bitch; drugs, fraud, insurance fraud, I used to do all the insurance documents in court when they got caught, I used to write them up but it were the family that got me doing it. Then my daughter's dad, he was a severe alcoholic so they were all stealing from shops blatantly, fighting, robbing flats; not me personally, I was always outside going, "what the fuck are you doing?" (Laughs). But yeah... I've partied most of my life to be honest with you. At 22 I had my first kid, Stacey and when I finished with her dad... I finished with an alky and started drinking. So I had a few years where I was pretty... a mess to be honest with you. And then, I pulled back out of it and realised, right, "You

can't do this shit, you've got a kid." So I sorted myself out, and like did the perfect mum shit. (Anna, Age 36)

The role of a mother provided the 'alternative pro-social identity' (Rumgay, 2004) required to desist in Anna's later years. Whilst certainly the role of mother provided the social bonds (Sampson and Laub, 2003) and the identity change (Maruna, 2001) required to desist, desistance was also partly a natural process for Anna related to aging and the passage of time.

For Grace, drinking alcohol and smoking cannabis also began in secondary school.

UB: And you kind of already mentioned this before, but what were you like at school? You said you were quiet?

Grace: Yeah, as I say I was very good, I liked going to school, the teachers liked me, I was always you know, top marks for everything... Got to high school, and it just went downhill from there basically. I think, just, you know got in with the wrong people and you know, other circumstances along the way. I started smoking weed quite young, I was 12, maybe 13, em... drinking at weekends, to the point of passing out, you know having to be carried home and that... basically just buying cannabis, I have no other offences other than that one that's basically on... Apart from when I was 16 I was caught shoplifting. (Grace, Age 31)

Whilst Anna and Grace (both single mothers) felt that they had matured since their early offending backgrounds, both were charged with offences in the years and months prior to my interview with them. Anna remained in the same area where she had grown up and remained close to family and friends from her younger years who were involved in criminal behaviour. It was these relational ties which were the conditions for Anna's most recent joint-enterprise burglary offence was therefore something unexpected for her, out of the ordinary from her pro-social identity.

Witnesses will say what I say, even the guy... there was a lad in the house, a 19 year old but we didn't know, he said I didn't move out the car, I didn't do nothing. So I'm like, "well why have I got charged?" (Anna, Age 36)

For Anna therefore this offence was associated with bad luck and did not reflect a deviation from her pro-social identity (of course we may question Anna's 'vocabulary of motive' [Mills, 1940] speaking to myself as a researcher here or to justice practitioners in the past. Nonetheless her subjective interpretation is important despite 'techniques of neutralisation' [Matza and Sykes, 1964] employed). Contrastingly for Grace, her most recent offence was associated with choice and indeed careful consideration, yet also did not indicate a move away from her pro-social identity which was also based around her role as a mother.

I was growing cannabis, um... I will say it was the wrong thing but for all the right reasons, there was reasons why I did it. I had a young daughter and the house, the house that I'm still in, it's, you know in Winter, it's very cold, it's drafty, and somebody offered. I didn't go out looking for it, somebody offered for, if I were to set up some plants, you

know whatever they made of it, they would give me half, and, you know it's like two and a half grand, it's a lot of money when you haven't got and I were thinking about it and I basically worked out I could do it twice a year, all I had to do was water them, that's all I have to do with them. And then, April, round about my daughter's birthday, I would get a big lump sum then, and then like in the winter, just before Christmas, I'd get another lump, so it was sorta like it would see me through Christmas, make sure I could buy presents, make sure I could keep the house warm, because it was very cold. That was it basically. (Grace, Age 31)

As we can see for Holly, Anna and Grace the 'natural process' of growing up did occasionally mean deviations into offending yet this did not always mean deviations from the pro-social identity which they had been individually cultivating as they matured. Matza's (1964) theory of 'drift' has salience here with the sporadic nature of offending seen in these women's narratives which appear chaotic at times. As Carlsson notes, "drifts' or 'lulls' in offending are likely to occur due to the nature of the social world, full as it is with its complexity, coincidences and contingencies' (2012: 915).

For these three women offending in earlier years was associated with a carefree attitude and a normalised behaviour related to what 'everyone else' was doing. Offending in youth also tended to involve drugs or alcohol. Whilst a relational experience in youth, drug use tended to be an isolating experience in older age for the women. We can note the links here to cultural criminology, for example Jack Katz' 1988 work on emotions and crime where offending is related to a buzz, where at the time there are no regrets and offending is exciting. In later years however this type of offending lost its appeal for the women and they began to consider alternative 'settled' lifestyles much like the desisting young people in Barry's (2006) study.

As these examples show, offending was not solely a 'natural' process which Holly, Anna and Grace 'grew out of'. Social reaction theory (Becker, 1963) can explain the onset of offending, particularly for Holly and Anna. Overall, offending was generally a 'transitory phenomenon' (McIvor et al., 2000) for the three women. Yet desistance was not a process which happened (or was happening) 'naturally' for the women. Desistance, on the contrary, required both the 'will and the ways' to stop. For Anna this is an ongoing process which means moving out of the area where she grew up, severing ties with friends and family. For Holly desistance means 'settling down' with her partner and regaining custody of their daughter. Grace's desistance narrative meanwhile focuses on her relationship with her best friend and gaining education and employment. Whilst self-control gained through the aging process has a role here, it is not the sole desistance-promoting factor. These narratives have particular salience with Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory of social bonds which will be explored in the next chapter.

5.3 Late Onset Offending

The beginnings of offending occurred at different points for the women studied. Whilst Marie's quote introduces us to this chapter, it must be noted that Marie was 40 at the time of our interview, certainly out of the peak of the age-crime curve found within traditional criminology. Marie herself recognises that her offending trajectory was the opposite to what a researcher might usually expect.

UB: We're going to talk about your background, community, family and school and so on. So what were you like as a child?

Marie: Um... Better behaved than I am now (laughs). I were basically, I were quite a good child really...

UB: And do you remember what you were like at school?

M: I were a bit of a bugger but I weren't really bad. I wasn't as bad then as I was now, I seem to have gotten worse as I've got older. (Marie, Age 40)

Although Marie mentions a shoplifting incident when she was 10 or 11, she describes the incident as a one-off and a 'giggle thing', not something she was regularly involved with. Marie spoke in great detail about her background and employment history to highlight that the change in her behaviour did not actually mean a change in her identity as an essentially good and caring person.

I mean I were a nurse, I were in St John Ambulance when I were a kid. Ten year I used to teach first aid, I've got a qualification, A B.Tech national diploma in science, I've got all qualifications in things. And then I got pregnant, I had Jo, I couldn't go back to nursing. And I'll tell you how I started offending. I lived on a building site, this building site and they were building round me. And this lad said to me, "oh that's that Kingspan there" you know, insulation? It were like insulation for like walls. He said, "if you get me some of that I'll give you like fifteen quid a pack." So I started half inching it didn't i? Right. So I were making a fortune of it (laughs). And I started going all over, started going on other work sites and that. Anyway, I didn't really get caught doing any of that. And then I started hiring tools, it just got... it grew should I say. It's just... not greed, I'm not a greedy person. I've had money and then lost it. And that's even... I think it's worse than going from not having money to not having *any* money (laughs). But I used to have money... I used to make £1000 a week cash and that were legit money, I had my own pub and hotel so... But I went from that, then everything went tits up and then I just started basically doing it 'cause I were skint... It's been like possibly, over the last ten years really that I've been in bother. It's not really, I'm not a naughty, naughty girl, I wouldn't go and burgle someone or owt like that, I've got an heart do you know what I mean? One of them, it's I'm stubborn and I'd rather go out and dig some flags up from an old farm that's disused than ask me mum for money do you know what I mean? And this is why my mum gets upset. I feel like I should work for my family, if I can't put food on the table there's something wrong. So I go out to an old farm, but I usually get caught on the way back, put in the slammer for a flag! (Marie, Age 40)

Marie is quick to note that she is not a "greedy person" or a "naughty girl" but that offending in later life was related to both poverty and chance. Marie's partner, Claire claims that Marie has "ODD" or Oppositional Defiance Disorder which explains Marie's late onset offending. In my

field notes, I note that Marie was probably in the 'primary desistance' (Maruna and Farrall, 2004) phase of her offending trajectory. As part of her sentence Marie is banned from driving and she is proud when relating that she has not driven "yet", the "yet" here suggestive of her possible actions in the future. She relates stealing stone flags to a "buzz" as well as a needed income stream, much like the early cultural offending of Holly, Grace and Anna. Marie speaks about her offending in the present tense. Marie's trajectory does not follow a maturational course as desistance has not happened naturally or without the influence of other factors (Glueck and Glueck, 1950). Whilst Marie recognises she must "grow up", without the will and the ways to do so, desistance has not been forthcoming.

Similarly Rebecca notes that her offending has been confined to later life. Although in her early days Rebecca remembers being expelled from school, after a difficult childhood caring for her schizophrenic mother and dealing with her parent's divorce, she quickly turned her life around whilst in a privileged school in Europe which she was able to attend thanks to her grandfather's connections.

I went into secondary school; while I did all my school work, I was an A+ student, I still became a bully, that's what I became, I became a bully. So I was quite manipulative at a very young age... I knew exactly what... I still remember it now, so I'd get other girls... to actually, I'd primed them to deliver what I wanted to say so that I would not get in trouble... And then eventually that resulted in me being excluded or as it was called then expelled from school... So as soon as I'd been expelled from school I then was on a boat to Belgium and I was packed off to boarding school... And that was it; I went to boarding school... And they were all diplomats, very... you know quite wealthy children... I felt totally isolated for the first six months. But again the headmaster and the dormitory parent was the one who dragged me through basically. So it took me about 6 months and then from then on in it was essentially the main kick up the bum... well I say that it put me on the right track until I was 42. So you know, and I did manage to get my head down. (Rebecca, Age 46)

From here Rebecca lived a fairly privileged life, working for international companies and travelling the world with her husband and two young children. However on the family's return to England at the age of 32, Rebecca began to develop an alcohol dependency which essentially led to her offences.

So while I still got up for work, what it was doing was draining my finances, it was affecting my marriage, it was clearly affecting my children and it began to affect my life... it began to affect my work, you know the tired, the not wanting to get up in the morning. So and that was the decline then. So from being 33 up until I was 42 was the real decline with alcohol. And you know my marriage broke down, my ex-husband then took the children, didn't bring them back, took them out of the country. I then went through probably as many courts as I could, hired solicitors, racked up huge legal fees, and ran away from it all. Moved to Austria, thought I'd go back to Europe, worked there, tried to get my life on track but the booze was, you know, it had now got a complete grip of me. So rather than it being a total dependency, it was a mental dependency. So I just

blew every penny I had, I was getting in a mess... And I then rang my father and sort of said, "Come and help"... I was just in a total mess. So he said, "Yeah." Came back to Easton, so I was 42. Came back to Easton, sort of you know quite broken. Moved in with my father and my step-mother who I'd had quite a difficult history with. Found out you know so much more about my own mother who was living then on the streets in Easton. Then what happened was my own bills caught up with me because they always do... I ended up committing credit card fraud in my step-mother's name. And she reported that to the police. I knew what I was doing; I knew it was wrong... I paid it off for a while so until my money ran out and then it all caught up with me. And you know I got found out, she reported me to the police and then obviously I went through the CJS. (Rebecca, Age 46)

Following this conviction Rebecca signed a cheque which bounced for rent and was once again convicted of fraud and eventually became homeless. Unlike Marie however, Rebecca is certainly in the secondary desistance phase (Maruna and Farrall, 2004). Her generative work and cognitive shifts have led to desistance promotion, something which can clearly be seen with her work with her HfN Project.

So I then went back to my mother's and began researching, saved up enough to get my deposit, and moved into my own house... I spent a while thinking, "Well actually, looking around for other women who had written their own narratives, I couldn't really find very much. And I thought, "Well there's a lot of men's stuff out there, there's not a lot of women's stuff." So... and then it sort of grew, I never really expected it to grow like it did... And I thought... "I've got to do something for women in the CJS. I am going to do something. (Rebecca, Age 46)

For both Marie and Rebecca, acquisitive offending was partly a product of the conditions they found themselves in in later life. Carr and Stovall-Hanks (2012) found that women with late onset offending shared characteristics including frequent mention of loss, caretaking (both social and economic), and addiction as turning points or periods that contributed to their involvement in crime. For Marie, caretaking and for Rebecca, addiction and loss were also factors that contributed to the onset of offending. The authors also note that however social bonds (Sampson and Laub, 1993; 2003) such as entering a new job or relationship are factors in the desistance of female late-onset offenders. The same can be said for Rebecca and Marie here. Desistance for both the women has not been something which happened naturally over time as they aged but has been an active and difficult process requiring relational support as well as individual agency.

5.4 One-off Offending

A final trajectory was recognised in the narratives of the women who had carried out one-off offences and can be seen in the narratives of Heather and Katie who both were charged with benefit fraud offences. Both of these women had little to no contact with the criminal justice system (CJS) prior to their fraud offences. Offending here was not a behaviour but an action.

It [the police and courts] were all new (Heather, Age 24)

I had quite a sheltered life really and didn't go out much. Mum and dad were quite strict, very strict. So I didn't go out much... here was some people that did offend. And there was lots of stealing going on from cloakroom pockets and things, because you used to leave your bags and coats in the cloakroom. So there were things like that but, no I didn't, I kept away, I kept away from people like that, otherwise my parents wouldn't have liked it. If they didn't like somebody I couldn't speak to them so... (Katie, Age 60)

Particularly for Katie, the entry into the CJS was something which was wholly unexpected and out of the ordinary. At the time of our interviews she did not see herself as an offender but maintained her pro-social identity which was connected to her childhood and upbringing.

If somebody had have sent me a letter, I wouldn't have ignored it, I've never been like that. I've always been brought up to you know, know right from wrong. My father, he would never claim benefit or anything. My mother wouldn't, they didn't believe in it you know, so I weren't brought up that way. (Katie, Age 60)

Nonetheless both Katie and Heather had lives which are unfortunately typical of females entering the CJS. Both suffered from myriad mental health issues including self-harm and suicide attempts, Heather had a history of childhood abuse from her father and her alcoholic mother whilst Katie had physical health problems and relationship problems with her husband and daughters. For both women, their problems were exacerbated and multiplied with their entry into the CJS. (For more on Heather and Katie's experience of the CJS see chapter 8). Minor offences by women are currently resulting in harsher responses across the western world (Sheehan et al, 2007; Barry and Mclvor, 2008). Whilst neither Katie nor Heather can be considered persistent offenders, their lives share many of the conditions and disadvantages of females with convictions in general and their desistance narratives are therefore important. Neither Katie nor Heather's desistance occurred as part of a natural process but much like the other women previously mentioned required both support and agency.

Women who may be viewed as 'one-off' offenders or even offenders without intent, cannot be eliminated from any consideration of desistance. Like the women who follow a 'traditional' trajectory of offending, or those who come to offending in later life, 'one-off' and non-intentional offenders travel the same criminal justice pathway; they are arrested, put on trial, 'punished' or 'treated' accordingly. This pathway has an effect on their lives and identities. Often, as Katie and Heather's experiences show, their lives have been blighted by gendered or structural inequalities. Furthermore, they travel the same journeys of resilience and survival which often mirror their fellow 'offenders' desistance attempts. This theme will be expanded upon in chapter 8.

5.5 Conclusion

Whilst many of the women studied decreased the concentration and level of their offending as they aged, others did not offend until later in life and for yet others offending was comparable to a blip in an otherwise law abiding narrative which was nonetheless marred by disadvantage. Whilst the maturational theory, which considers offending to be a behaviour that (most) individuals will 'grow out of' does have some salience in the experiences of the women affected by the CJS who were part of this study, it is far from the only factor in explaining their desistance pathways. Attempts to 'go straight' such as those noted by Grace, Anna and Holly were challenged when the chaotic nature of the women's lives reached a particular level. For Marie, who is arguably most aware of the expectations placed on her to change, self-control has not been enough to prevent her from offending in later life. Neither was Rebecca prevented from offending by her maturity. For Katie and Heather, at either ends of the age spectrum of the women studied, maturity and self-control had nothing to do with their convictions. These were women punished by what Garland terms the 'crime control complex' (2001). This issue in particular will be discussed further in chapter 8.

The notion that desistance is a 'natural process' effectively silences the narratives of resilience of women affected by the CJS. Although many of the women interviewed as part of this study appear at first glance to follow the ontogenetic perspective that offending is something which individuals essentially 'grow out of', this viewpoint ignores the conditions in which the offences and desistance journeys of women take place. To suggest that desistance is a natural process for women is to ignore the poverty, domestic abuse, drug and mental health issues that invades both their offending and desistance.

The next chapter examines the social conditions which can encourage and stifle desistance and will examine the issues mentioned above, particularly in light of the social bonds theory of desistance.

CHAPTER SIX – SOCIAL BONDS THEORY

6.1 Introduction

If we are to rehabilitate female offenders, we must take proper account of the *realities of their lives* and ensure that resources are best targeted to help more women turn their lives around.

The Rt. Hon Chris Grayling MP, Former Secretary of State for Justice, 2014 – emphasis added

The previous chapter considered the possibility that desistance may be a natural process which relates to aging and the passing of time. For many years, traditional criminology considered this the key theoretical underpinning of the process of ending offending behaviour. However, as has been seen, this is problematic. Not only does the maturational theory inadequately explain the various offending trajectories of offenders, and particularly those of female offenders who may be described as ‘late onset’ or minimal transgressors of the law, the theory also neglects to explain the social processes and events which may coincide with change in offending behaviour or actions.

It is to these social changes that this chapter turns. In this chapter, I consider the events and processes which have influenced (whether positively or not) the desistance journeys of the women who were part of this research. The ‘social bonds’ which connect women in liminal zones (Turner, 1967) to society will be examined. In doing so, I compare my findings with what has been found to be useful in the (mainly white, male) desistance journeys considered by the desistance literature.

6.2 Adult Social Bonds

The ‘respectability package’ (Maruna, 2001) which Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) have argued can produce a positive change in offending behaviour for the men involved in their research is largely based around finding employment and entering marriage or a stable relationship. According to the sociogenic thesis, changes in adult life circumstances such as these can have a direct effect on the ability of an individual to a) ‘knife off’ the past b) invest in new relationships that foster support and growth c) be under direct, informal control or supervision, d) engage in routine, conventional life activities and/ or e) perform an identity transformation (taken from Carlsson, 2011). Other social bonds or institutions which have been found to be positively related to changes in offending for both men and women include becoming a parent (Katz, 2000; McIvor et al., 2011), joining the army, moving away from home (Sampson and Laub, 1993; 2003), finding religion (Giordano et al., 2008), changing groups of friends or developing friendships (Weaver and McNeill, 2014) and gaining stable accommodation (Farrall, 2002). McIvor et al

(2001) found that the 'respectability package' gained by these 'turning points' was more important for women than men. In this chapter I explore whether this caveat can be said to be true for the women involved in this study. I examine not only the effect of social bonds such as meaningful employment or education and a stable romantic relationship but also changes such as becoming a mother, the effect of friendship groups, moving from a specific area and stable accommodation which in particular emerged in the women's narratives as the most significant influencers in the desistance process.

It is imperative to note the contexts in which both offending and desistance occur if we are to promote change in women's offending. The '*Transforming Lives*' 2014 Report produced by Soroptimist International and the Prison Reform Trust noted that for women in prison in England, 53% report having experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child. 46% of women in prison have attempted suicide at some point in their lifetime. In 2013 women represented 26% of all incidents of self-harm in prison despite accounting for less than 5% of the total prison population. 52% of women in prison self-reported that they had used heroin, crack or cocaine in the four weeks prior to custody. Around one-third of women prisoners lose their homes, and often their possessions, whilst in prison. In 2011-12 just 8.4% of women leaving prison had a positive employment outcome. For men the proportion was 27.3%. The findings from this study, although small scale and qualitative in comparison, paint a similar picture, not only of women who had spent time in prison, but of women serving community sentences. Of the sixteen women with convictions interviewed as part of this study, eight freely told stories of domestic abuse or childhood abuse without being asked a direct question about this, all discussed mental health issues ranging from anxiety and depression to self-harm and suicide attempts, thirteen related offences to issues surrounding drugs and alcohol, one was homeless whilst four were living in temporary accommodation and thirteen out of sixteen were unemployed at the time of interview. Neither offending nor desistance occur in a vacuum. When considering social bonds theory as a lens through which to view women's desistance, it is crucial to consider the social circumstances and exclusions through which women travel their desistance journeys.

6.3 Employment

6.3.1 Contexts of employment

The first 'social bond' which emerged from the observation and interview research as important was employment. Although women suffer generally from what has been termed the 'feminisation of poverty' (Carlen, 1998) and are more likely to be part-time, temporary or voluntary workers or full-time carers, nonetheless the women in this study came from a variety

of employment backgrounds. Eight of the sixteen women with convictions interviewed had never worked, indicating that material deprivation of women is a contemporary experience, particularly amongst women with convictions. As noted above, at the time of the first interview, thirteen of the sixteen women were unemployed, two were employed and one worked in a voluntary capacity. Other than the two women who were unable to work for health reasons, all the remaining unemployed women expressed a desire to gain a paid or voluntary job and/or additional training or education. The employment histories of the women were varied. For example, Julie, the daughter of a policeman, worked in the legal profession all her life until her most recent offence. Grace was a former labourer, which she gave up on becoming pregnant, Sue was a travel agent before the death of her father resulted in a move to voluntary work and Rebecca was a commercial business city worker before losing her children in a divorce and her alcohol problem caused her to leave the UK. Many of the women had exited employment recently. To understand employment as an element in the desistance process, it is important to consider the historical relationship with employment in the women's narratives. Many of the women who had not worked or had given up work or education did so for mental health reasons. For example, Heather's mental health conditions formed the context of her ending her voluntary employment in the past.

Heather: I'm not employed. I did do voluntary work before I got ill. I went, oh gosh, before I moved in that house so I'd say about 3 years ago, before things just went out of control

UB: When you say things went out of control what do you mean?

H: I started self-harming. I had OCD really bad, I was frightened to go out of the house and frightened for my partner to go out of the house. This is before I got any help so it were just terrible. I didn't know what was going wrong; I didn't know what was wrong with me either until someone said to me, "You need to see the doctor." And I did and I got the help I needed. (Heather, Age 24)

Similarly, Anna ended her job working in a fast food van to become her mother's carer when her mother became sick. When her mother died, the mental anguish that it caused meant Anna did not return to employment. Ruth was working as a bartender and cleaner when she became homeless and gave up the work as a result of the strain it was having on her mental health.

Ruth: I'm currently not working; I'm currently on the sick. I was working 55 hours up until the end of February this year. I just... they couldn't help me find anywhere. I was going to work, leaving and having nowhere to go. I carried it on as long as I could and they still wouldn't help me. So I eventually, 12 week ago, went on the sick.

UB: And where were you working before?

R: Well I've got my bar license so I've done bar work. I was cleaning in a school 40 hours a week and then working on the bar 15 hours as well. And then coming out with nowhere to live, I couldn't physically do it anymore, I was just so tired. (Ruth, Age 31)

This relationship between mental health and employment is particularly poignant considering the current political landscape in the UK where full-time, paid employment is considered the desired position, certainly by the main political parties. Whilst there is a tendency to link unemployment with the continuation of offending (Warr, 2002), a 2006 government directed meta-analysis by Waddell and Burton nonetheless found that for a minority of people unemployment could be related to improved health and wellbeing including mental health. Certainly the historic relationship with employment and mental health for females with convictions is something which should be considered in relation to the desistance agenda.

For this reason it was perhaps unsurprising that the women expressed a desire not just to enter into employment, but to enter into employment that was meaningful to them. For example, Kate, one of the group members in the Southton centre, when asked about her future employment hopes by Jenny, the group leader, noted;

I've done care, I've done pub work and retail. I quite liked retail. My friend does that mad scientist thing you know where you go into schools and do science experiments with the kids. I'd love to do something like that, something that gets me thinking. (Kate, Tulip Centre)

It was often the woman's most recent offence and subsequent sentencing which caused her to express a desire for meaningful employment. When asked about how her sentence has affected her life, Julie, a former town council clerk, replied;

I would like to try and make sure I can do something useful, purposeful, whether it's paid or unpaid. (Julie, Age 60, second interview)

The importance of employment's desistance promoting factors was clear to many of the women, yet for Kelly-Marie, past desistance attempts had failed as a result of the superficial qualities of former job roles and have played a role in her return to prison.

So I've gone to jail and I thought, "Right, better sort me shit out now." And I've got there, I've got meself clean, I got meself into education, I've come out after two and a half years a qualified beautician and hair stylist. I was interlinked with recovering addicts, I was a recovery mentor. I got meself a full time job wi' Timpson's. But I took meself off all me medication. And I thought I were fine, I thought I'd got it made now, everything's fine. Anyhow I've got home and everything were fine for about 3 weeks. I started to think, "I don't want to be out here; I can't cope out here. I'm not ready to be out here." ... I didn't want this job at Timpson's, I didn't get this hair and beauty to go and cut keys at Timpson's. And I'd stopped taking me mental health medication; I'd took meself off me methadone. And within 7 months of being home, I'd started using in-between... But I felt I wanted to go back to prison and I needed to go back to prison. So I went out and I were reoffending and I didn't go to appointments so I got a 28 day recall. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Clearly for the women in this study, employment on its own could not produce meaningful change. Whilst a source of income may provide temporary relief from acquisitive offences,

employment must have a meaningful position in their lives other than to make money. Whether through providing mental enrichment or being something that the women enjoy and are good at, employment must be significant to women's lives to be desistance enabling. This finding is not without backing in the wider desistance literature (Sampson and Laub, 2003; Aresti et al., 2010).

Another finding related to the literature on employment and desistance which emerged as significant time and again in the women's narratives, was the potential for generative employment, whether paid or unpaid to pave the desistance pathway (Maruna, 2001). For Kelly-Marie, for example, practising hair and beauty would not be enough to sustain change, she states that when the time is right for her to go back to employment, the generative route is the most desirable.

I would probably use it with a project; a project within a project, yeah? To give other women self-worth and to let them know that you can do something with yourself and there is hope. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Kelly-Marie is extremely focused on her own desistance journey, travelling the desistance path at a speed which she has set for herself. It is what she has learned along this journey that she wants to share with other women through her work. It is evident throughout Kelly-Marie's narrative that she has been influenced not only by the change in her practical circumstances provided by her situation within the HfN Project but also by Rebecca's influence. Rebecca's desistance pathway included the most obvious generative employment change. Rebecca moved from working in a commercial international business to developing a grassroots level, community organisation designed to offer support to women in need following her conviction. It is clear that this generative (Maruna, 2001) and meaningful move helped to sustain Rebecca's desistance.

I wrote an article on the mental health of female prisoners. And yeah that's where I... I spent a while thinking... And I thought, "Well there's a lot of men's stuff out there, there's not a lot of women's stuff." So... and then it sort of grew, I never really expected it to grow like it did. So then it started growing and growing and growing, and then I thought, "Well you know." And then other publications started saying, "Will you do this? Will you do that?" And I thought, "Well I could do my research and my R&D; I've got to do something for women in the CJS. I am going to do something." So I started thinking, "Well I'm going to set up, I don't know, a women's refuge for women from prison?" I looked at the different housing models, I studied it up, I studied a lot, a lot, a lot... And that's when I approached a construction company... and I said them a couple of emails and I said, "Do you know what? I know you've got some properties in Easton, would you be willing to work with me on the Northshire Housing Project" That's why... so they were like, "OK" and I met with them and they gave me 4 houses to work with, and that's how it started. (Rebecca, Age 46)

However, many of the other women also spoke unprompted about generative desires, sometimes directly related to their sentencing in the form of community service which they enjoyed but also in a desire to share their experiences and life lessons in various ways. This generative focus was evident very clearly in many of the narratives.

The lady who I'm counselling with said, "Why don't you get some voluntary... look at a charity shop or something?" And I thought, "right, yeah."... So I went in and I just said, "Do you need any volunteers?" And they just took my name and number and rang me out of the blue. And so it's been really good. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

There's a voluntary service I go to once a week... and there's like a charity that I go to there. Now they're saying that if I work with them I can basically start doing voluntary work there. (Karen, Age 36)

I want to qualify as a drugs counsellor, alcohol counsellor, I want to do that. I want to do the mental health side of things as well. So hopefully I want to be running drug awareness groups and helping other people. (Paula, Age 36)

This generative desire was also reflected in the staff narratives of those who worked both at the Women's Centres (WCs) and the Housing for Northshire (HfN) Project and was related often to staff members' narratives of victimisation, survival and bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1962; for more see Chapter 7) which were common to all the women. [Further links between staff and service user narratives will be explored in Chapter 8.] The moral element provided by these roles provided the women with the chance to belong to their respective communities (Aeresti et al., 2012). This generative desire nonetheless was not only related to the position of these women as ex-offenders with a desire to 'make amends' by 'giving back' to their communities but also as women with stories to tell, experiences to share and lessons to be taught about drug and alcohol addiction, domestic abuse and violence as well as mental health issues or the loss of loved ones.

Another clear theme to emerge from the narratives of generativity was that this generativity did not solely exist within the confines of employment whether paid or voluntary. From Karen's role as a carer for her sick friend in prison, to Shelly adopting a mother role to her partner's son, to Anna's offering of advice and support to friends and neighbours, generativity was a common theme within the vast majority of the women's narratives.

If anything it's just an experience isn't it? And I suppose one day I'd like to put it back into others because I know exactly what I'm dealing with in a lot of situations, way too many. The knowledge is there. That's what I do, basically, when I go up there, [to her friend's estate] I've got lines of people waiting to ask me questions, "What would you do if this happened?; How would you get the kid back?"... I don't know, I just seem to pick things up, bullshit things from the social and things like that. And they all need advice. But I've tried to stop doing it all and helping people 'cause they end up relying on me and then I'm like, I'm stuck with someone again. And if they go down the wrong path, it makes me look like I've done it meself. And I don't want that, I don't want the kids to be like on to the social. (Anna, Age 36)

As Anna notes, the desire to be generative is not without complications. In order to be desistance-promoting, work must first and foremost be meaningful to the women and not generative for generativity's sake. Additionally, however, generative desires can be recognised as occurring outside the confines of employment. Generative opportunities can be promoted as part of community provision where they are welcomed by individuals.

6.3.2 Educating Northshire

Almost as prominent in the women's narratives was the desire for further education to support their desistance journeys. Many of the women had negative educational experiences as young people, either being removed from school for various reasons, being bullied or 'acting up' in class. There was a prominent sense amongst many of these women of not having achieved their full potential which was something they wanted to correct through their desistance journeys. Education was also seen as a stepping stone towards employment and the 'respectability package' which it can provide.

I didn't really get educated to be honest with you. I came out with Cs, Ds and Es and all the teachers were waiting for me at the gate, telling me how disappointed they all are. I remember saying the same thing as everybody else, "like I care." It were only then about ten years later, "oh you fucking bastards, I'm not going back to tell you: you were right." But I can admit my faults; I can admit anything like that. (Anna, Age 36)

I've had no work ever so I'm starting a college course in January with what's her name downstairs? [in the women's centre], Claire I think she is. (Holly, Age 23)

As Grace has discovered however, the road to education is not smooth, despite having the desire to 'better' her prospects and expand her mind through education, this was not straight forward nor without difficulty, including financial difficulty:

I'm hoping to go to college but I'm struggling with finding funding because the only thing I could claim if I was going to college would be jobseekers allowance, but I wouldn't be actively seeking work because I would be at college, so I'm trying to find a part time course which I have to pay for... I've just found out there is actually funding for it, you can get a loan. I've only recently heard this, the other day from Easton College. And I don't know how much it's for, I've not looked into it but apparently it would cover the courses I want to do but I'm not sure about living expenses, I don't know how much the loan would be for but... If it's only funding for the courses I'm going to have to do part time because I'm still going to have to be actively seeking work part time as well...But if this funding does cover costs no matter how long the course lasts I will hopefully do it full time, get it done. Because I've no GCSEs and I know I am very clever, you know I was predicted straight As at the end of primary school but left at the end of year 9. (Grace, Age 31)

The above quotes from Anna, Grace and Holly further highlight the increasing importance of education and employment with age as noted by Uggen et al (2000). Clearly the desire for further education is prominent amongst females with convictions, particularly if they have had a negative relationship with it in the past. If the aspiration of government agencies includes

supporting desistance, they must invest in educational opportunities for these women to support the end of offending.

6.3.3 The paradox of volunteering

For the majority of females interviewed and indeed observed in the various groups, the offences for which they were convicted could be considered acquisitive. Paradoxically, many of the women have been encouraged to become involved in volunteering work since their sentencing. During the Conservative/ Liberal-Democrat coalition government which was in power when the interviews took place, the 'Big Society' rhetoric of voluntarism as linked to social solidarity was pervasive. On the other end of the scale, so too was the idea of working for free as encouraged by the government's 'Help to Work' programme. The benefits of volunteering for mental health, increasing the individual's pro-social networks and helping the individual to overcome any gaps in their CV are well known in the literature (Edgar et al., 2011) and were advocated by both the WCs and HfN Projects. Additionally, volunteering can provide the 'restoration to society' element which can be part of identity change (Maruna, 2001: 8). Indeed many of the women extolled the virtues of volunteering from their own personal experience.

And mentally I'm not bad, I'm not bad at all mentally... I help out at a charity shop when I'm needed, I'm going to have been there for like 9 weeks now... So I just do Saturday to help out and that gets me out meeting people again, I'm not as nervous going out and contacting people. And everybody's lovely down there, they're really helpful. Nobody knows about... what's happened. If they had to say mention it, I'd tell them, I wouldn't be frightened of telling them but nobody's asked and you know so... I've thought, "Well you know if they ask, I will tell them but otherwise you know it's alright." They're all lovely, I think I'm the youngest there they're all like a lot older than me, retired, but it's nice. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Nonetheless volunteering, by its definition, obviously does not provide the economic benefits of paid employment. Sue, for example noted her own 'luck' in inheriting from her father creating the conditions for her volunteering which has provided not only mental health benefits but enabled her to attend the courses and training which have been part of her desistance journey (it must also be noted that Sue was one of only two women involved in the project [observed or interviewed] who had never been convicted of an acquisitive offence). Julie meanwhile lamented the lack of paid opportunities for females in the CJS.

I basically inherited quite well. I mean obviously it would be difficult to get a job now because of my criminal record. But I'm quite happy doing the volunteer work. Ok, I'm 40 and I've still got time but I don't... It just works for me. I've got the flexibility because I'm doing these courses and I need to be doing the courses because a lot of them are during the day. I don't want to start working for somebody and then say "Oh can I have time off?" that kind of thing... (Sue, Age 40)

I've volunteered to do whatever might be appropriate just to give me something to do because it would be nice to be able to earn something, it really would, but for the time

being to get into things again, I'm happy to do voluntary work. So I'm hoping that some of those, I keep putting the feelers out here and there and I'm hoping that somewhere along the line, something will come. (Julie, Age 60)

It appears that women with convictions are often encouraged into hyper-moral roles (Matthews et al, 2014), perhaps as both an individual and societal reaction to their supposed 'double deviance'. Yet there is a concern that promoting volunteering specifically for women will reinforce their gender specific roles, further entrenching the feminisation of poverty (Carlen, 1998) and limiting the 'pro-social scripts' (Rumgay, 2004) available to females with convictions attempting to travel the road of desistance.

6.3.4 Employment, education and the justice system

Both the WCs and the HfN Project offered opportunities for the women involved in this study to enrol on training courses, education courses, employability workshops and volunteering. Many of the women, such as Grace and Karen who were involved in community sentences also kept this work up when their sentences finished. A particularly positive example of the work done by criminal justice agencies to encourage women to enter employment was noted in the 'Succeed' course run by the WC, parallel to their group work interventions, to encourage women with convictions and others to improve their CV, apply for vacancies, provide interview tips and help with money for interview outfits etc. During my observational research I witnessed first-hand the effect of this course when one of the Weston-based women, Fiona, gained employment whilst enrolled on the course. Paula also enrolled on the course and noted that she found the course helpful and useful in providing information about how to achieve her goal of becoming a drug and alcohol counsellor. Heather also noted how the WC had been useful in providing her with help to get back into education, whilst Shelly, Michaela and Kelly-Marie all made reference to the encouragement of employment within the HfN Project.

However the links between criminal justice agencies and employment were not always positive. When asked about the effects of their sentences on their lives the interviewees almost unanimously noted that their sentence would negatively affect their employment prospects, even if this is something they did not experience first-hand.

I still don't know why I pleaded guilty, looking back now, I wouldn't have done, because like I can't go out and get another job, with a criminal record. It's not as bad as if I've been given a suspended sentence or anything but I don't know how long it's there for. I got a sheet from the women's centre that said because it was only supervision that I can write it off. But I've heard it's up to seven years, so I don't know. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

A WC staff member based in Easton, Claudia, also had clear opinions on offences remaining on women's employment records as a result of her own experiences.

I'll tell you this. When I lived in Germany, I was 18 and my friends were 17 coming up to 18, they shoplifted, I didn't even take anything but I was convicted because I was the 18 year old and I found out that came up on my record when I applied for a job here... My opinion is there are offences that should stay on people's records like sex offences but all the rest of this silly rubbish needs to be deleted. (Claudia, group leader, Easton Women's Centre)

Even where the women had not directly experienced the negative employment effects of a criminal record, it was clear that their records restricted their employment goals. Another way in which the CJS had an adverse effect on the women's employment and education opportunities was through practical measures such as in Marie's case where receiving a driving license ban resulted in her dog walking business being negatively affected.

But he [the magistrate] said to me, he said "I'm going to give you a chance, so you can start up your business and carry on with your mum and stuff." And then I thought, "Eh? Without a license? I'd be better off doing a month in prison." (Marie, Age 40)

As noted by Farrall (2002), if criminal justice interventions are to work they need to take into consideration the contexts of offending and desistance. Indeed this was a sentiment reiterated by Chris Grayling, former justice secretary, in the introduction to this chapter. It has been proven time and again that there is a positive link between employment and desistance (Horney et al., 1995; Carlsson, 2012; Verbruggen et al, 2012). Yet paradoxically, it is often the CJS which stands in the way of true desistance by blocking access to education and employment. Whilst 'on the ground' services such as the WC and HfN Project appear to be providing positive practice at helping women into work, the legal formalities surrounding the employment of people with convictions stands in the way of desistance promotion. Much like the (subsequently u-turned) ban on books in prison, the CJS seems to be shooting itself in the foot by not providing easier access to employment and education.

Overall, education and employment provided the women in this study with the 'stability package' required to effectively promote desistance. Education, paid and voluntary employment have been shown in these women's narratives to reduce the propensity to reoffend, improve mental health and produce social bonds. Particularly where the employment is meaningful and, where possible, generative, it is capable of producing change. These findings reflect what is already known about males and desistance. Yet we must avoid further stigmatising females in the CJS by only offering hyper-moral or unpaid roles which can entrench their already-disadvantaged gendered identities. The CJS must work in favour of desistance by encouraging and supporting routes into employment and education financially and practically. Yet we must also be careful to note the historical context of employment, education and voluntary work in women's lives, noting where its promotion may be inappropriate and adopting therefore a holistic approach in supporting women's desistance pathways.

6.4 Romantic Relationships

Within the desistance literature, there is a wealth of data to connect desistance with marriage (Farrington and West, 1998; Sampson and Laub, 1993; 2003; Sampson et al., 2006; Bersani, Laub and Nieuwebeerta, 2009). This link however has largely been explored through male heterosexual experiences. Even amongst the strongest supporters of the ‘marriage factor’ however, there has been some acknowledgement that heterosexual women with offending backgrounds may be less likely to marry a pro-social partner than their heterosexual male counterparts (Sampson et al., 2006). Another criticism of the marriage factor thesis is that marriage is a somewhat outdated measurement device in contemporary society where couples are more likely to marry later in life, if at all. For this reason, this study does not use marriage as the measuring stick of a ‘good relationship’, instead the qualitative relationship experience as a whole will be considered to include both hetero and same sex romantic relationships. The findings from this study suggest that for women with convictions in contemporary England, relationships are not the turning point around which desistance turns. Whilst relationships were important as context for the beginning of offending for many of the women, they largely were not as important in the cessation of offending. McIvor et al.’s (2000) finding that the end of relationships can be important in desistance for females however is replicated in the narratives of many of the women.

6.4.1 Holly’s story

The link between offending and romantic relationships for women is narrated well by Holly’s experience. At the time of our interview, Holly’s partner, and father of her daughter, Nick, had been released from prison the month previously. He had served a second sentence of two years and three months for burglary. However, Holly does not link the beginning of her own offending with Nick’s offending; instead she links her own offending first with a normalised youth behaviour and gradually with poverty and cannabis use. She does however link her desistance with her partner’s. For example, Holly has quit smoking cannabis since Nick’s release as he no longer smokes. Generally, Holly also links getting back together with Nick on his release with settling down to pro-social behaviour and regaining custody of their daughter.

I just want to get my child back, and hopefully start another family up with my child’s dad and just be happy with my grandma. Let my grandma have a happy life, let her be happy and free. She shouldn’t be babysitting for my child now. (Holly, Age 23)

Whilst Holly is concerned with her own desistance, she is also concerned with being a positive example to Nick and directing his desistance journey also by settling down together. In this sense Holly is the invisible, usually female, pro-social partner we so often hear about in the male desistance literature. Holly’s narrative therefore provides an insight to the lives of these non-

protagonist women, who may also be struggling with their own (although perhaps not as prolific) desistance journey and other difficulties. Holly, for example highlights the struggles herself and Nick continue to have with money.

I only get £81 a fortnight so it's really hard it is. I think it's because like I had fines and that in the past and they take money out so I'm only getting £81 but I manage because my boyfriend's on jobseekers as well so he gets like £140 a fortnight so we manage 'cause like when he were in prison and I were on my own I were only getting like £81 that were making me go out offending and that so it's mainly only the money situation innit? But we're managing. (Holly, Age 23)

Clearly this money issue⁹ could result in continued offending for Holly or Nick, but Holly's desire for the 'respectability package' which includes a life together, has prevented her from offending in the months prior to our interview. When considering Holly's desistance journey, it is also necessary to consider her relationship history, which, like the majority of the women interviewed for this research, contained domestic abuse by a former partner.

I met a guy while he [Nick] were inside and he were violent, that's why she [Holly and Nick's daughter] ended up going to my grandma, 'cause he were violent. He took amphetamines and he always bullied me and stuff and that's why my grandma had to take the child because he were beating me up and stuff. So I split up with him and then I started getting back together with her dad. So it were really hard, it were... I went through a lot of depression and stuff and started like slicing myself a little bit. I went through a rough time 'cause I couldn't see my child and everything. But I went to the doctors, and I'm on tablets now, antidepressants and stuff so everything's looking a lot brighter now, I'm feeling better in myself, I'm right happy at home with my kid's dad, so everything's happy now. The last year I just went through a really bad phase in my life, meeting that guy and stuff. I only were with him for eight month but then he followed me round for a year and a half, putting my windows through 'cause I wouldn't get back with him. (Holly, Age 23)

For Holly, desistance is linked with a move away from a violent relationship, regaining custody of her daughter and improvements in her mental health which have coincided with her partner's release from prison. The tone with which Holly describes her mental health and domestic violence, "and stuff", "a little bit" etc., perhaps suggests their normative presence in Holly's experience. Alternatively, this could be a coping mechanism. For Holly, a stable relationship represents hope for change. So whilst a positive relationship experience is central to Holly's desistance, the link is complicated by both Holly's past negative relationship experiences and her desire to be the pro-social partner in the future. This narrative highlights the complicated link between romantic relationships and desistance for the women in this study.

⁹ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2016) recently reported that there were over 1.2 million people living in poverty in the UK. 'Destitution' was defined as an income of £140 or less per week per couple with children. It is clear that Holly and Nick fall into this category, as did many of the women involved in this study

6.4.2 Supportive relationships, domestic abuse and desistance: similar desistance outcomes for vastly different experiences

Some of the women however reported positive relationship experiences which, whilst not always directly resulting in desistance, certainly provided the foundations for it. For Shelly and Michaela, meeting each other whilst in prison proved to be a turning point in both their narratives.

Michaela: I've not offended since July this year and normally I'd be nicked by now and back in prison.

UB: What do you think is the main reason for that?

Michaela: I've got into a new relationship, I've been clean sixteen month now so I don't need to shoplift any more to feed an addiction, I'm no longer in that domestic violence relationship where he was an alcoholic and I was shoplifting to fund his habit as well. So my life's totally changed. (Michaela, Age 34)

In all honesty, Michaela's been a big positive influence in my life, really honest to God. And it's not just that, she makes me life feel like I'm worth something you know what I mean? Whereas the last relationship I come out of, I'm being honest with ya, nothing was happening in the relationship, sexual or otherwise for 16 years and that's the God's honest truth. What it was about right is, with me being full gay, I couldn't have children of me own. I could have done probably, do ya get me... but I knew I was full gay and it just wasn't happening, do ya get me? And I think that's what kept me in that relationship that long; it was the fact of the grandkids. And not just that, with the heroin and everything... I just didn't want them discovering at that age that their nana... I didn't want them discovering that and I would have done anything to protect them from that. You know for them not to see that? And that's exactly, to be honest, that's what kept me in the relationship so long, I know it did. It was the fact of the children, family orientated and that. Like Michaela's got an eighteen year old son and I'm so close to Jack, he's such a lovely lad, I swear to God he's got his head on right and he knows what he's doing... Honest to God, the whole family have accepted me with open arms, it's just unbelievable. (Shelly, Age 53)

For both women, the beginnings of heroin addiction and offending were related to past relationships. Michaela had been connected with the Housing for Northshire (HfN) project whilst in prison because of her history with domestic abuse and she had requested that her new partner, Shelly, a fellow sufferer of domestic violence also be taken in by the agency. Both women have offending histories but support each other on their desistance pathways through their relationship. Shelly and Michaela were hoping to get married in the months following the interview, tellingly with Rebecca (Manager of HfN) 'giving them away' at the wedding.

For Heather, her partner represents the 'person who always believed in her' considered in Maruna's (2001) work. Heather's narrative includes references to her partner encouraging her to stop drinking and supporting her through suicidal periods in the past. Heather was also engaged to be married at the time of interview. Julie's husband was another example of the angel-type figure who is a constant supporter of the offending individual who appears in Maruna's (2001) study. Julie for example, makes reference to her husband being particularly

vigilant that Julie did not break her curfew. During the group sessions, a few women also talked about their positive relational experiences. For example, Janet, a former heroin addict at the Easton WC, spoke about her partner wanting her to stop drinking.

He doesn't like it when I'm drinking. (Janet – Rose Centre observations)

We must treat these seemingly positive relationship experiences extolled by women in their narratives with caution. Particularly where the language of control is present, these narratives may mask an abusive relationship which nonetheless produces a period of non-deviant behaviour (Umberson et al., 1998; Johnson, 2006). For example, Karen explained that whilst she was in a relationship she was very “settled”, however this lack of offending actually represented a controlling and abusive, violent relationship:

When I'm in a relationship, because I was with Tom for five years, I never went out, I'm quite family orientated. You know I had them; I had the dogs. But when we split up and we went to my mum's, because I had my mum on hand, I went out and I was just basically re living my youth... Then when I met Sean and had the kids, for years I was settled down and then... But obviously with the violence, the police were obviously alerted. I didn't press any charges or anything. (Karen, Age 36)

Karen's relationships with both Tom and Sean produced periods of non-offending but for dramatically different reasons. The narratives of violence in the lives of many of the women in this study echoes the experiences of violence as described by Emma Humphreys in *The Map of My Life*, (Bindel and Wistrich, 2003). The often inverse relationship between offending and violence in women's lives should not be underestimated.

6.4.3 Relationships with men and offending

Nonetheless, the common romantic relationship experiences described during both observation sessions and interviews were overwhelmingly negative and linked to both the beginnings and continuation of offending. The observation sessions were littered with narratives of relationships (usually with men) being the root cause of the beginnings of offending.

Kelly-Marie had a long history of offending and drug addiction. Whilst she did not blame any of her former partners for the beginnings of her offending behaviour, her relationships marked important 'turning points' in her offending trajectory. Kelly-Marie's first husband introduced her to a world of criminality at a young age, something which Kelly-Marie claimed was new to her.

And when I got to 16, I left home and I met my daughter's dad, that was Frankie's dad, and I had Frankie. But he were a bit of a bugger. And at the age of 19 I wanted for nothing; I had me own home, as much money as I wanted, clothes, jewellery, cars, you name it, I had it... And I thought that was where it were all coming from. And I don't know whether you remember or not but there were a big fraud deal that went down with... cars and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of cars, well that were my husband. Well anyhow, he obviously had all this money. Well I just had Frankie and the

first I knew that he was a criminal were when the police were at my front and the back, and me doors were going in and I'm feeding the baby going, what's going on? Anyhow, they took him away, he's got remanded and big dos and little dos, I weren't too impressed. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

After splitting up with Frankie's father, Kelly-Marie met her second partner, father to her second daughter, Emma, an extremely violent and controlling man. During this relationship, Kelly-Marie's offending and drug use decreased. Kelly-Marie eventually escaped from this relationship and her offending and drug use again began to increase. However, upon meeting her third and final partner, Johnny, Kelly-Marie's life began to "spiral out of control".

I've met a man called Johnny. And I got wi'him and it were all high life and everything, do you know what I mean? It went from amphetamine, to cocaine, to ecstasy, LSD, heroin; you name it, I were taking it... I've got an habit, I've got no job, I've got no money, me family don't agree with Johnny. I'm off the rails, nobody can tell me any different and I've started committing offences. To the point where he got me... I'd gone and I'd robbed a person, took £25 out of the drawer and he came down the stairs and I remember saying to him, "I'm sorry but I really do need this more than you right now. And I really don't want to take it." And I've took it and I've gone. And I've got three years and nine month for that. So obviously, from there onwards, I'd done the sentence, I was still in contact with Johnny, but I loved him. But it weren't him I loved, I think it were the drugs. And that's all our relationship were built on, it were drug orientated. It weren't a normal relationship. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Johnny was subsequently "in and out" of Kelly-Marie's life following this sentence, his entry back into her life always leading to amplifications in drug taking and offending to support their habits. It was only with final breaks from all the men in her life that Kelly-Marie could focus on her desistance journey.

Maybe if I had have, not just me, if things had have been picked up sooner and dealt with, maybe I wouldn't have gone down the paths that I've gone down... I've been at every channel and they're the wrong ones, I'm on the right one now. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Similar narratives were shared by many of the women. Anna experienced periods of non-offending whilst with her abusive partner and offending acceleration when introduced to other men. Michaela was directly introduced to heroin by her previous abusive partner for whom she would go shoplifting for and Janet, a woman I met at the Easton WC, had also been introduced to heroin by a former abusive partner. As well as introductions to offending, therefore, male partners also coerced women into offending and drug taking. In fact, domestic violence was such a common experience for women involved in this study that it was referred to by its acronym 'DV' during the group sessions by both staff and service users alike. As previously noted, eight out of the sixteen convicted women, and four out of the five staff told horrific stories of domestic abuse, violence, rape and childhood abuse in their narrative interviews, unprompted by the interviewer (the staff experience will further be considered in Chapter 8 of this thesis). Once

again, it is clear that the social bonds desistance thesis as championed by theorists such as Sampson and Laub (1993; 2003) has neglected to consider the contexts surrounding both the onset and decline of women's offending. Abuse appears as a consistent experience.

6.4.4 Independence and desistance

Chapter 7 will consider the role of agency and identity in desistance, however it is worth mentioning here that for many women, rather than being a relational experience, desistance was a largely independent venture. This finding is supported by previous research such as Leverentz' (2014) finding that desistance for women often means avoiding romantic relationships at least temporarily. Perhaps this is an unsurprising finding when it is considered that many women were introduced to offending by previous partners or their offending took an upward trajectory whilst in certain relationships. This has been noted above in Kelly-Marie's experience. For Anna, who was convicted of a joint enterprise offence with her friend, Dave, desistance was synonymous with independence also.

No, not had a partner for a long time now, no. I think Dave were the closest person that I had from me past. Again, another bloke, someone else that was taken away from me. But I'll always bounce back; they'll never keep me down. I can make mates no problem; do you know what I mean? And I don't need anybody there all the time, me. I'm not one of these people that need a big group of people there... I don't need it, I'm quite happy, as long as I know the kids are happy. That's all I can ask for, that's all I've ever wanted, to do it my way. (Anna, Age 36)

In fact the narratives of the majority of the women interviewed highlighted an understanding of the intimate linking of independence and desistance. Nonetheless, as claimed by Anna's narrative, this independence was not something which was always socially acceptable.

And then I fell pregnant off a one night stand with Craig. It were meant to be mates with perks but I found out there were no perks to that situation once I fell pregnant (laughs). The lad never bothered. He lives two streets away, I walk past him all the time, won't bother about the kid... But the little girl never bothered about her dad, the little boy craves it. He walks round the street going, "do you want to be my dad?" And yeah the school shout at me and say, "yeah Craig's problems are down to a lack of men." But every man that I've managed to find, whether it be friend or whatever had let him down and walked away because I can't give them more or whatever. (Anna, Age 36)

According to Anna, her status as a single mother is deviant when considered by wider society including her son's school (Helena Kennedy (1993) has argued effectively that this is something which is reflected in the courts). In fact it is this independence which propels her on her desistance journey. Oakley (1981) contended that these masculine traits of independence are often seen by society as deviant (Kennedy, 1993). Women, sentenced and otherwise, are too often considered in the desistance literature only in terms of their relational identities— as mothers, partners, daughters etc. In the process of desistance, women also often discover their

independence and this too, alongside supportive, loving relationships is something which can be promoted.

6.4.5 Romantic relationships and the criminal justice system (CJS)

A further consideration in the link between relationships and desistance referred to throughout the women's narratives, is the damage that convictions and their knock-on effects can have on current romantic relationships. For Katie, the deterioration in her mental health as a result of her conviction for benefit fraud had caused problems in her relationship with her husband.

But it has been really traumatic, and they [her daughters] can't understand that. And my husband is the same, he blocks things off. And I can't talk to him; he's not the sort of person you can talk to. And he's been a lorry driver since we got married, so he's always worked away. And before that he was in the army. So we've always been away, we're used to being away. So it's not like it's any different but I don't feel like I've got the support there with him that I would have had, if we'd have been close. We're just not close. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

During our second interview, Katie reports that her relationship with her husband has not improved in the intervening months. On top of not being able to talk to her husband, she theorises that the shame brought on by her conviction has resulted in less time her husband has spent socialising with friends.

You know I feel like he doesn't seem to go out like he used to do with friends and things and I don't know whether they've blocked him off or not because of me (begins to cry). I know it sounds silly... well I don't think it sounds silly, but maybe I'm imagining it, but that's what I feel like. You know he used to go for a pint with some of his work mates and things or we'd all meet up every now and then together and he's never asked. Or whether he's asked and he doesn't tell me because he doesn't want to go. I don't know. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Similarly, Marie relates her own relationship problems to her convictions but in a different way. Marie's relationship with her wife, Claire was deteriorating during our first meeting as a result of the driving ban she received as part of her sentence. This ban has meant that Marie was unable to "escape" their marital problems nor provide for her family either through illegitimate methods or her dog-walking business. I had arranged a second interview with Marie however she called me on the day of the interview to postpone due to 'domestic issues' herself and Claire were having. She did not rearrange another interview but I later found out from one of the other women that Marie and Claire had split up. The negative effects of imprisonment on employment, housing, poverty and relationships are well explored by the literature (Petersilia, 2003; Sim, 2010; Hattery and Smith, 2010). However, my data show that even for women serving community sentences, the conviction and its related consequences can have a direct effect on the quality of romantic relationships. If we are to consider that there is some validity in the sociogenic thesis that supportive relationships with pro-social partners can positively influence

desistance, the CJS must be careful not to ruin these supportive relationships by unnecessary penalisation of women.

This section has explored the theme of romantic relationships as told from the point of view of women involved in this study. As has been seen, there are examples of loving and supporting relationships which are desistance promoting. However not every relationship which is desistance-promoting is also loving and supportive. As Karen's and others' experiences highlight, violent, abusive relationships can also promote desistance for women. Academics and criminal justice practitioners must be very wary not to confuse desistance for positive relational experiences. Many women in this study were introduced to offending and generally deviant behaviour by romantic partners. This is not a new finding (Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; McIvor et al., 2000). What it does highlight however is that for many women, desistance is intrinsically linked to independence and carving her own pathway. Therefore alongside, or in place of, happy, healthy, supportive relationships, desistance may be found in independence. Finally, where there is evidence of positive relationships supporting desistance, the CJS and its penalties must be careful not to destroy these relationships in the same way that it has been known to destroy employment, housing or mental health prospects.

Whilst meaningful employment and romantic relationships emerged as the most prominent sociogenic themes in this research, further 'turning points' which emerged as important included becoming a mother, gaining stable accommodation, changes in friendship groups and communities. In the following sections, these themes will be briefly considered in terms of desistance.

6.5 Becoming A Mother

There is much research to indicate that becoming a mother is a significant desistance-inducing social bond for females who break the law (Bersani et al., 2009; Giordano et al., 2002; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Rutter et al., 1998; McIvor et al., 2011). Again this argument situates a female's desistance in terms of her relational identity. Amongst the sixteen women with convictions who were interviewed for this study, thirteen were mothers and two were grandmothers; all thirteen committed their varied offences after becoming a mother, indeed eight of these had lost full custody or completely lost their children to social services or family members due to issues surrounding their offending, their alcohol or drug use or in Ruth's case, homelessness. We have seen in the previous chapter how for Holly, becoming a mother indicated a turning point for her friend, Ciara, whilst for Holly having her daughter did not produce the same result. For some women, offending was related to being able to provide a life for their children; tragically, for Grace, it also meant that her daughter was taken into care.

Marie, in her narrative, related offending to being able to “put food on the table”. For these acquisitive crimes we can see a link to the stereotypically masculine trait of providing for the family.

For a second group of women, offending was not something which was related to their role as mothers nor their relationship with their children. Paula, for example, noted that neither the threat of nor loss of her sons encouraged her to stop drinking.

It's weird really because when you're in the addiction, you're so selfish and you just block out everyone around you and you see them and you hear them and you don't take anything in, even my children weren't enough. And my children got taken to live with their dad, that weren't enough, it was just like “oh they're not here now; I may as well carry on drinking.” So you're very selfish, but I didn't think of myself as selfish, I suppose at the time I thought of myself as the victim. (Paula, Age 36)

Nonetheless, whilst the act of becoming a mother did not produce the required ‘turning point’ for the women in this study, many did relate their identity as a mother and their desire to become law-abiding to their relationship with their children. It was again not the act which provided the impetus for change, but the identity which helped maintain change. Motherhood provided the ‘script’ (Rumgay, 2004) for change in women’s lives. Particularly when considering their hopes for the future, many of the mother’s hopes revolved around their children.

They're [Ruth's children] the only thing, the only two things, keeping me going at the moment, I haven't got a whole lot to smile about at the minute, as you've been aware. But hopefully something will change, very soon. (Ruth, Age 31)

I'd love to move out of here [Housing for ex-offenders in Southton], start having the children at the weekends and as they're obviously getting older they'll be able to make a decision you know, if they want to stay with me. (Karen, Age 36)

Similarly, whilst talking about the decision to begin a methadone prescription, Michaela notes,

Michaela: 'Cause I have a child that's just turned 18 and I needed to start being a mother.

UB: So it was to do with that more?

M: Yeah, for meself and for my son, yeah. (Michaela, Age 36)

For Kelly-Marie, whilst having her two daughters and losing custody of her younger daughter, Emma, did not produce desistance from offending, becoming a grandmother for the first time provided a temporary ‘script’ for change which was not to last.

And from Frankie being 16 to me grandson being born, I was in and out of the courts, the cells, prison and just reoffending, taking drugs and I didn't really give a shit whether I lived or died basically. And Frankie's fell pregnant with me grandson. And I thought, "right ok, it's time to sort your shit out." Because even though Frankie had never seen me take drugs, or suffered from me taking drugs, yeah? In my eyes, she hadn't suffered, but she had yeah because she didn't have a mum like she should have had. And anyhow,

Frankie's had Riley and he's my be all and end all. (Begins to cry). And for seven year I were clean. I got rid of Johnny; I'd moved back near me family and everything were hunky dory. And then Johnny popped up again. And by this time, I let him in, but I'm thinking I'm in control, I'm not taking drugs or anything, I'm clean. But I've gone from one extreme to the other so I'm selling drugs now. And making a lot of money, but I'm spending less time with me grandson. And my granddaughter's come along at the same time. And I'm spending less time with them. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Identity and motherhood will be explored further in the next chapter. To base female desistance around women's relational identities however not only is inappropriately stereotypical (Perry, 2013) but restricts their ability to change. Unlike the desistance literature, this study did not find that becoming a mother, nor indeed a grandmother, automatically created the social bond to society required for desistance. We see in Kelly-Marie's narrative that without addressing other issues such as poverty, relationship issues and drug addiction, desistance will not be forthcoming. For many of the women however, motherhood provided a 'script' (Rumgay, 2004) and the 'hook for change' (Giordano, 2002) necessary to desist and importantly offered hope of a brighter future.

6.6 Gaining Stable Accommodation

Perhaps unsurprisingly, inadequate housing was another of the key sociogenic factors recognised by both the women with convictions and the staff of both projects as being conducive to crime and offending. Certainly for two of the women in particular, housing was central to their entry into the CJS. Grace's narrative linked poor housing with inadequate heating directly with her rational and considered decision to begin growing cannabis which would help to heat her home. Ruth on the other hand, who was homeless at the time of interview and had been for 10 months prior, had been convicted due to her inability to pay off an overpayment of housing benefit. She notes the reasoning of the magistrate in her narrative.

Ruth: Well they said it was to make me aware that the overpayment was wrong but also it was to open other doors to help me find accommodation because I have been homeless for the last 10 month.

UB: And has it helped you so far?

R: Not so far but I've only been on probation what... eight weeks so I've got ten month of it left

UB: And have you been getting any help to find accommodation?

R: Not up to now. I mean I've been filling in forms for accommodation through the housing for ex-offenders programme two week ago, so hopefully... he says he doesn't see why not because it's got to be minimum minimal offences to be accepted onto the housing for ex-offenders programme... Mine is the most minimal, it's not as if I'm a reoffender or I'm aggressive. It all takes time; each form you fill in seems to take months to come back to you (Ruth, Age 31)

Ruth has effectively been criminalised as a result of her homelessness. The court have suggested that the only way Ruth can access adequate housing is by her entry into the CJS. Clearly however,

this criminalisation will have wide ranging effects in terms of Ruth's employment prospects, relationships and mental health. McNaughton and Sanders have argued that whilst housing is a crucial aspect in transitions from 'deviant' behaviour to 'ordered lifestyles', 'there is strong evidence to suggest that the conditional welfare services given through the entanglement of the welfare and CJSs play a pivotal role in maintaining marginal lifestyles and a cycle of entrapment into social exclusion' (2007: 885). Although the authors here are referencing street prostitution and homelessness generally, the same can be said for women who are forced into the CJS for minor infringements of the law in the guise of support. Whilst Ruth is hopeful for a future which encompasses stable accommodation, she is all too aware of the negative consequences of her criminalisation.

It's just seemed to have knocked me so far this time, I just want somewhere to live and go back to work. But obviously with this on my record for the next two years, it's... it seems harsh, to give me a criminal conviction over this when I've never been in trouble before. I'm not a reoffender and that's what all these courses are for, all about reoffending... and reoffending isn't what's going to happen. It's not as if I've gone out and done something wrong. But yet I'm paying the price for them overpaying. (Ruth, Age 31)

Carlsson (2012) has contended that changing trajectories of offending must come through policies which help 'bond' an individual to the conventional social order rather than through policies which result in isolation, exclusion or punishment. Ruth's case effectively illustrates that even where well-meaning, criminal justice intervention can create exactly these negative outcomes. The links between the CJS and supporting desistance will be explored further in Chapter 8.

Karen, a reoffender and former heroin addict, had been placed in the housing for ex-offenders programme that Ruth was applying to. However, her experience of the programme had not been particularly positive. She complained that the programme had not been helping her find somewhere permanent and stable to live. Additionally, on the weekend before her interview Karen had been visited by her children and she had been told off for them causing noise and disruption which had upset her.

The system's not really like very helpful. They just sort of leave you hanging. It's just like they ignore us, it's like "oh you're a criminal, you know you've done this, so" ... I mean there's lads in here now, they've signed up for flats and things like that, they're getting to move on. And that's, I hope, a stage I will be at sooner rather than later. So I'll be looking at that like over the next few weeks, looking at safe let, looking at the housing association. Because I spoke to the staff here about that today and said you know, "why's my name not down on any housing lists and things like that?" So she's put me forward for things like that, which should have already been done. I feel like I have to tell her what needs to be done, which is really shit really. (Karen, Age 36)

In contrast to Ruth and Karen's experience, Shelly, who had been homeless prior to her time spent in prison and had difficulties finding stable accommodation on her release from prison, found that entering the HfN programme run by Rebecca, was the key to both her desistance and ultimately, survival.

In all honesty, I'd have gone back to X2 [city Shelly previously lived], I'd have been homeless on the streets, probably be back in jail by now... I'd probably be near dead... I'll be totally honest with ya... only I met Michaela, she come to pick me up to Easton. We lived with Michaela's auntie for two weeks, well right it was three weeks altogether because Rebecca had gotten in touch, ya listening? From her agency... that woman honestly is a miracle worker Rebecca Brown...the help she's given me and Michaela... and not just us, other girls I know that have come out of jail... her agency, honest to God is... you just have no stuff like that in X2 and you should have, you should have honestly. Within three weeks I had... our own home, like I know it's supported accommodation, it holds up to three women, are you listening? But I and Michaela were the first to go in there. And honestly within three weeks, honest to God... I have a roof over my head. (Shelly, Age 53)

This finding supports large-scale quantitative analysis on the particular importance of the link between housing for females with convictions and recidivism (Ellison et al., 2013). For Ruth, Karen and Shelly, securing stable accommodation was central to their desistance pathways. The same was true of Rebecca's other clients, Michaela and Kelly-Marie. However the experiences of support in securing housing differed vastly. For the majority of the other women involved in this study, securing safe, secure and stable accommodation was part of the 'respectability package' which was related to their desistance. For Bridget, a new house not only meant that she could save money on bills but that she could express her identity by painting and decorating. For Sue, entering new accommodation was important for severing ties to her ex-husband. This research highlights that housing must be central to a female-focused desistance agenda but homeless women should not be forced into a punitive CJS as a result of welfare net-widening.

6.7 Communities, Friendships And Desistance

The linked themes of moving away from criminogenic friendship groups and communities were final significant social bonds level themes which appeared in the narratives of women travelling, or attempting to travel, desistance pathways. Additional to the idea of securing stable accommodation, many of the women involved in this research expressed a desire to move away from areas in which they lived and had committed offences. Anna, for example, expressed a desire to move out of the area where she has lived all her life. She believed that the area does not support her desistance journey because "you can't change if you're still expected to be the same cow you've always been." Ironically however it is her current status as a probationer which has meant that she is unable to move out of the area; Anna noted that she was unable to look

for somewhere to live as it would have been “seen as eyeing places up to rob”. Nonetheless, Anna has found coping mechanisms to live in the area whilst maintaining her desistance status.

I’ve always been alright in the area. I don’t mix anymore, I keep my eyes down on me way home, I close myself off... it’s the best way to be at the moment with everything going on. I don’t want to... I don’t want to use it as a big up to myself like most people do like I know some of the boys are like, “look at me, with my tag.” And a lot of the girls in the village and other places love it, like shorts on ‘cause they’ve got a tag and they’ve never worn shorts in their life. It’s like, “really, is that what you want? Wow.” And again you have people looking at you, walking around with a tag, what a dickhead. No, I never wanted to be like that. I just wanted to... I don’t know... be me. No, it’s a hard thing to be when you’re around people who want you to be what they want. But I’ll always fight against it and I certainly wouldn’t give in now because I feel a bit bullied off the police. (Anna, Age 36)

Anna associates the area with her younger offending identity and her family’s reputation. Her desire to move away from this criminogenic behaviour includes a desire to move away from the criminogenic area and ‘be herself’, the ‘person she was always meant to be’ (Maruna, 2001). Similarly, Karen notes that when she was young her family moved from Scotland because her father was becoming involved in the gang culture of the area. Conversely, in her own narrative, however, she experienced rejection from her own community because of her reputation as a heroin user.

Everybody knows everybody, it’s a very close-knit community. But because I started using drugs, that’s why I’ve come away because I couldn’t use the drugs I was using on that estate because they wouldn’t have it. It’s a no no on our estate, like a dirty drug sort of thing. (Karen, Age 36)

As a result Karen went into supported housing and was on a methadone prescription at the time of her interview. However her desistance journey was not as straightforward as moving out of the community and beginning a methadone programme to re-establish social bonds to the area. Karen’s desistance also required a ‘Road to Damascus’ (Soothill and Francis, 2009) conversion whilst in prison and caring for her terminally ill friend, great stores of agency and hope as well as re-establishing severed bonds with family and overcoming past victimisation.

Many of the women also found support in their communities. Julie found support and comfort in her Church community. Julie had been a regular Church-goer all her life. However, following the discovery of Julie’s past alcohol problem and an arson incident (for more on this see the methodology chapter) by her Church Minister, Julie felt victimised by the Church for bringing up the spent conviction.

The other biggest person, or people who have left me as feeling a victim were the Methodist Church. And people... a lot of people who aren’t Christian, or aren’t connected with the Church or whatever, cannot believe that I still bother going to

Church at all. But it's been my life and not just that, the fact that there's been someone to rely on and pray to, and I don't know where I'd be without that. And so, I've stuck to that. I don't always get the answers I want. But you know, I feel that I've been looked after. (Julie, Age 59)

By the time of our second interview, Julie and her husband had changed to a different Church.

We were formerly made members of Sandhill Church, we transferred our membership. And it's just lovely. It's a little village chapel, but everybody knows everybody. (Julie, Age 60)

For Julie, religion and community were interlinked and despite an initial period of non-support, Julie's desistance narrative was based around acceptance by her Church and community. (For more on religion and spirituality and desistance, see Giordano et al. (2008) or Schroeder and Frana (2009)). Unlike the majority of the other women, Julie's most recent fraud offence could have been described as a white collar crime. Julie's narrative centred around acceptance by her community and it was clear that she felt shame about her failure to 'keep up appearances' with family and friends. Julie's status as a middle class and older law-breaker certainly had an impact on her desistance journey. However like Anna, Karen and many of the other women, a supportive, orthodox community was an important 'social bond' to conventional life which helped maintain this desistance.

A further key theme was the difference between 'friends' and 'associates' in the women's narratives. This was not only the dividing line between non-criminogenic/ criminogenic relationships but also a dividing line between supportive/non-supportive relationships.

I don't really have any friends, I've had associates but I wouldn't really class them as friends. It's just me, myself and I really. But I've just got to look after myself. Just number one (Karen, Age 36)

I don't have any friends. And they weren't friends; they were just acquaintances, associates. My new friends are to come. I've got two in Rebecca and Josie. Well, I've got another two actually, Shelly and Michaela, yeah? They are friends. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

UB: Have any of your friends ever been in trouble with the police and courts?

Michaela: Um, only a couple of them. I don't have that circle of friends, or associates as you'd call them, I just have my normal friends. (Michaela, Age 34)

Other people, obviously, just won't give me the time of day. It's them, what do you call them? Fair-weather friends, they're never there when you need them, too quick to pass judgement. So, I know the people who are around me I know I can trust them. (Paula, Age 36)

Not only are pro-social, supportive friendships important but the end of criminogenic, non-supportive friendships are important in desistance promotion and maintenance. Another important factor in friendship groups which promote desistance were friendships with those

who have been through a similar offending/desistance trajectory, as seen in both quotes from Kelly-Marie and Paula above. Katz (2000) notes that friendship groups are important in the desistance of non-white women. I have also found this to be the case in the white women I have interviewed. Beth Weaver and Fergus McNeill (2014) have explored the relational elements of desistance within a group of desisting males in their 40s. For the women in this study, offending was on the whole not a relational, friendship-based experience, especially with other women. For the more prolific offenders such as Anna, Karen and Marie, offending was partly a consequence of their friendships with male associates but for the rest of the women, offending, and especially desistance, was a largely individual experience requiring stores of agency. Again it is apparent that on a social bonds level, women's desistance is a qualitatively different experience than men's. Friendships and communities were certainly important for women travelling the road of desistance but as a result of their offending patterns and societal reaction to women's offending, these tend to be experienced in different ways.

6.8 Conclusion

The social bonds women had prior to their offences were unsurprisingly weak; women's narratives included stories of unemployment, destructive relationships and communities, domestic abuse, loss of children and homelessness. A telling feature of the lack of social bonds in the lives of the women involved in this research were their apathetic attitudes to politics, particularly in the run up to the general election (see also Farrall, 2014). When asked about her political views, Shelly's answer was a typical response.

You know what, I'm not being funny, the only thing I can turn round and tell ya is this government that are in now... I can tell you I've never felt so strongly about it in my life, this government that are in now have made such a fucking mess of this country, honest to God, they've made such a fucking mess of it. 'Cause I'm telling you now, they've taken away... I'm telling you, I mean look what's happening with this bedroom tax and everything. Before you know it how many people are going to be homeless? How many families are going to be homeless on the streets? And that's 'cause of this government. And then you've got to look at it this way; whatever, even if we get them out when we next vote, are you listening to me? How long is it going to take the next ones that get in to clean up the mess they made? Cause I think it's disgusting, food banks and everything? It's disgusting! That's something that doesn't happen in our country, that's something that happens in the Third World, that shouldn't be happening here, what's that about? It just makes me so angry. And taking all that money off students to pay tuition fees every year, what's that about?... It just makes me so angry because they're doing it to their own people. They really are. No wonder people are committing crime you know... and you know I don't agree with people selling death, I don't agree with people selling heroin and shit like that, but you know what? I'm not being nasty or nothing but I can understand why they do it, because how the fuck do you live when you want to make money? (Shelly, Age 53)

In order to promote women's desistance it is important to not only repair bonds to society but make sure that these circumstances mentioned above are not structural features of women's lives in general which lead to criminogenic behaviour. The women involved in this study have complex lives and often their desistance stories can be seen as resistances to expectations of 'normal' social bonds such as marriage and employment. As well as considering individual social bonds reparation, structural inequalities must be examined; social bonding must occur in a society that women want to be bonded to. With charity coalitions such as 'A Fair Deal for Women' highlighting the disproportionate effect of austerity on women, tackling phallogentrism (Smart, 1995: 78) in all areas but particularly in terms of the economic impact of cuts is crucial. In addition, the CJS must not serve as a destructive force on the very social bonds which can act positively influence desistance journeys.

It is important to provide women who have committed offences with the tools to help themselves. For example, women should not be forced into employment which is not meaningful other than as a means of making money, nor should they be coerced into voluntary work on the misplaced, stereotypical assumption that women with convictions in particular have a desire to be generative. Instead meaningful, generative employment should be accessible to women travelling the road of desistance when they are ready to avail themselves of it. Relationships which on surface levels may appear conducive to desistance may be masking violence and coercion therefore desistance should not be the only end goal but part of a wider goal of women's equality promotion. As part of this equality promotion we must consider women's desistance as separate and different from men's, situated in social circumstances which are often different to men's desistance contexts. We must move beyond the white, male character of justice which pervades liberal societies (Hudson, 2006) exposing desistance as a gendered process.

For the women in this study, desistance was about more than changes in work and romantic relationships. As well as the importance of relationships with children, housing, community and friendship groups, cognitive shifts in hope and self-efficacy, shame and remorse, internalising stigma and alternative identities (Le-Bel et al., 2008) were important in desistance promotion and maintenance. It is to these subjective level themes which accompany changes in life circumstances or social bonds that the next chapter now turns.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUBJECTIVE THEORIES

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter considered the 'social bonds' (Sampson and Laub, 1993) which proved effective or otherwise at encouraging desistance. It was concluded that many of the social bonds experienced by males travelling desistance journeys tended also to be salient in the female experience. However, when we consider the female narrative, it emerges that many of the social bonds which have proven persistent in the male desistance literature are problematic. We must consider the realities of society as experienced by females, fraught as they are with discrimination, abuse and material deprivation. Additionally, what the social bonds approach tends to neglect is the agentic actor and the subjective cognitive discourses which accompany these social changes or act independently to produce change.

The lives of women affected by the criminal justice system (CJS) are not one dimensional. They can have a laugh like anyone else, they are emotionally touched by spiritual experiences, they hope and dream, cry and grieve, they appreciate the kindness of friends and family and beat themselves up upon their unkindness to strangers. There are various cognitive processes which enable and restrict ongoing offending for these women. It is important to study desistance from the point of view of those travelling or resisting desistance journeys in order to open what Farrall (2002) terms the 'black box' of terminating offending. Whilst there are limitations to the narrative method, it is also the most useful methodology for studying the subjective processes involved in desistance. As has been argued in Chapter 4, criminologists have long espoused the benefits of narrative methodologies in analysing these subjective processes.

Based on their own narrative analysis, LeBel et al. (2008) have highlighted four interrelated subjective-level themes which they contend emerge as most buoyant in the desistance literature: Hope and Self- Efficacy; Shame and Remorse; Internalising Stigma and Alternative Identities. This chapter will also examine these themes, finding much concordance with the male literature. Whilst self-efficacy may not be as forthcoming, both hope and self-efficacy appear to be as important for women as men in the process of desistance. Shame, remorse and stigma, however, should be treated with caution. Much of women's lives in general is replete with shame and stigma when they break both the social and gender contracts; we must be cautious when considering the place of these subjects in desistance promotion for females. Additionally, the final subjective level theme of identity change is particularly poignant in the narrative of the women involved in this research. Women outside the CJS are often categorised in terms of their roles as daughters, partners or mothers. Simultaneously those within the CJS are categorised as

offenders, victims or survivors (Mills et al., 2015). This chapter moves beyond these limited relational or stigmatised identifications to consider women as bricoleurs of their own desistance. Again it is clear that subjective desistance theories are gendered in their approach.

7.2 Hope And Self-Efficacy

Two of the key tools in the cognitive toolbox which proved instrumental in paving the desistance pathway travelled by some of the women were hope and self-efficacy. These elements also have salience in the male literature (Maruna, 2001; Bottoms et al., 2004; Le Bel et al., 2008; Maruna and Burnett, 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2005) as well as female-based studies (Rumgay, 2004). Distinguishing between hope and self-efficacy, theorists have suggested that they can be divided into 'the will' and 'the ways' of achieving change (Le Bel et al., 2008).

The hopes of the women involved in this research are, on the whole, 'everyday' hopes in an age of austerity and encompass family, housing, education and employment. Indeed these hopes are not only associated with desistance but also the onset of offending. Some of the women relate the beginnings of offending to finding a more stable and ordinary life, a far cry from Jack Katz's (1998) 'moral and sensual attractions' of committing crime. The 'thrill' of crime described by Katz is largely absent from the women's narratives. The psychological processes for these women in committing crime do not surround wild desires or heightened emotions but are aligned with their everyday hopes and worries. In general the women's hopes have not modified significantly from their pre-offending desires.

Well, I'd like my health to be better. I'd like, if possible to have some sort of employment, even if it was only charity, charitable work. Maybe we might move because I think as time goes on we're going to need a bungalow rather than a house, and something smaller. And well I mean I'm not looking at winning the lottery, well I wouldn't ever do that because I don't even buy tickets (laughs). But, yeah, just a nice home that was suited to what Kenneth and I require because probably by then, I'd like to see Daniel [Julie's son] happily married, if I could. And then, I'm not asking for loads of anything, just what we need and if I can have a job where I either earn money or just do something voluntarily for somebody else, and decent health. Those are really the priorities. (Julie, Age 59, first interview)

I'm hoping to sort meself out, get this operation done and behave meself, make enough money to plod on. I don't want a lot, I'm not asking for a lot, I'm happy with my house and that, I've got everything I need in my house. I need to crack on with this business but obviously it's [her conviction] put me back a lot now. (Marie, Age 48)

UB: So what are your hopes for the future?

Michaela: Just to stay focused on being abstinent from illegal drugs really

UB: Sure. And where do you see yourself in five years?

M: Hopefully with a job (laughs)

UB: What would you like to do?

M: Anything, a job's a job to me, do you know what I mean? There's nothing specific. (Michaela, Age 34)

I don't really look too far into the future 'cause I live for the here and now and I can only deal with... I haven't got any long-term plans to you know have a cottage in the country with a little rose-framed fence around it. I'd like to you know go back to a bit of writing more or less when the project is embedded and running itself, Paul and I to take a step back and relax a little bit. (Rebecca, Age 46)

I want Rebecca [Brown, Housing for Northshire Project manager, quoted above] to stay my landlady and she's going to get me and Michaela a two bedroomed house or two bedroomed flat, right? And she's going to continue support and like I said, next year me and Michaela are getting married on 22nd July and Rebecca's giving us away. It's my birthday, yeah so we're planning to get married then. So I turned around and said to Paul before, "I don't know about Rebecca giving us away, she'll be fucking throwing us away!" (Laughs). So that's what I will be doing, yeah, that's my ambition in life, yeah. (Shelly, Age 53)

This reflected the findings of the 'Sheffield study' (Bottoms and Shapland, 2011). Whilst these grounded hopes are the common experience for most women, there is a gap between 'the will' and 'the ways' in some of their narratives. Grace, for example, situates her hopes in extending her education and moving to a new house. She notes, "I know what I want and I know where I want to end up, I'm just not sure about what's needed in between." This statement is typical of the women's subjective experiences and highlights a gap which has the potential (Merton, 1957) to result in further deviance. It must be the position of intervening agencies to minimise this fissure in women's lives, to ensure that their modest hopes are realisable.

Not all the women have such straightforward ambitions however. For both Heather and Katie, self-efficacy is situated abroad. Both women have been failed so completely, both on an intimate relational level and a structural, governmental level, because of their status both as women and transgressors of the law in England that the only option which they see as being available to them is to leave the country completely.

Heather: [I want]... to get better, to have a better life really and start afresh in a different country

UB: Do you think that moving away will help?

H: I do, I really do yeah, 'cause it's something new, it's a new experience, something I've never done before and I just think I'd be better really going somewhere else (Heather, Age 24)

We have really good friends in [Spain]. We said we were going to move over there a few years ago but we didn't. And they said they'd help us get property and everything, so I do know I could get help if I do go over there. But it would be abroad definitely. I do not want to stay in this country a minute longer than I have to do to be perfectly honest... I've never voted because there's nobody who I would have wanted to vote for. And after this experience, as soon as I can, live in another country than England... I'd rather get somebody else's nationality. And I'd rather be Spanish or something than English. I just think it's not a just... (begins to cry) (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

Nonetheless, both women have various relational ties to England; Heather has her sister whom she wants to look after (Heather's sister attempted suicide the weekend prior to our interview whilst she was staying at Heather's house) and Katie has her granddaughter Natalie who in the intervening months between our interviews has developed a severe illness (more below). Heather narrates this messy internal process of changes in hope relating to external circumstances.

Heather: I feel like it's [her life] in turmoil at the moment, it's neither good or bad it's just in the middle

UB: Why do you feel like that?

H: Because it's like when things start to settle down, something always goes wrong if you know what I mean? Like at the moment with my sister, I'm trying so much to support her 'cause she's been through a lot, and she's falled out with her boyfriend recently, it was on Friday, and she had to go to the hospital and things like that and I had to go with her and it was a nightmare. It was horrible (Heather, Age 24)

Karen's narrative contains perhaps the most significant lack of hope and especially self-efficacy. This has a substantial effect on her identity construction which will be explored further below. Whilst in prison, Karen does experience what Aresti et al. (2010) would term a 'defining moment' which impacted significantly on her feelings of confidence and ultimately agency.

This time, in custody, my friend's got terminal cancer and she was dying. She got moved to X prison, to be closer to home, to die really. The Home Office wouldn't pardon her, because of her offence. And it wasn't actually her, it was one of those Joint Enterprise charges... in a couple of months, it ate away at her, you know it went to her brain, all over her body, you know when she went for scans. You know when she had this seizures, she was scared to go to sleep, you know scared she wouldn't wake up. Now when they asked about being resuscitated she'd said that she didn't want to be... when she had the seizure, it changed her mind, she said she did want to be resuscitated. The prison were humming and hawing about this and talking to Macmillan and saying you know... and it was like she died.... And basically because I'm like I am, basically I was like having none of it, causing uproar. And one of the governors took a liking to me and basically said he respected the fact that I was sticking up for Louise because she used to be a very feisty woman but she was unable to do it for herself at that time. So her medication got put up and things like that, she was more comfortable and that. And it made me take a big, big look at my life. I watched her kids come to see her, and her twelve year old daughter, her youngest, you know she had to tell her daughter on a prison visit, you know, "I'm dying". And you know, it was horrible. (Karen, Age 36)

Faith (2011) considers the bonds women make with other prisoners as a form of resistance, resisting 'prisonisation' and maintaining dignity. For Karen, this event and her feelings of hope from being able to help make Louise's life more comfortable had a significant effect on resistance. Not only did she experience her own agency but she also got a 'wake up call' regarding her own offending and drug use. However once outside of prison, Karen's continuous victimisation at the hands of the CJS, her former partner, her accommodation providers and

even her mother when combined with her heroin addiction has diminished all self-efficacy which emerged from this 'defining moment'. Like the other women, Karen's hopes are modest. Yet like Grace, she cannot see a way of achieving her goals. She distinguishes herself from 'normal women'.

I'd love to move out of here, start having the children at the weekends and as they're obviously getting older they'll be able to make a decision you know, if they want to stay with me. But my mum is very strict, my mum actually wants to see me get accommodation, live properly, go shopping, live a normal life, do things that normal women do. I don't seem to have that in me, I just feel you know, incomplete. (Karen, Age 36)

Whilst Karen's manifestations of hope are indeed aligned with those of 'normal women', she sees herself as an outcast, she buys into the idea of her own 'double deviance'. She uses the terminology (perhaps learned through the CJS) of 'choice' in her narrative, in particular about her 'choice' in her offending behaviour.

I choose my paths. You know, I went seeking this different life, you know. When I first split up from my eldest son's father I sort of like went off the rails then as well... I know the choices I've made have had a domino effect on me and everyone around me, my whole family and friends. And I realise that now but it's a bit too late, I can't take those memories back for the kids, you know I can't... I've not been seeing them now because my mum doesn't like me seeing them, they get upset, they don't want me to go, and then they just take it out on my mum. Because they remember me and my mum arguing because my mum doesn't like me drinking. I'm quite confrontational when I've had a drink. So my mum kicked me out basically. And my kids were aware of that, they were hearing things so they resented my mum for that. She's done so well. She's done an amazing job. The kids are great. My eldest son, he's at his dad's mums, and he's spoilt rotten, the conservatory is his games room, he's got a big 50 inch TV, but he doesn't want that, he wants to be with his brothers, he wants the family, and I've took that away from them through stupid choices I've made. (Karen, Age 36)

Karen's experience highlights that where both hope and self-efficacy are eroded away by injustices and victimisations, desistance will not be forthcoming.

The follow up interviews with Julie and Katie expose the importance of hope and self-efficacy in the promotion of desistance as well as their wavering temporal effects. Julie is more hopeful in the first interview than Katie and can see the "light at the end of the tunnel" in her hopes for getting her tag removed in the coming months. It is this prospective turning point around which Julie believes her life will revolve. She notes how her tag will be removed around her 60th birthday and she plans a party around this time. However by the time of our second interview, Julie has turned 60 and had her tag removed but she has also been hit in the meantime with legal aid fees which cause her mental health to deteriorate once again. Nonetheless, with the

help of her daughter Julie upholds her sense of self-efficacy even though this required maintenance when challenged.

And I said to my husband, "When this tag isn't on, I think I might feel like dancing in the garden before seven o'clock in the morning". But it's just that you know, that feeling of things being better. But that's how I view it all. (Julie, Age 59, first interview)

I had [a panic attack] last week when I woke up and I'm thinking about these blimbling bailiffs and I'm thinking, "Oh, crumbs". And I decided that when I was in the house I would lock the front door, I would lock the back door and then if anybody came I could hide. But then I thought, "Well that's not going to do any good is it?" You've got to address this and try and sort it out and that's what I've been doing. But you've got to get yourself into that frame of mind. And my daughter's very good, she sends emails back and says, "why don't you try this and that." And I'm thinking, "that's the sort of thing I would have said to people years ago." But now trying to focus on it when it is you is not easy. But anyway, we're getting there, we're getting there slowly. (Julie, Age 60, second interview)

Katie meanwhile is less optimistic in her outlook during the first interview and the glimmers of hope in her narrative emerge only in her desire to escape and move abroad to start a new life. Her experiences, not least her arrest and conviction have led to serious mental health problems including suicide attempts. By the second interview however things have changed; her granddaughter's serious illness is something that she could not have predicted and dwarfs her own problems. Her focus now is on her granddaughter and her hopes for the future centre around Natalie's health. This focus provides her with the self-efficacy required to carry on. We can see therefore that even negative experiences can provide the self-efficacy required to desist.

I don't feel much about my life; I don't feel like I have a life because I'm trapped indoors really because I'm frightened of going out because I'm looking behind me all the time thinking, "has somebody got a camera? Have they got it in their handbag? So I don't go out, I don't go to any family dos or functions, I don't go out for a drink. The odd time the kids will drag me out for a meal or something; I have a friend who comes and takes me out sometimes and gets me lunch... But I just don't feel like I have anything in my life whatsoever. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

I just carry on, I just carry on and try and get through every day separately you know like every day as it comes... [My hopes are] just that Natalie gets better you know these episodes are fewer and further in between because they said that every time she has an episode it damages part of her brain. And when they did the scan, there's five parts of her brain that have been damaged with this, you know with her speech and her writing and things like that. Her mobility. So I just want things to sort themselves out and get back to normal. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Subjective experiences change over time; what a person feels on one day can be different to the next. Changes in social circumstances naturally affect stores of hope and agency. Each interview conducted and each group meeting observed as part of this research provides only a snapshot into each woman's life. Symbolic interactionist theorists (Mead, 1934; Matseuda and Heimer,

1997; Giordano et al., 2002; Uggen et al., 2004; Carlsson, 2012) would argue that every piece of research is coloured by the women's daily experience and interaction. Adding to this, the women involved in this research have chaotic lives and the CJS has managed to compound their problems both practically and mentally. Desistance for them, as Carlsson (2012) would argue is a constant process of maintenance. Any move towards desistance should be celebrated whilst any setbacks should be examined and addressed. Hope is an important factor in their desistance because when there is nothing to lose, offending is more likely to occur.

Hope increases for the women in particular when they experience relational links with others who have successfully negotiated desistance. For example Holly's hope is increased by her brother's successful desistance negotiation and Rebecca, Kelly-Marie, Shelly and Michaela each inspire hope in the other. Self-efficacy occurs when the women experience positive social bonds to conventional life, from positive relationships, generative employment, supportive agencies, stable housing etc. In line with prior research, this study has highlighted the centrality of hope and self-efficacy in producing change. Kelly-Marie's narrative confirms the power of hope and self-efficacy when they come together. The contrast in Kelly-Marie and Grace's narratives are stark. This subjective-level theme (which for Kelly-Marie was initiated by her involvement in Rebecca's agency and her improved relationship with her mother) can be the turning point needed for change.

I've gone full circle, there's nothing else can come at me now. I had to do it for me, and I had to be ready for me and I'm just fortunate enough to have me family and still have me mum... And well, I wake up every morning and I smile 'cause I've got something to wake up for. And that's it basically, I just take each day as it comes, ***I know where I'm going, I know what I want and I know what I need to get there.*** Do you know what I mean? And I'm in recovery, I interact with [the drug recovery team] and they're trying to get me involved in doing recovery work there, working as a peer mentor, but I'm not ready for that. And if I'm more honest with meself, I don't think I really want that. Because I want to pull meself away from the addiction and what goes on with it 'cause you can quite easily slip back down the road. And I don't care whether you're a recovery worker or whatever; they say "once an addict, always an addict." Well that's not true, once in recovery, you're in recovery for the rest of your life. And I don't want reminding for the rest of my life, do you know what I mean? There is something else out there for me, and when the time's right it'll be there. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48).

7.3 Shame, Remorse and Internalising Stigma

The next cognitive-level themes which LeBel et al. (2008) construct as important to desistance are shame and remorse. However the authors noted that shame and remorse do not always lead to desistance but can have the opposite effect in terms of the 'doomed to deviance' (Maruna, 2001) script as highlighted in Karen's narrative. This is particularly evident in Karen's use of the discourse of 'choice' as noted above. This difference in the positive and negative effects of shame and remorse links to the third theme considered by the authors, internalising

stigma. John Braithwaite (1989) draws the distinction here between re-integrative shame where the law breaking act is regretted but the internal self-worth of the individual is preserved, and stigmatising shame, where both the act and the actor are degraded. According to Braithwaite (1989) these distinctions emerge in criminal justice reactions. However I would extend this definition to include the internal processes and reactions to shame as imposed by the CJS or from other sources. Probyn (2005) argues that shame is gendered, particularly for women who experience abuse. Probyn argues that this shame is located in 'women's enduring, historically diverse and multi-dimensional experiences of subordination' (2005: 83). In Karen's narrative above, it is clear that the effect of the shame and remorse about her past actions has resulted in stigmatising shame. The process of 'double deviance' for Karen has been particularly effective here (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 2012; Worrall, 1990; Leverentz, 2014). Karen stigmatises herself for her actions as both a mother and a citizen. This stigma is a reflection of her interactions but is also a process which is cognitively developed. Probyn (2005) argues that those who experience shame in early life are likely to re-experience it later and this is particularly clear in Karen's narrative.

The difference between stigmatising and re-integrative shame is important. Whilst re-integrative shame has desistance-inducing potential, stigmatising shame effectively blocks desistance journeys, constructing barriers between women with convictions and their future 'good' selves. Stigmatising shame does not provide the glue for the social bonds to society described in the last chapter, whilst re-integrative shame can do. Katie, for example, differentiates between the stigmatising shame she feels from her family and the re-integrative shame she feels from her friend related to her mental health difficulties following her conviction.

So we [herself and her friend, Rose] went out for lunch and it was really nice. Yeah we caught up on things and we said we'd do it more often, go out once a month at least and so we can have a talk. And she's really good, she's a really good friend and we've known each other since I was nine, so it's nice. She's there if I need her you know, she's told me to ring her if I need her she'll come over. So that's nice to know that I've got somebody there besides the family that doesn't judge me. My family seem to judge me and, "oh pull out of it, stop being so daft," you know, if I keep saying I feel really down today, "oh don't be so silly." It's like they don't understand. So she's got lots of patience, Rose has, and it's nice. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Shame has also moved from the stigmatising to the re-integrative for other women. Kelly-Marie describes her shame surrounding her past behaviour but she now accepts this behaviour as part of the person she used to be which has in turn helped her become the person she is. Her narrative strongly resembles Maruna's 'desisting scripts' (2001).

My eyes are open wide and it's time to move on. Yeah? My grandchildren are getting to an age now where I don't want their friends saying, "Oh your nan's always getting in

trouble with the police." I don't want that. I mean I brought the embarrassment on my daughter and my family, there's another generation there. And I don't want that generation... I want them to be able to come and visit their nana, and their children to come and visit because they don't know any of this. They don't know any of their nana's life. And what life I have got left I want to find something out there to get a career or maybe carry on with me beauty and hairdressing, whatever comes up, do you know what I mean? (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Paula's narrative is similar to Kelly-Marie's; whilst her offending behaviour was not as consistent (she describes the theft as a 'one-off'), the re-integrative shame she feels as a result is central in paving her desistance pathway.

It's just not the kind of person I am. And now that I'm out of addiction and the guilt and shame of it all. And my family, the children, it's just not a good thing to do. And prison is not a nice place to be. I was only there for 6 days luckily. But not an experience I ever want to do again. (Paula, Age 36)

Paula's re-integrative shame is such that when she talks about a new romantic relationship, although she has not yet told her current partner about her conviction, she feels that his reaction will be the turning point for their future; stigmatising shame on his behalf will result in the ending of the relationship, she is more concerned with her own desistance than a romantic relationship.

...But it's still early days. At the end of the day, I think I spoke to someone in here [the Women's Centre] about it, and it's just one of them isn't it? If they're a keeper they're not going to be bothered. (Paula, Age 36)

Rebecca's narrative also has strong themes of re-integrative shame throughout. Rebecca describes her internal journey from stigmatising shame to more useful re-integrative shame through her work on her project.

So the sentence on my life, it wasn't even a sentence, it was my own behaviours. You know I started beating myself up a lot. You know... 'cause that's what guilt is, it's turning the knife inwards, I do believe that. And I started really, really doubting myself as a person... And you know it wasn't... a behavioural act, it was something that I choose to do and was with intent... You're typing in somebody else's name that isn't your name, that's intent. I intended to defraud, even though she didn't have to pay anything financially, because it was all written off, that's not the point. You know, I stole her identity. And that should never have happened, regardless of my personal feelings towards her; that is crime, it's a criminal act and it impacted my life deeply. Very much so. That the only way I would ever have come to terms with my criminal behaviour was by doing something for "the criminals". That was the only way I could come to terms with it. And my work today has enabled me to come to terms with that. (Rebecca, Age 46)

The shift from stigmatising to re-integrative shame for Rebecca was also intimately connected with her relationship with her partner; whilst stigmatising shame had a negative effect on her

relationship, when her past behaviours were acknowledged and accepted, the relationship also changed.

So when I was going through, because I didn't tell him [Paul, Rebecca's partner] what I'd done he knew something was wrong and thought I was an online gambler or I was having an affair. So you know eventually it just threw us apart because I couldn't actually bring myself to... and that was the guilt. So I justified my lies with never having to feel the guilt but that's how the guilt was dribbling out and he could obviously see and he thought, "Well she's just lying, she's this," and when it all did come out, he said, "well if only you'd told me because I was thinking..." He said, "Well is that all?" (Laughs) But we've come through that time and obviously you know he's supported me in getting this [her agency] off the ground, because he knew for the... for my own piece of mind that I had to do it. (Rebecca, Age 46).

For many women involved in this study, stigmatising shame was the lasting effect of criminal justice interventions. Even Katie who maintains her innocence in the benefit fraud she has been convicted of throughout our meetings, describes the stigmatising shame she feels. Katie's conviction had also been featured in the local media.

Katie: Yeah I just feel like everybody's looking at me (Begins to cry) and they aren't, they probably don't even remember it or they never saw it. I just feel like when people do look at me, they're seeing a criminal. I know it's silly, it's silly thinking that... but....

UB: What does make you think that?

K: I don't know, I think how I'd be with somebody. Like my daughter's husband, he's in prison for murder. And I think. I look at him and I think... I don't believe he did it, I think he had some involvement in it, I really do but I don't think he actually did anything to it... But I look at that now and I think, that's you know... people are going to know you for that, I mean I know it was murder and things. But that's how I think, is somebody going to look at me and think, you know you've taken all this money of the state and... (Breaks down)... you're a criminal. You see it just goes through my head that. I just want to shout, "I haven't done anything wrong." (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Katie's stigmatising shame is so profound that she equates her own transgressions with those of someone convicted of murder. Negative effects of criminal justice intervention will be explored further in the next chapter. However, for many women sources of shame did not solely emerge from the CJS and transgressions of the law. Kelly-Marie for example, described her deep shame at falling pregnant with her second child to her abusive partner.

Anyhow it's got to two weeks before I was supposed to go for the IVF and I told him I weren't going. He said, "I've paid all that money, what do you mean you're not going?" I said "I don't want to," I said, "If I can't have one naturally, then it's not meant to be." I didn't want to be able to. So I think it were 3rd December, he said to me, "You're pregnant you." I said, "Don't talk stupid." Anyhow I'd gone and got all these tests just to piss him off 'cause I'd spent all his money this that and the other, and I took two into the doctors and they'd all come back positive. Well my gynaecologist couldn't believe it 'cause there were no way that I should have got pregnant naturally. So I've gone up there, had the scan and he's over the moon. But I wasn't. And I felt so guilty and so shameful all the way through that pregnancy. And it were me baby I were feeling for 'cause I'm tied to this man for the rest of my life now. I'm going to be abused and

battered and where's me life going? Anyhow there you are. And I'd made a few attempts at taking my life. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Kelly-Marie's stigmatising shame here emerges from her inability to be a 'good' mother to her second child. The impact of the ideology of motherhood is clear here (Rich, 1996). Again the 'double deviance' of women is a feature even in the absence of transgressions of the law. Women are deemed deviant even when they are abused but cannot fulfil the prescribed mother role. For Holly, shame was a feature of her relationship with her mother's drug use. This taking on of parental shame was also evident in Jenny's (a member of staff at the WCs') narrative. Jenny described her shame at not being able to provide for her siblings. Again her shame results from her inability to be a mother-figure.

The kids got taken off my mum and given to me and my nan. And I think what happened because of that, we knew it was bad 'cause she was using drugs, but we didn't realise just how bad the neglect was. And I think that, 'cause I kind of stopped going to my mum's because I... that was my way of dealing with it. It was all that guilt had built up and I had to have... it was kind of like post-traumatic stress. So I had to have counselling for it but I did become really, really depressed to the point where you know I couldn't even make eye contact with people in work, you know 'cause I was that anxious about stuff and I'd be crying all the time and I was in a very bad relationship as well. It's surprising how easy people can sniff you out when you're vulnerable. (Jenny, Group Leader, Women's Centre).

Holly: A lot of people ask me and stuff like about my family and my mum and I tell them she's on drugs but I won't go into it like this. Like my probation worker, she knows and like people like that but I don't really speak about it because people who really know me know about my background, so...

UB: Do you mind talking about it?

H: Not really, 'cause I've gone through it now haven't I? So, it don't bring it back up just I wish it could have been different but in a way 'cause like my mum left me through like drugs and that and my grandma's... in a way I think about it and I go mad at my mum but I can't really go mad at my mum 'cause I left my little child, well my grandma had to take her 'cause of domestic violence but in a way with me going out and smoking the cannabis, I'm doing exactly the same as her, not like through drugs but through different circumstances so I don't really go mad at her no more 'cause I try my best to get my daughter back and stuff and stop going mad at my mum 'cause I've done it for the past like, she's been there the past twelve months and stuff. (Holly, Age 24)

Skeggs (1997) notes that white, working class women often construct systems of meaning to negate the symbolic systems of denigration and degeneracy they are marked with. For Holly and Jenny, these systems of meaning emerged in their own personal lives; Holly's, as is seen above, in her desistance journey and her ability to care for her daughter, whilst for Jenny this lay in her generative employment. In this way Jenny's experience mirrors Rebecca's attempts to overcome stigmatising shame, despite Jenny not having a conviction.

But yeah I've got a really good relationship with them [her parents] now, which I think is really important for my own personal development personally and in my career 'cause

if I can't lay things to rest, I don't think I could do the job that I do which is so intense sometimes. So I think I had to do that for my own personal and career development. (Jenny, Group Leader, Women's Centres)

It is clear that even in the absence of convictions; women must deal with the theme of stigmatising shame in their day to day lives. Overcoming this stigmatising shame, even when not related to offences, must be part of any meaningful desistance journey.

Shame, remorse and stigma are important cognitive level themes which emerge in women's desistance narratives just as they do men's (LeBel et al, 2004). Even in the absence of offending pasts, women's general narratives often also contain these themes. Women involved in the CJS are often 'doubly demonised' (Heidensohn and Silvestri, 2012; Worrall, 1990; Leverentz, 2014) as a result of their imagined moral transgressions in the eyes of the CJS and wider society in general related to their positions as mothers, daughters and partners. On top of this, women experience levels of shame and stigma attached to other 'deviant' behaviour, particularly related to these roles or even engulfing shame related to the deviant behaviour of others. Shame, remorse and stigma therefore should be considered holistically and agencies aimed at encouraging desistance can seek to minimise stigmatising shame whilst increasing women's self-worth whether this shame and stigma emerges from the woman's transgression of the law or from other sources. Again we must work to ensure this shame is not an omnipotent feature of women's lives in general.

7.4 Identity

Maruna notes that 'to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves' (2001: 7). Maruna found that those who successfully desist from crime had high levels of self-efficacy, meaning that they saw themselves in control of their futures and had a clear sense of purpose and meaning in their lives i.e. 'the ways', discussed above, to enable desistance. They also found a way to 'make sense' out of their past lives and may find some redeeming value in lives that had often been spent in and out of the CJS. Implied here is the suggestion that, in order to desist, former law breakers must consider themselves not in terms of self- or socially-imposed offending identities. The 'offender' term carries with it not only a description of the past but a presumption of the future. Feminist research has argued that often women do not fall easily into the artificial 'victim/offender' binary (Ferraro, 2006; Stubbs and Tolmie, 2008), using examples not only of victims of domestic abuse but also indigenous women in Australia who are overrepresented in the CJS. This intersectional approach suggests that for women (and indeed for many men) desistance therefore is not just about overcoming offender identity but also may be about overcoming the victim identity which may also be linked to past offending behaviour. This is not to suggest that those with an identity associated with

victimhood are unable to desist but high levels of self-efficacy and feelings of control do not usually emerge from those who continue to self-identify as victims. What follows is an examination of the various identities considered by desisting women involved in this research, moving beyond the victim/offender binary to consider desisting women as survivors and bricoleurs (Levi-Strauss, 1962) of their own fate through composing various alternative pro-social identities, including, but by no means limited to, care-givers and mothers.

7.4.1 Offender/ ex-offender identities

Chapter 2 included references to women and men as ‘offenders’ and ‘ex-offenders’/ ‘former offenders’, as people with convictions are often termed in the desistance literature. However, throughout this study there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of terminology and labelling. Whilst for some the term ‘ex-offender’ can be associated with positive connotations related to self-change, for others the term situates identity in past actions, mistakes and victimisations (Aresti et al., 2010). Some researchers and people with convictions have gone as far as to describe the term as dehumanising, a term which describes a person in terms of past behaviour or actions and nothing else. Both the Women’s Centres (WCs) and Housing for Northshire (HfN) project considered as part of this research also found these terms problematic. Rebecca articulates her feelings on the terms on behalf of herself and her clients at the HfN Project. Similarly, Christine, CEO of the WCs contends that her project does not situate women’s identities in terms of their offences.

I never refer to myself as an offender or a former offender, I see myself as a citizen of society that leads a law-abiding life. So I don't ever describe myself as a former offender or an offender... I don't see myself or any of our members as criminals, former offenders, ex-cons or anything, we've got the experiences that we've got and I think it's important, just like any other area that our narratives are given in order to you know make a bit of change, at least a small dent in it. (Rebecca, CEO of Housing for Northshire Project)

We don't differentiate someone being an offender or not an offender, they come and the reason they get access is because they seem to be all unique stories but similar stories, similar themes. (Christine, CEO of the Women’s Centres).

Whilst a move away from the problematic ‘offender/ex-offender’ terminology is welcomed, some of the methodological difficulties I faced when recruiting women for this study included a tendency for women at the WCs to argue that as they did not see themselves as offenders or former offenders, they would not be good candidates for interview. Whilst this resistance was important in their desistance journeys, at times, it also effectively formed part of the societal reaction for other women who did consider themselves ‘offenders’ or ‘former offenders’. It is the societal and criminal justice reaction to their offences which causes some of the women, including Anna, to consider themselves as offenders.

In reality I'm gonna have to see myself as an offender now because of the charges that are over me head and me name. I keep denying it but I'm going to fight it... I did drive away but I didn't realise there was something in the back of me car. I did know things weren't right. (Anna, Age 36)

Nonetheless, within Anna's recognition of her status in the eyes of others, there is a resistance; she acknowledges that she has been denying the label but is now going to 'fight' it. This resistance to societal and particularly criminal justice labels was evident in many of the women's narratives.

I've never been in trouble with the police [prior to this offence]. I just made a massive mistake. It's not like I got caught in the act, I actually handed myself in for it. So, no I don't know, I think I'm just one of those people who messed up. (Paula, Age 36)

I do joke about being a criminal, yes. Well, no I don't to be honest because really it is just circumstantial. For me, it's obviously, it's an emotional issue. I'm looking to do an emotions course actually in Northton in September because I think I need to address that, because that's when things seem to go a bit pear shaped. So, yeah I'm just trying to do what I can really. (Sue, Age 40)

If I did it purposely, I'd hold my hands up and go, "Yes I did, I am an offender, I've learned my lesson." But it was just a mistake you know. (Heather, Age 24)

For Heather, Paula and Sue, their identity is not situated in the fact that they have transgressed the law and been convicted for it; for these women, their transgressions were blips in otherwise law-abiding lives. The lack of a pattern of behaviour clearly changes the identity dynamics. Particularly for Sue and Paula, offending was recognised as something which was separate from their identity, yet they do not deny the behaviour but try to take something positive from it. Essentially, much like Maruna's (2001) 'desisters', these women see themselves as fundamentally good people who have nonetheless made a mistake. This finding also reflects the conclusions of Radcliffe and Hunter's (2014) research into the positive reinforcement effect of women's community services (these will be discussed further in Chapter 8). However, particularly in Heather's case, but also in Katie's and Ruth's narratives, there is a sense that the offender identity is something which has been imposed on them unjustly. In these cases, it is difficult to 'make sense' out of their convictions and supposed past errors. When promoting identity change as a route to desistance therefore it is important that convictions are seen to be just. This issue will be discussed further in the following chapter.

As noted above, some travelling the road of desistance do find the 'ex-' or 'former-' label useful. Some of the women in this study such as Kelly-Marie found that their current identity was situated in a recognition of past behaviour but particularly in their attempts to move beyond historic behaviour.

I think of myself as somebody that's been rehabilitated, yeah? I'm a work in progress, yeah? I'm not running before I can walk, I'm not biting off any more than I can chew; I

just take each day as it comes. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Kelly-Marie had one of the strongest 'desistance' (rather than 'ex-offender') identities amongst the women involved in this study but this identity was also present in Michaela and Shelly's narratives as well as Rebecca's. It was perhaps their status in the HfN Project which caused this desisting identity to be so strong. When living in a criminal justice related project, the women are faced on a daily basis with their past offending selves. They constantly confront this identity in an attempt to move past it in comparison to the women attending WC meetings who are only likely to confront this aspect of their past behaviour formally on a weekly basis.

Societal reaction was a key feature in the construction of identity. Many of the women drew distinctions between themselves and other 'proper offenders' and this helped in the construction of their 'non' or 'lesser' offender identities. Marie, for example, drew a distinction between her own offences of robbing flag stones and burglar identity.

I don't see myself as... last time I got arrested the sergeant says to me, "Oh it's Dodgem the burglar". And I went "wow" I said, "I'm not a burglar". He went, "Yeah I remember when you got done last time." And it were an allotment thing, I met this lad there, went to pick the trailer up for him. He'd nicked a whole lot of stuff and I were basically the wheels behind it again. Got caught; but it were classed as burglary within a non-dwelling. But I wouldn't class myself as a burglar. And then I were up on a burglary charge for one of my customers when I were dog walking, and I were looking at five year for that. Anyway I won it 'cause I took it to court and everything 'cause I'm not a burglar, it's not something I do. I can't do it. I'd have a heart attack on the spot. It's a bit different than... I know it's not right and the police don't see it like this but I'll go to an old farm, on me own, middle of nowhere, night time, and fill the car up with slate, sell it the next day. That's where I need to step back and think, "no that's wrong, that belongs to someone." It obviously belongs to someone, I don't know who. But... it might not, I dunno (laughs) it belongs to the quarry doesn't it? But I don't know; it's hard really to... I wouldn't go and pinch something out of someone's house or anything, I can't do that. I'm not like that. (Marie, Age 40)

It could be argued that this propensity to recognise her offence as somewhat victimless was a factor barring Marie's desistance journey. This was a feature of many of the women's narratives. For example during a WC observation session of a group session on Victimisation, a woman in the group, Sarah, noted that she did not know who the victim of her shoplifting offence really was.

See this is where I have a problem, I can't see who the victims of my crimes are ... There's no way that if all shoplifting stopped tomorrow there would be a massive drop in the price of clothes... They have insurance. (Sarah, Tulip Centre)

This was something which was raised time and again in the Victimisation sessions and something which the group leader also found problematic.

Their insurance prices will go up after they've claimed, although I know what you mean it does seem to sometimes be like a grain of sand on the beach to those big companies. (Jenny, Group Leader, Tulip Centre)

Again we see a link here between the offender identity, victimisation and desistance. Where there is an absence of a victim, it can be difficult to promote desistance. At these times, both the WCs and the HfN Project promoted individual self-improvement as an end in itself.

A further issue in identity change processes which emerged in the narratives was the social construction of identities which occurs prior to and following the offences committed. For example we can compare and contrast the identities of Julie and Holly. During our interviews, Julie is more resistant to the offender identity, situating her offence in the context of her mother's death and stresses at work, whilst avoiding mentioning previous offences. Holly immediately accepts herself as an offender and is upfront about her past shoplifting and marijuana use. For social constructionists what is important is the presentation of the 'self' in comparison to others. As noted by Nils Christie,

'Crime does not exist. Only acts exist, acts often given different meanings within various social frameworks. Acts and the meanings given to them are our data. Our challenge is to follow the destiny of acts through the universe of meanings. Particularly, what are the social conditions that encourage or prevent giving the acts the meaning of being crime?' (Christie, 2004: 3)

Although both women have essentially been convicted of crimes, I argue that Julie's rejection of the offender identity can be accounted for by Julie's socially-constructed middle-class, older, religious identity which is not usually associated with offending. In comparison, Holly's acceptance is related to her socially-constructed working-class, younger identity and her relationships with other offenders. In many ways however this will make Julie's desistance pathway a more difficult one to travel; without a public recognition of past mistakes, it will be difficult to move past them. Julie cannot find the 'something good' in her past offending which Maruna (2001) states is central to identity transformation. For example, Julie would almost certainly shy away from the public post-criminal justice intervention 'graduation' ceremonies advocated by LeBel and Maruna (2013) whilst Holly would be likely to embrace them. When considering desistance it is clear that we must take into account socially-constructed identities which are not only gendered but class and culturally-based.

The importance of socially-constructed offender identities is clear in Katie's narrative. As noted above, there was a sense in Katie's narrative that the offender identity was unjustly imposed on her. Nonetheless the socially-constructed identity was an important one.

I feel like I've got 'criminal' tattooed on my forehead. That's how I feel. And I mean I know it's not murder or anything, it's not child abuse or anything like, but it's still... I've still fraudulently claimed from the government. (Kate, Age 60, first interview)

It is clear therefore that desistance is a relational process, not only in terms of relationships with the person with convictions' immediate family and friends but with the wider public, including the media which had a role in the construction of many of the women's identities (see for example Katie and Julie's profiles in Appendix 1). Whether a woman takes on the master status offender identity has as much to do with her offence and her own self-perception as to the societal reaction and support she receives. Desistance occurs not only in the change in women's behaviour and actions but also in society's reaction to this change. This was highlighted clearly in the narratives of Marie and Shelly; both had been accused of something which they were later found not guilty, but in both cases it was the women's status as 'offenders' which caused the suspicion around the offences. Shelly was tried for a theft from a person offence. She had pleaded not guilty but nonetheless was denied a place in a hostel whilst she was on trial because of her perceived offender identity.

And I'd put a 'not guilty' plea in; remember in the magistrates court? He's [the magistrate] then gone like that, "no I'm not giving her bail because I believe she'd reoffend." So as far as I'm concerned, you found me guilty before, I've just told you I'm not guilty, me plea's not guilty, you found me guilty already. (Shelly, Age 53)

Similarly, Marie was convicted of a burglary offence for which she was later found 'not guilty'. Shelly and Marie's 'not guilty' case studies starkly highlight how reaction to past offences can have negative consequences in terms of escaping the offender label. In addition, societal reaction can act in more subtle ways by denying women alternative identities also. Labelling theory has salience here as society's reaction can affect deviant identities. As noted by Howard Becker, 'deviance is not a quality that lies in a behaviour itself but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those that respond to it' (1963: 14). Reactions are clearly important in offender identity construction and deconstruction. A good example of how societal reaction can promote offender identity deconstruction happened after my interview with Bridget. Bridget's helper Fran spoke to me and said, "She's not a bad person, she's just easily led and people take advantage." This rhetoric clearly affected Bridget's opinion of herself and fed into her desire to want to 'go straight' so that she wouldn't let Fran and others down. Relationships between staff and service users will be explored further in the next chapter.

The women involved in this research tended to travel one of three pathways in terms of the offender identity; either they took on this identity which proved to make desistance more difficult; they rejected the identity completely which again tended to make desistance arduous

(unless they had very minimal offences, see Sue for example) or thirdly, like Maruna's (2001) desisting group, they accepted this identity as something which was part of their past, which they learned from and built upon, developing an alternative pro-social identity as they went. It is to this alternative pro-social identity that this thesis now turns.

7.4.2 Alternative identities

Summarising the differences between male and female desistance pathways, Matthews et al (2014) note that there are four factors which can explain the difference. Firstly, informal relations and supports are more important for women. Women are also more likely to seek conventional roles of a partner or parent. Thirdly, women are more concerned with seeking roles with social approval. And finally, women appear to be able to change their lifestyle more quickly than men. This section will focus on the second and third of these purported differences which build upon Rumgay's (2004) finding that women use 'scripts' during desistance to exit offending behaviour. Beverley Skeggs (1997) has argued that although white, working-class women are inscribed and marked with the symbolic systems of denigration and degeneracy, they manage to create systems of value and attribute respectability and high-moral standing to themselves. This labelling system was even more prominent for the white, (largely) working-class women with convictions involved in this study. Some of the women were able to create similar systems of respectability and high-moral standing. One way in which women with convictions used alternative systems of meaning and identities in their narratives is to compare and contrast their offences and offender identities with imagined other, more serious or prolific offenders/offences.

I'm not a naughty, naughty girl, I wouldn't go and burgle someone or owt like that, I've got an heart do you know what I mean? (Marie, Age 40)

I have seen other people who have gone to court with far, far more serious situations and got off very lightly, well in my view. (Julie, Age 60, first interview)

And when I've had my benefit it's not like I've lived a fancy lifestyle or anything. You know it's not like you see some people where they've claimed thousands or over half that I've done and they just do it openly. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

Whether these techniques of neutralisation (Matza and Sykes, 1964) are conducive to desistance, however, is questionable. Maruna (2001) notes that for his desisting group, those who successfully navigated identity change incorporated elements of their former offending selves into their new personality. Where this behaviour is denied or downplayed, desistance becomes difficult. These findings reflect McIvor et al.'s (2000) finding that females were more likely to downplay their offending and attach a moral element to non-offending behaviour.

Nonetheless, for women like Karen who still see themselves in terms of an offending identity, desistance is again unsurprisingly a very tough journey.

I'm living day to day at the moment, I'm not even thinking about the future. You know I was thinking about this the other day, you know when I was younger and little girls used to say, "when I'm older and I get married and..." I never had that in my head, I never dreamed of getting married and things like that. And I just feel like, my path was set out at a young age and I followed it, and here I am now, you know in a train wreck. (Karen, Age 36)

For Karen, all hope has gone, her identity as a 'normal woman' who gets married and has children was destroyed before it had a chance to exist. As a result of her offences, Karen's gendered 'pro social' identity was stripped away. She links her offending identity to a fatalistic sense of self. Despite being a mother, once her children were taken away, Karen had no alternative pro-social identity to conform to. For Karen, as for patriarchal society more widely, the offender and mother identities clash and conflict with each other but her master status is her offending identity. She later talks about her sister who has 'chosen' a different path to her and conformed to the alternative identities which Karen felt were out of her grasp.

She's got everything that I wanted. At 36 I feel like I'm not going to get it now. My kids... I feel like I've lost them through the domestic violence. I wasn't strong enough to make a choice you know. They put me in refuges, in Bridgetown and things that. But I just blocked it out. I just got involved with bad things I felt like to punish myself, I felt I deserved it. I felt like I let my kids down. You know the choice I made to let my kids go to my mum's, I made that choice because it was best for them. If I had have dragged them from house to house... Paul was smashing houses up. The kids were very close together, two of them are the same age now, they're both 7 but they're not twins. So... age 3 and under you know it was hard work and then with him on top. So for years you know I was, you know, family orientated and then when it all crumbled, I just went back to what I was like. (Karen, Age 36)

It is clear that the offender identity is so entrenched in Karen's mind that what prevents her desistance is her lack of self-worth. Karen feels 'doomed to deviance' (Maruna, 2001). The rhetoric of 'choice' in her narrative highlights the damaging effects of the lack of help and support available to Karen which made her unable to draw a distinction between the victim and offender identity and this led to a continuation of offending and self-punishment. The dichotomy of 'offender/normal woman' within Karen's narrative highlights how for women, even for the 'offender' themselves, offending is not a 'normal' identity. Again this reflects McIvor et al.'s (2000) finding that women tend to underplay their offending identity as compared to men and tend to seek 'hyper-moral' roles when travelling the road of desistance in order to compensate for this supposed past transgression against their gender; to account for their 'double deviance.'

This is also reflected in Perry's (2013) argument that the CJS often associates desisting identities with traditional 'feminine' identities.

As has been seen in the previous chapters, the gendered 'script' of motherhood did, for some of the women, provide a route out of offending. For example, Anna found doing "the perfect mum shit" as a script she could follow to protect herself from offending behaviour. Similarly, Ruth, Karen and Michaela all related their attempts at not offending to their roles as mothers whilst Kelly-Marie linked non-offending and her identity as a grandmother. Rebecca provided a clear example of Maruna's (2001) desisters when she described how her past behaviour has affected but not subsumed her essentially pro-social identity.

But you know, my morals had gone, all my moral fibre, but my values never changed; I always knew deep down that I have got values and they never changed. I was still a mother, I was still a daughter, I was still a sister, I was still a friend. And you know, I was still the same person I was that had been loved and had a successful career before I went down that road... (Rebecca, Age 46)

Rebecca's identity therefore was not only rooted in her perpetual relational identities as mother, daughter, sister etc. but also in her 'hyper-moral' (Matthews et al., 2014) subsequent actions. Other women also found their pro-social identity in generative roles. For Grace, the possibility of an alternative identity based in motherhood was removed when her daughter was taken into care following her arrest. This was clearly an extremely difficult experience for Grace; nonetheless she managed to find strength and the possibility of an alternative identity through her volunteering work.

Yeah well like as I say, I went from being a full time mum to being like nothing; it kept me occupied, it kept my mind off things and they're very nice, they talk to you, you know and I get along with all of them there. (Grace, Age 31)

Julie meanwhile found her alternative identity rooted in a renewal of her religious and spiritual background and an increased involvement in charitable fundraising. She describes raising money by asking for charitable donations instead of gifts for her 60th birthday.

And in fact I got £150 and I was told Sunday just gone that the money just gone to a lady that's in Sierra Leone who suffers from polio but has been given two children to foster who have lost their parents to Ebola and the £150 will give them food, rice and will feed them for 6 months. 6 Months! Without her having to beg... Really it's not a huge amount of money is it? But it can make such a difference so I thought, "Oh that's really good." So that was nice. (Julie, Age 60, 2nd interview)

As was seen in the previous chapter, for many women it was their relational roles as partners and mothers which provided either the route into or the maintenance of their offending. This was highlighted clearly in one of the observation sessions when one woman Janet described,

without shame, her part in covering for her son's offending, something which she and others felt was part of her motherly duty.

“My sons have been in trouble with the police before so when there was stolen stuff in the house, I took the blame” (Janet, Rose Centre)

“That just shows you're a good mum” (Christine, Rose Centre)

When desistance literature suggests that women change much faster than men, this may mask inequalities and social expectations of what it is to be a 'good woman'. Although Matthews and colleagues note that women exiting prostitution and offending generally tend to be attracted to relational and generative alternative identities, 'not all women aspire to or are able to achieve such roles. This raises the issue of whether women ascribe to these roles because of the lack of viable alternatives on offer: or as we have seen in relation to exiting, for example, the limited emphasis that is placed on finding alternative forms of employment' (Matthews et al., 2014: 136). In addition to constricted employment identities, we have seen how women with convictions have a limited access to additional alternative identities other than those relational roles of mother, partner etc.

7.4.3 Victim identities

As has been seen in previous chapters, the women involved in this research do not easily fall into the 'victim/offender' binary often portrayed by the CJS and traditional criminological research (Ferraro, 2006; Stubbs and Tolmie, 2008). As well as being women who have a history of transgressing the law, the women in this research were also victims of domestic abuse, poverty and mental health issues. The 2015 Prison Reform Trust Report has confirmed that these are the common experiences of women in prison in England; I would extend this to women entering the CJS at any stage. Women in this research were also victims of the violence of the CJS (explored further in the next chapter) and the media and their punishments included removal of children from their care. In addition, at the WC observation sessions on the topic of 'Victimisation' and throughout the interviews, it became clear that women entering the CJS included victims of childhood abuse, rape, forced prostitution, theft, robbery, fraud, assault and other crimes. In a recent collection of essays, Rebecca Roberts of the Centre for Crime and Justice has noted, 'the overlapping nature of law breaking and victimhood where women with experience of abuse, assault and sexual violence are frequently swept up in the CJS as 'offenders'' (2015: 9). Nonetheless, victimologists maintain that labels including victim labels, are socially-constructed (Walklate, 2007). Nils Christie (1986: 18-19) for example notes that there are five attributes of the 'ideal victim'. Christie notes that the ideal victim is weak, carrying out a respectable project, where she could not be blamed, whilst the offender is 'big and bad'

and unknown to the offender. Certainly many of the women do not easily align with this socially-constructed notion of the 'ideal victim'.

Within many of the narratives of the women involved in this research, there was often a resistance to the 'victim' label, much in the same way as there was a resistance to the 'offender' label.

It was me who did the wrong, so no; I wouldn't describe myself as a victim. (Paula, Age 36)

I suppose I do feel hard done by, yeah, I feel it's one of those things, why me? But I know lots of things happen to lots of people, probably worse than me. But I think with me it's just sort of being a constant... hopefully now, I can just sort of have some stability. (Sue, Age 40)

I'd never describe myself as a victim. I've overcome all that. (Anna, Age 36)

The reasons for resistance to this label varied, but for all, resistance to victimisation was central to desistance. Whilst for some women resisting victimisation was about becoming, 'the person they always knew they were' (Maruna, 2001), for Anna, the former victim identity was associated with transgressive behaviour. Following abuse at the hands of her former partner, Anna describes how she became "a bully, a drinker, a rebel." Anna's desistance therefore was related to overcoming both her victim and offender identities in a very direct way. Conversely, Holly adopts the rhetoric of the offender/victim binary when she separates her own victimisation and offending identities. However part of Holly's desistance pathway will inevitably involve support for her experiences of abuse.

UB: And would you describe yourself as a victim?

Holly: No. Well not any more, I were like last year, from my ex-partner and that. Obviously people are victims like where I've stolen from shops and stuff like that, that's a victim isn't it? (Holly, Age 23)

Shelly speaks about her past experiences of domestic violence in much the same way as Maruna's (2001) desisting group speak about their past offences. For Shelly, desistance is about not only coming to terms with and learning from past offending experiences but also past victimisation experiences.

I would never accept myself as a victim at one time but now, yeah. Because when I look back, 'cause I used to think of it as a weakness and I never ever seen myself as a weak person. But you know what I mean; Michaela just makes me see things in a different light. "It doesn't mean you're a weak person Shelly." "You should have fucking said something Shelly, you should have spoke out at the time."... But I do now, yeah, [see myself as a victim in the past] yeah of course. I do now. I've still got the scars to prove it, trust me. (Shelly, Age 53)

For Shelly, part of her desistance journey was about addressing and overcoming past victimisations. Many women in the CJS are victims; supporting women to overcome these victimisations can be the most integral part of any intervention. However, where women's victimhood stems from the CJS itself, (Smart, 1976; Kennedy, 1993; Jordan, 2004; Davies, 2011) it is clear that it is difficult for them to associate the label with anything positive and particularly difficult for women to match this victimisation up with moves towards desistance. Principally in the narratives of Katie, Ruth and Heather who struggle to come to terms with viewing their transgressions as offences (arguably understandably so), the victimisation at the hands of the CJS is particularly preventative at encouraging desistance as it is so brutal and yet official and democratic. Speaking about her conviction, Katie noted;

It's like you're in a dream and you're standing outside and thinking, "No that's not me; nobody'd do that to me." (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

Kelly-Marie also struggled to come to terms with her victimisation at the hands of the CJS and square this with any moves towards desistance, particularly in regards to the short prison sentences she served.

They [the short sentences] were pathetic 'cause I were crying out for help and they just thought, "Just put her in prison." So I were drying out, coming out and just doing it all over again. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Much like the reaction to the 'offender' identity, those who fully accepted the victim identity, seeing it as their master status, faced barriers to desistance. This identity, like Kelly-Marie's past attempts show, was not conducive to feelings of hope, self-efficacy and agency. For women involved in this research, this acceptance of their victim status stemmed solely from their treatment at the hands of the CJS. Women who denied their past victimisations also had trouble travelling the road of desistance. They were unable to address the issues which often led to their offending in the first place. Nonetheless there is a difference here between denial and resistance. Members of this final group were resisters of the victim identity; resistance meant a recognition of past victimisations and acceptance of them as part of the make-up of their current identity yet it also included a rejection of the identity as their master status. These final group were often further along their desistance journeys. Women who were able to resist both offending and victim identities can be described as both survivors and bricoleurs. It is to this identity which the thesis now turns.

7.4.4 Survivor/ bricoleur

Where women resist the labels of both offender and victim and yet have experience of both the CJS and gendered victimisations, they can often adopt the identity of 'survivor', an identity which

is both individually adopted and socially-constructed. This research has found that resisting women are more than survivors, they are bricoleurs of their own desistance, using what limited resources they may have in their attempts to travel the desistance pathway.

Anna's narrative provides a case study in the construction of the bricoleur identity. Over the course of our interview, Anna described her entry into the criminogenic world her brothers and father had inhabited. Once she entered this world of fraud, robbery, drugs and violence however and established her dominant offending identity, she found that the more difficult journey would be the desistance journey.

And then do you know how hard it is to get out? It's easier to get in! And it has taken me all these years to finally be able to walk around my own area without getting dirty looks and the fucking comments. But I've done it so... It's one of them isn't it, life goes on. It's got to... (Anna, Age 36)

Nonetheless, Anna did make her way out of this world. Her most recent offence is characterised by Anna as a blip in an otherwise deviance-free journey, a result of where she lives, her family's identity and the social expectations of those surrounding her. As a result of this most recent conviction, Anna describes a breakdown in the relationship between herself and her children which she believes is a result of the interference of social services, resulting in constant paranoia that her children will be removed from her care.

I felt like my world had crumbled. Do you know what? They've knocked my confidence and everything, me and my kids haven't been getting on since it all because I'm looking at them going right, every time they're late for school I panic.... I look at my daughter, Stacey, she's a teenager, she's fourteen... They text me the other day from school saying that she's been late, so she comes home, I'm screaming at her so she went "Mum phone em, phone em, phone em", do you know how late she was? Three minutes. And I was nearly slapping her, I was going, "you're lying to me!"... It's ruining my life, you're [the school] ruining the family right? (Anna, Age 36)

Anna could succumb to her status as a 'deviant mother' as she feels is portrayed by the school and social services. Nonetheless she resists both the offender and victim identities; she recognises these identities as part of her past but is ready now to move beyond them, using resources provided by the WC, her relationship with her children, along with great stores of hope and self-efficacy to attempt to travel her own desistance journey. Maruna (2001) found that desisting narratives include an intervention from 'someone who always believed in them'; this was not largely the experience of the women involved in this research, instead desistance was a lonely journey which, as a result often required great stores of agency. Anna is determined to move on, even against others expectations.

How can I try and move past it? I am though and I'm going to do the volunteering at the women's centre... I'm going to do it just to prove I could, to myself. I'm just trying to keep myself busy. (Anna, Age 36)

We can see here Anna's identity change beyond the offender/victim binary using both social and psychological bricolage to construct her desistance identity. Levi-Strauss (1962) argued that bricoleurs use any limited materials available to them to solve new problems. When cultural (or social or psychological) materials are limited, bricoleurs reuse tried and tested methods. Sue discussed a similar use of psychological and social bricolage to help herself; things she did not find conducive to desistance she disregarded but she took on the advice of others as well as doing things for herself to help her cut down on alcohol consumption, moving beyond the offender and victim identities towards desistance.

I mean I've done a lot myself, I went on a self-esteem and assertiveness course at the women's centre, I've had counselling... She really, really helped because we did a similar thing to what we are doing now; we started right from the beginning and went through right to the present day. The advice she's given is... you know the thing is with me, I always like to get things done quickly, you know I'm an organised person. So what she's said to me now is, because you're on your own now, just take a step back, take it a day at a time and things will just happen when they happen. (Sue, Age 40)

Conversely, Karen is in the very early stages of her identity change and has a very limited support, social bonds or psychological reserve available to her; she has no fixed accommodation, is in a drug rehabilitation project, has lost her network of friends or associates as well as her children. The guilt and stigmatising shame Karen feels by not living up to the constructed idea of an 'ordinary woman' is something which is difficult to move past. Karen struggles to come to terms with her past offending and victim identities as well as the loss of a possible alternative 'mother' script.

I go to see my probation officer and she says, "Oh take deep breaths in the morning and don't think about it." But if you're taking deep breaths not to think about it, you're thinking about it. And it's there all the time, it's always at the back of my mind. It just won't go away (breaks down), I keep thinking, "how long is it going to be for me?" Because I keep thinking, "what could I have done differently that I hadn't already done?" (Karen, Age 36)

The desistance journey continues to be an educational journey for the women involved in this research; when they found something (whether this is a cognitive process, a new identity, a relationship or voluntary employment etc.) which worked for them, they tended to build on this, discarding what did not work for them along the way. Desistance also meant the construction and reconstruction of identities; generally what tended to work for women was a recognition of past offending and victimisation identities but a resistance also to allowing these to become their dominant identities or 'master status'. In some ways, the 'talking therapy' provided by the

interviews conducted during this research provided some of the women with the opportunity to recognise past offending and victimisation as well as pinpointing factors which have helped in desistance journeys and those which have not. In addition, as seen in Chapter 4, for some of the women, the interviews provided a generative opportunity (in their minds) to 'give back' through the sharing of their own experiences with the researcher.

Christine, the CEO of the WCs considered the construction of identity around the offender/victim/survivor binaries as often detrimental to women's desistance journeys. When women's identities are situated in past behaviour, they are unable to make sense of the bricolage which can help and hinder their desistance pathways.

I see very often people defining themselves in those roles [ex-offender, victim or survivor] somehow and it feels like that is something that's difficult to move away from. I also seem to find that people define themselves as being "in recovery" for a very long time and you see that amongst different communities. And they will, "I'm in recovery, I'm a recovery champion." And it becomes their identity and you know I would say, "I'm Christine" you know "I'm good and bad and full of hope and stability and bad habits, and all those sorts of stuff." I wouldn't describe myself as polarised. (Christine, CEO of Women's Centre)

The narratives of desistance highlighted by this research can in many ways be viewed as narratives of resistance and resilience. We have seen in the previous chapter how desistance can mean resistance to social expectations; in this section on identity, it has been noted that desistance can also mean resistance to the constructions of women with convictions occupying the offender/victim binary. Women who successfully negotiate and resist the offender/victim binary can be seen as bricoleurs of their own fate, using whatever limited resources they have to hand to travel the often arduous desistance pathway. Clearly as Maruna (2001) found, identity change is a key element in desistance. Women who transgress the law are portrayed as 'doubly deviant' and are therefore 'doubly damned' (Lloyd, 1995) in terms of their treatment at the hands of the CJS, the media, social services, at intimate relationship level and by wider society in general. When this is combined with the fact that women in the CJS are likely to be victims of domestic and childhood abuse, mental health issues, poverty and addiction, it can be difficult to see beyond the offender/victim binary into which women with convictions are generally placed. Nonetheless, women who are successfully travelling the desistance pathway within this research see themselves as bricoleurs of their own fate, using resilience, stores of agency and whatever resources they have to hand to resist their victim and offender identities.

7.5 Conclusion

Thomas Le Bel and colleagues argued, 'the idea that rehabilitation involves changes in an individual's thinking and personal outlook is among the oldest ideas in corrections. What are

relatively new are systematic efforts to uncover just how desisting ex-prisoners think and how these thinking patterns differ from those of active offenders' (2008: 136). The authors proposed that previous research suggested there were four interrelated themes which were salient in the subjective literature; hope and self-efficacy, shame and remorse, internalising stigma and alternative identities. The 'Oxford Recidivism Study' involved a ten year follow-up of 130 male former prisoners who had been convicted of property offences (Le Bel et al., 2008). The authors quantitatively measured the desistance-inducing potential of these themes and concluded that there was an argument for a 'subjective-social' model for desistance; subjective states before release from prison have a direct effect on recidivism and indirect effect on social circumstances following release which proved important when predicting desistance. The current study examined the same cognitive themes prospectively and qualitatively from the narratives of women, based in Northshire, with a range of convictions, who may or may not have spent time in prison for a range of offences (although the majority were property-based) concluding that cognitive processes are similarly important in the desistance scripts of females with convictions. Nonetheless, when considering desistance from a female point of view, the realities of women's lives must be considered. The research found levels of hope and particularly, self-efficacy, to be important factors in the narratives of women with convictions. In general women's hopes were modest and surrounded families, homes, health and employment. Interestingly these hopes were generally similar to pre-conviction hopes. Hope and self-efficacy however were found to be qualitatively different factors; many women had hopes and dreams but had no idea about where or how to begin achieving them. To promote desistance for women, we must bridge the gap between the will and the ways of achieving these overwhelmingly modest hopes.

A further key distinction in cognitive-level themes was found in the difference between re-integrative and stigmatising shame (Braithwaite, 1989). In a patriarchal society where women's equality is not forthcoming, women are stigmatised on a daily basis for going against socially-constructed gender norms when they resist or fail in their roles as mothers (Rich, 1996), daughters and partners. Furthermore, Goffman (1968) notes that stigma occurs when a person does not conform to desired socially-constructed roles. When we consider women as offenders, not only have they resisted gender norms but they have also violated moral and legal norms (Kennedy, 1993). Desistance must involve a negation of both these harmful stigmatising effects and this is the role both of the individual actor and justice and social agencies, as well as requiring a move towards a more equal society for women.

Finally, cognitive shifts are deeply related to identity constructs. Women with convictions are often constructed as falling within the offender/victim/ survivor trichotomy. This study has

found this to be problematic. When women self-identify as offenders or ex-offenders, this can result in either a self-fulfilling prophecy or a positive move towards desistance depending on the availability of alternative meaning structures. When women are socially-identified as offenders, the result tends to be the former. Yet when women are constructed solely as victims, their agency disappears; they are relieved from blame regarding their offences but also their ability to desist. Similarly, when women with convictions are identified as survivors, it can be difficult to move away from the past as this is where their identity is constructed from. When women fail in or reject stereotypical care-giving or relational identities, further stigma is often the result. On top of this, it is often these very identities which are the catalyst or maintainer of deviance. Instead, this research shows women travelling desistance as bricoleurs of their own fate; they make do and mend with what resources and cognitive processes are available to them and construct their own desistance pathways, with the help of positive relationships and other social bonds. Justice agencies and academic literature alike must increase these resources to enable this identity formation.

What is clear is that when women with convictions are doubly demonised, cognitive processes require reinforcement. Alternative systems of meaning (Skeggs, 1997) and non-gendered scripts for safer survival (Rumgay, 2004) must be readily available for women attempting to travel desistance pathways. It must be the role of justice and social agencies to locate and reinforce these alternative systems and scripts, particularly where they are not forthcoming. Yet we must not underestimate women's ability to change their own lives, to hope against all odds, to resist stigma and reconstruct shame and above all to be bricoleurs of their own fate. Where there is strength, agencies must be willing to reinforce this and where it is absent, it must come from alternative social sources and bonds.

This thesis has now considered maturational, sociogenic and cognitive explanations for desistance. In doing so it has found much in concordance with male literature and has found each perspective to be helpful in shedding light on the how and why of female desistance journeys. However the unique yet plural perspectives of females with convictions living in patriarchal societies has shown that much of what is 'known' about male desistance journeys cannot be applied to females. Women are often convicted for one-off offences or later in life, their offences and desistance journeys often occur in situations of deprivation and abuse and their journeys are intimately linked with feelings of shame, lack of self-efficacy and a limited prospective of alternative identities. With these caveats clear; how can justice and social agencies effectively promote and encourage desistance journeys? It is to this theme that the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER EIGHT: JUSTICE SYSTEMS

8.1 Introduction

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where —' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat

(Taken from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, also on the wall of the Daffodil Centre in Northton where group meetings were held)

As 'reactors' to violations of the law (Young, 1986) the state and civil society more widely, as formally represented by the justice system, are key actors in any examination of desistance. The role of the criminal justice system (CJS) is particularly salient at the time of writing because of the changes under the 'Payment by Results' (PbR) and the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' (TR) agenda which many authors have argued will have significant detrimental impacts on women attempting to desist (see Anison and Brayford, 2015 for a detailed examination). Anison and Brayford (2015) argue that much of PbR and TR will reverse recommendations made by the 2007 Corston Report. Women are a minority within any part of the CJS; under the TR agenda, Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) in these times of austerity, are likely to concentrate their funds on the majority male clients as this is where they can concentrate on reducing re-offending. Broad and Spencer (2015) also argue that policy 'silences' around women's rehabilitation will be likely to persist, amplified by austerity cuts to services. However, Anison and Brayford (2015) note that this also opens the possibilities for women's centres becoming CRCs, specifically focused on the needs of their female clients. Nonetheless, commissioning decisions under TR have been happening from November 2014 under a binary measure of reoffending rates. This decision has been criticised by academics studying the link between gender and desistance (McDermott, 2012; Radcliffe and Hunter, 2013) as lacking recognition of the complex pathways of desistance that women travel and devaluing the incremental moves they may make towards desistance. Certainly much of what has been shown in this study so far reinforces these points. Desistance for women can be a multifaceted process involving setbacks and disappointments, situated within gendered inequalities, not least of these, cuts to women's services.

This chapter examines the role of parts of the justice system in the process of desistance both from the perspective of women attempting to travelling desistance journeys and the women attempting to enable and empower them to travel. The various dimensions of desistance as explored in the previous chapters often coincide with women's experience of the CJS. This

chapter in particular examines the multifaceted role of prison, probation and community alternatives such as The Women's Centres (WCs) and the Housing for Northshire (HfN) project [an overview of each project is available in Chapter 3] in enabling or otherwise desistance journeys. It must be noted that desistance academics in general argue that desistance can be 'supported but not controlled by interventions or services' (Clinks, 2013) and therefore steer clear of formulating a generic guide for effective practice. This chapter takes a similar approach and does not aim to produce a guide for CJS practitioners working with women. Instead, this chapter examines what service users and staff have found to be useful or otherwise in supporting desistance. It has found factors such as flexible and holistic services, strengths-based approaches, partnership, community-based working, peer- and long-term support to be important and these factors reflect the work of other researchers, although largely based around the male experience (Clinks, 2013). Additionally this chapter stresses the importance of the staff-service user relationship and shared experiences as promoting the relational aspects of desistance.

8.2 Criminal Justice And Desistance

Desistance theorists have long suggested that programmes for sentenced individuals should have as their basis a 'desistance paradigm' (Burnett and McNeill, 2005). This section will examine the extent that this is a feature of the current traditional CJS. Turning first to the prison service, the mission statement of HM Prison service is: 'to keep those sentenced to prison in custody, helping them lead law-abiding and useful lives, both while they are in prison and after they are released' (HM Prison Service, 2012). Whilst there is no direct reference to desistance here, the aim of law-abiding and useful lives contains an implicit aim of encouraging a move away from offending. The vast majority of criminological research now widely acknowledges that time spent in prison does not reduce recidivism but in many cases actually has a criminogenic effect (Cullen et al., 2011). Prison has also been recognised as an 'expensive and ineffective way of dealing with many women offenders' (Justice Select Committee, 2013: 4), something which was also made clear in the 2007 Corston Report.

Although this research focused mainly on community sentences and community desistance, the women's narratives were replete with references to imprisonment. Seven out of the sixteen women interviewed about their offences had spent time in prison. An additional three women had male family members with prison experience; Anna's father, brothers and male friends had spent time in prison, Holly's partner had recently been released and Katie's son in law was in prison during our interviews. The vast majority of the sentences served by the women were short sentences; Paula for example served 6 days before her appeal was granted; Michaela served a total of 22 sentences throughout her life, her longest sentence was five and a half

months and Shelly claimed to have lost count of the number of prison sentences she served in her early life during her heroin addiction 20 years previously.

Shelly: To be honest with ya, I had a heroin problem so I had to fund it didn't I? So I was in and out of jail every six weeks starting a new prison sentence, every six weeks right? For shoplifting. Every six weeks I was back because then if you'd been nicked for shoplifting, on the third time you were nicked, you were back obviously it was an automatic prison sentence. So every six weeks I was back in jail (laughs).

UB: How many times were you in prison?

S: Aw Jesus, God that was... loads (Shelly, Age 53)

Kelly-Marie had served multiple prison sentences including two long sentences of three years nine months and seven years respectively for burglary. She served five shorter sentences, firstly for non-payment of a fine, three for shoplifting and finally a 28 day recall for not attending probation meetings. Kelly-Marie articulated her feelings about the shorter sentences;

Kelly-Marie: The little sentences, they were hard work. I don't like little sentences. I don't like long, but the short sentences are a lot harder than a long one.

UB: What do you mean by that?

KM: Because your head's still out the gate, you can't get your head into what you're doing, whereas if you're on a long sentence, you've got things put in place, you've got your sentence plan and things that you need to do like TSP or drug programmes or thinking skills or whatever, yeah? You've got things that you've got to put in place and you've got to deal with your issues. Whereas on short sentences, you're just a statistic, basically. You go in one gate, you come out the same gate and you're still the same. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

According to this perspective, short-sentences had none of the elements of support as claimed by other interventions but all the indifference and pointless processing of the CJS under the guise of punishment. Many of the same feelings of pointlessness of particularly short prison sentences were expressed by other former prisoners in the group. Michaela reiterated Kelly-Marie's sentiment.

I just think that women need a lot more support in prison than they do get. You know 'cause some people do come out homeless, some people don't want to go out of prison because they've got no life to go back to or their life's not good. They just need more support in prison, yeah. (Michaela, Age 34).

Shelly also recalled the futility of imprisonment for many women. She recalled women she met in prison who had allegedly received jail time for what she saw as futile reasons; shoplifting a bottle of lemonade and another for shoplifting a sandwich. Many of Shelly's former fellow inmates had been imprisoned for failing to keep probation appointments. The majority of the former prisoner group discussed the detrimental impact of imprisonment on their children (for a theoretical overview see Scott and Codd, 2010). Karen talked about women being introduced

to drugs in prison. Additionally, Michaela discussed the lack of through the gate support for women in prison. This finding has been replicated in an Australian study by McIvor et al. (2009) as well as in Aresti et al.'s (2010) male former prisoners phenomenological accounts of 'doing time after time'.

The futility of women's imprisonment as related to support and reconviction, and particularly women's short term imprisonment is well known in criminological research (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 2002; Prison Reform Trust, 2014; Player, 2014). Quantitative analysis of women's incarceration does not make for positive reading; women's imprisonment nearly trebled from 1993 to 2005 and although there has been recent decline, women are still being sent to prison in droves, mainly for non-violent offences and to serve short sentences. In the 2009 cohort, 51% of women leaving prison were reconvicted within one year; for those serving sentences of less than twelve months this figure increased to 62% (Ministry of Justice, 2012). Certainly when considered in the light of desistance, women's imprisonment, and particularly short sentences for non-violent offences, can be wholeheartedly critiqued.

Another omnipresent feature of the women's narratives was the probation system. In a similar way, probation was a real presence in my observations at the WCs; offender managers often had brief meetings with the women before or after their group sessions. Probation was often a topic which emerged in group sessions. Some studies have positively linked formal probation with encouraging desistance. For example Rex's (1999) study of 60 probationers found that 68% of those interviewed stated they were less likely to offend as a result of the supervisory experience. Rex's results were from a prospective, narrative, study. The author (similar to the current study) therefore could not know anything about the outcome of probation intervention. Nonetheless, many of the women involved in this research also had positive probationary experiences which they elaborated on in the course of our meetings. On the whole, the positive probation experiences were related to good relationships with offender managers and flexibility in their approach. Shelly's experience was typical of a 'good' probation experience.

You know what I've got one of the top probation officers... he's getting on but, I swear, he goes like that to me, he goes, "you know what Shelly? You're very punctual and you're always here when I tell you," he went, "but if there's ever a time, for whatever reason," he went... "if you can't make it for whatever reason, give me a ring, or get Rebecca's office to ring... "If you haven't got any credit, please get Rebecca [Housing for Northshire manager] to give me a bell... He went, "I'm not going to breach you," he went, "I'm not going to get on your case over it." He's dead good my one, honest to God. (Shelly, Age 53)

Shelly compared this current experience with former probation experiences which she did not

feel were as useful. However there was a recognition from Shelly that this poor relationship was also a result of her own mental state at the time.

In X2 [city Shelly previously lived], I wouldn't give a shit, I must have been a probation officer's worst nightmare, I must have been. 'Cause the moment they said, "Shelly's at reception", that woman's [former probation officer's] nerves must have been in bits. I'd go in there I'd be steaming drunk, i couldn't give a fuck. And I'd say to her, "excuse me, you going to help me or am i going to sleep on the streets again tonight? What you going to do for me?" (Laughs), I goes, "because yous are full of shit, that's what I'm thinking, yous are full of shit." And she'd just sit there like that... She gave me loads of black coffee and everything, I'd still go like that, "Now what are you going to do?" ... And like when I was waiting to be transferred over to here to Easton, you know probation wise, she obviously stayed in touch with me on the phone. She'd ring me up and go, "I can't believe it's you I'm speaking to, Shelly, you sound so accomplished, so happy and full of life," she went, "I can clearly tell that you've not been drinking or anything." "Well there's no need," I went, "it was that ex-partner and everything. And X2 stressing me out." (Shelly Age 53)

Karen also had a good relationship with her probation officer. For Karen, the guilt at past actions she feels is reflected in the attitude of her probation officer; nonetheless, Karen feels this is what she 'needs' to maintain her desistance and abstinence from heroin.

My probation officer has been amazing, she's firm but she's fair, she gives me a good kick up the backside when I need it. But I still feel like I've failed and I can't take back that time. (Karen, Age 36)

What was important to both Shelly and Karen was the time taken to build a positive relationship with their offender managers. It has been the concern of researchers that the relationship element has been eroded over time (Burnett and McNeill, 2005) and it is of current concern that this element will be eroded further with the current TR rhetoric of binary outcomes (Annison and Brayford, 2015). Nonetheless, there is no 'one size fits all' officer-service user relationship model; for Shelly flexibility was important whilst for Karen, strictness was key. Holly also valued strictness and discipline in her relationship with probation but felt this was not forthcoming. Holly's narrative was replete with criminal justice rhetoric about just deserts and punishment. However, she noted a seeming lack of interest in her progression and desistance journey from criminal justice bodies.

And like when I go to probation it's like no help at all really. All they do is ask you how you've been doing, what have you been doing? But obviously I could lie to them and say, "oh I haven't been doing crime," which I used to do and they didn't bother checking or anything so I just found it all not good, they need more power or stuff like that. And if you got really sentenced for it you'd probably stop doing it but because they give us so little, we're redoing it again. They just send you in there for five minutes, ask you how you've been doing, ask if you've been keeping out of trouble and you say, "yeah"

whether you have or whether you haven't and you just, you're on your way again so you could be doing all sorts and they don't know. It's not helped one bit. (Holly, Age 23)

Mutual respect in officer-service user relationships was also important in narratives surrounding probation. Both Marie and Anna described times when they felt this mutual respect was lacking, particularly surrounding attendance and time keeping and lack of flexibility on the offender manager's side.

I'm not so keen on my probation worker really, she talks down to me. She does talk down to me a lot. The one I had before this were alright, she were sound, she understood if you were going to be late and stuff. But this one, I think she's an ex-copper or summat... I'll probably like her at the end do you know what I mean? But at the minute, it's a bit like... she was fifteen minutes late. And I'm sat there. And she kept me an hour sat there, and she didn't even apologise. And it's like, we're supposed to apologise if we're late, and I agree with that, I think that's courteous, it's natural to say "I'm sorry I'm late." Blah Blah Blah. But she just walked in like, "come on Marie!" And I thought, "No I'm not having that." But I didn't say anything, I bit my tongue, 'cause I would say normally. But I bit my tongue and just went "mmmm". And then she kept me an hour, with my daughter sat outside. It were when I were doing dog walking. My mum's got a dog walking business and we were covering it for me mum. Anyway and I just thought, "you bitch". You know it's one of them, it's normal, nice and courteous to say, "I'm sorry I'm late." And we would be expected to do it. But she just talked down, right down to you. She does talk down to you, she's one of them. (Marie, Age 40)

Probation have just... I was weekly but she's dropped me down to monthly. But she said I wasn't interacting... I don't have any problems with her but she went on holiday right, and she knocked on my door when I was going out with Craig [Anna's son], and I said, "I'm always here, if I'm not here just text me, you'll always get a text". And she's... I don't know what's going on, I got bollocked yesterday for it. And I'm like really, I've not missed one... and then I think, like I said, "I'm on the phone, I'm on the mobile." Like you know, I text you. And I've even turned up with my little boy, "listen I'm not lying, he's really poorly, what do you want me to do?" (Anna, Age 36)

In both the above situations Marie and Anna felt that the respect they were expected to show was not reciprocated and resulted in an unequal relationship. This in turn added to feelings of victimisation at the hands of the CJS which created feelings of defiance and barriers to desistance. As noted in Chapter 7, this was not an unusual finding about women's experiences of the CJS ((Smart, 1976; Kennedy, 1993; Jordan, 2004; Davies, 2011). There appeared in these narratives to be a lack of flexibility in probation's approach to women as single mothers with caring responsibilities. It is also somewhat ironic that probation created difficulties in furthering employment opportunities as in Marie's case. This problem was also present in Rebecca's narrative when she described not being allowed to continue her community service by probation for reasons which were unknown to her. These narratives reflect Farrall's (2002) finding of a lack of recognition, on the part of probation, about the social circumstances in which desistance occurs (or, indeed, does not occur). Flexibility and encouraging adoption of

'alternative identities' must be central in any probationary approach aimed at promoting desistance. Anna in particular felt that probation was a negative experience which was completely unhelpful at encouraging desistance.

Probation? Pointless, really pointless. They stick me in a place where all them nutters go that I've grown up with all my life. So I'm avoiding people and I've got to see them. I'm like, "do I have to come here, really?" 'Cause I don't like it, it's all people from me past. And I don't do 'owt now. Do you know it's a really hard situation? You know, "Oooh there's not many women in here. Are you all right, do you want my phone number?" (Anna, Age 36)

For Anna, not only did the unequal relationship discourage any chance of 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999), additionally her probation meetings meant she was regularly meeting with people (usually men) from her 'past life' who could jeopardise moves towards desistance by association. Additionally, the mixed gendered setting resulted in intimidation and harassment.

In many ways there appeared to be a lack of connection to the 'lived experiences' of women amongst criminal justice practitioners. Although both the WCs and the HfN Project have links with the changes in community provision (both projects are sponsored by the council whilst the women's centre is also sponsored by the county CRC amongst others), reflecting the work of Annison and Brayford (2015), there was a feeling amongst both project's staff that this lack of recognition of women's social circumstances was only set to get worse under the PbR agenda as they too are dragged into CJS rhetoric around results and austerity.

I find it an utter travesty what's happening in the probation service... and payment by results is never going to happen, it is never going to happen. It's not even setting up people to fail; we just cannot get it right. I think there's an industry created on the backs of offenders, addicts and alcoholics. We are dealing with an industry here, it's a massive, massive industry. And now in times of austerity where they're putting the pound signs in front of the offenders and the addicts, it's just pure accountancy, so obviously there's going to be massive failures within that industry... they're typecast, there's no personalising it any more. And it's the community. When the community was disbanded, because they have been disbanded, purely through materialism and greed, it's everybody for themselves now. Not just criminals and addicts, it's everybody, get what you can for yourself and forget everybody else. Everything's got to be scaled back to the community. If you stigmatise and label people, you're never going to get anywhere, you've got to personalise it. This payment by results, I don't know which joker came up with that and it has to be a joker. (Rebecca, Housing for Northshire project manager)

Staff note that PbR will have negative implications for women attempting to desist as it will encourage labelling and a lack of the available alternative identities which the previous chapter has noted are central to desistance. This sentiment is also present in the work of Matthews et al. (2014) who note that this constant criminalisation through labelling of women can effectively act as a barrier to desistance.

As noted previously, identity change for women with convictions involved not only a disassociation with offender identities but also victim identities. In many of the narratives, it appeared that this victimisation also emerged from experiences within the CJS. Victimisation at the hands of the CJS not only emerged in narratives surrounding probation; victimisation was present in every aspect of contact with the CJS, from relationships with the police and courts to solicitors and prison staff. This was particularly poignant in the narratives of Katie, Karen, Ruth and Heather who espoused various levels of innocence regarding their recent convictions but also in the narratives of Shelly and Marie which contained examples of past convictions for offences of which they were later deemed innocent (for more on Shelly and Marie's experiences see Chapter 7). Both Katie and Heather had been convicted for benefit fraud offences. In both cases the women maintained that they were unaware they were committing fraud and certainly they were both hugely affected by what they felt was the unnecessary involvement of the CJS in their lives.

Because to do what they [the police] did... if they sent me a letter! You know to send people a letter to say, "can you come in? We need to have a meeting", I'd have gone, I wouldn't have said, "Oh I'm sorry I'm not coming." And when I've had my benefit it's not like I've lived a fancy lifestyle or anything. You know it's not like you see some people where they've claimed thousands or over half that I've done and they just do it openly, I've thought I've done everything I should have done, even the job centre said, "You've done what you should have done, you're on it indefinitely. This shouldn't be happening." And I thought, "Would they have gone to court and said that? Or would they not have been able to?" You know and that's what I think... I would have said, "Right, I'm sorry I'm working, it's my fault, I will sort it out." And that's it... I can believe that I'm not the only person this has happened to. (Katie, Age 60, second interview)

I filled in a little section wrong, I put an "X" instead of actually not doing, that's all I did... Yeah, 'cause it says, "Does your partner work?" I just put an "X" there instead of saying anything. And that's why I got... it would be good if they could have rang me and asked, you know, "You filled this in a bit strangely, does your partner work or not?" You know... (Heather, Age 24)

Heather's and Katie's narratives had more in common than a feeling of victimisation at the hands of the police and courts. Both women experienced severe mental health issues following their convictions and both made attempts to take their own life which they related to their convictions. Additionally both Heather and Katie had been given advice to 'go guilty' by legal and mental health professionals; and both regretted the 'decision' to do so, although both felt they did not have much choice.

Heather: Well when I was trying to explain to my solicitor, he just said, "Well, other people won't believe that, they won't believe you." And he were quite nasty really with me, he just said, "There's no point wasting your time 'cause they won't believe you." So

I just felt really low then, I was just like, I have to basically say that I've done it on purpose, just so that I can do, do you know what I mean?

UB: So was that his advice, to plead guilty?

H: Yeah. It was basically... in a way it felt like he were threatening me 'cause he said, "if you don't plead guilty, it's going to go on forever, they're going to be really harsh with you, you're going to have to pay more money", and all this, so it's like I had no choice. (Heather, Age 24)

And then, when we went round to court, I spoke to the barrister - it wasn't my solicitor that I had talked to. He said, "I've got your case, we'll go and have a talk." I said, "right", I told him everything and I said, "but I want to plead guilty." He said, "why?" I said, "I've had this nervous breakdown. I'm seeing a counsellor at the minute, she said she doesn't think I'm well enough to go through a court case, it could make it worse, she said, because I'm classed as high risk for suicide"... "And she said, it'd just make it worse for me, and they said, "if you plead guilty, it'll all be done away with, it'll be over with and that's it. It's done. It'd be dragging on, she said, and you'd have to go to court, and there would be people there who'd done statements, they'd have to say things that you wouldn't like."... He said, "Look, I'd rather you plead not guilty, because, everything here, you've got a really good case you know what told me." ... I said "I can't, I can't. I can't go through it; I'll just be a wreck, a nervous wreck. And I don't think I'll make it through, I think I'll do something stupid..." So that's how it happened... well I stood there and they said, "well how do you plead?" And I said, "not guilty." And everyone turned around and they looked, and I said, "oh, I mean guilty." And they were all looking at me and I were thinking, "oh my goodness." I were that confused. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

Katie narrates how her voice was effectively silenced as a result of this advice. Indeed it was arguably because of this silencing that Katie was so determined to narrate her experience to me.

And then they told me, I heard one of the magistrates say to the others, "she's been on this benefit for a long while and she's been working for five years." And I thought, "I haven't been working for five years, I've been working for two and a half years that's all." And she said, "she knows she doing something wrong." And I wanted to stand up, and I weren't allowed to do. I wasn't allowed to say anything, the solicitor took down words that I wanted to say. And I said, "look, I want them to know." He said, "there's only so much I can say with you pleading guilty, because if you're pleading guilty, why are you saying, oh I shouldn't have been arrested, you've got to accept that if you're pleading guilty, you can't do a thing." I thought "oh crikey." I kept thinking, "am I doing the right thing? Should I plead not guilty? Should I go through this?" And I thought, "I can't". It were awful, I was sat there crying all the time I were in court. (Katie, Age 60, first interview)

The distressing experiences of Heather and Katie at the hands of the CJS deserve recognition. The myth of the 'benefit scrounger' within the media and the CJS runs deep (Grover, 2010). Arguably it is this labelling culture which meant the women were caught up in the CJS in the first place. It is particularly noteworthy that the excuse for the women's treatment in court was their fragile mental states (according to their narratives). In many ways women who are sentenced are not only 'doubly demonised' but they are doubly persecuted precisely because of the

hardships and inequalities that they face. The punitive practices of the CJS are unlikely to abate at any time soon. A 2012 Government White Paper provides insight into current criminal justice thinking; the paper promises 'swift' and 'sure' judgement within courts with an emphasis on punishment and redress. The reforms proposed by the paper were 'designed to secure guilty pleas earlier in the prosecution process, improving efficiency, reducing paperwork and process times and alleviating some of the burden on witnesses and victims of crime' (Ministry of Justice, 2012: 6). Mary, a member of staff at the Women's Centre, noted that this kind of rhetoric is unlikely to be helpful for women attempting to travel desistance pathways. It is clear that the current rhetoric provides no safeguarding for women like Heather and Katie, women with mental health issues who may be pushed through a harrowing system 'for their own good' only to their detriment.

Another woman who described being brought into the CJS 'for her own good' was Ruth. Ruth became homeless following a relationship break down. Ruth's offence was also related to her benefits; she had been overpaid housing benefit, council tax and income support and had been paying this back over time. When she could no longer pay, she was given a 12 month probation order. Ruth states that the court passed the sentence to "make me aware that the overpayment was wrong but also it was to open other doors to help me find accommodation". Whilst Ruth's entry into the CJS had a moral element to it, this net-widening of the CJS to include a social services role is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's statement: 'The carceral objectives of resocialization through work, through the family and self-culpabilisation, are now no longer localized in the closed space of the prison but are being extended and diffused throughout the whole of the social body' (Foucault, 1976/2009: 16). Ruth's experience shows that even seemingly progressive strategies can lead to further criminalisation. It is also worth noting that at the time of our meeting, eight weeks into her supervisory experience, Ruth was no closer to gaining accommodation. Yet she now did have a criminal record which she was acutely aware would create difficulties in gaining employment. McIvor et al.'s (2000) finding that women are routinely failed by the CJS and other systems - doctors, solicitors, teachers, social services etc. is particularly poignant here. The authors found that individuals who claimed to have been treated unfairly by the CJS were most likely to reoffend. Certainly in the cases of the women here mentioned, the CJS, through a focus on 'swift' (and consequently unconsidered) 'justice' has done much more harm than good to support their desistance journeys. Even where there is a seemingly progressive objective, women's inequality which can often barrier to desistance is best addressed outside the often violent and victimising CJS.

Overall, the women's narratives were not sources of anecdotal evidence of the desistance inducing potential of the traditional CJS. Whilst examples of good practice, particularly within the probation system, were to be found, these were few and far between. The Corston Report of 2007 noted that traditional justice particularly in prisons but also in the police, courts and probation service were failing females with convictions; this research found that little has changed to 2016, reflecting the 'five year on' findings of Nick Hardwick (2012) and No Offence (2012). In many ways in fact, the net widening created by the TR agenda, alongside the new binary measure of success or failure of desistance under PbR, compounded by the continuing punitive rhetoric and pressure on probation service staff, has created further problems for women in the CJS. If there is light in the CJS tunnel it comes from the caring nature of its overworked staff and its ability to provide support through alternative means, two of which will now be considered.

8.3 Social Justice And Desistance

One of the central findings of Baroness Corston's report was that more often than not, women with convictions' issues were best addressed outside prison. These findings have been given qualified support above. However, as noted, there are issues with probation provision. Nonetheless a positive impact that probation was found to have, was referral of probationers to women- only services. Radcliffe and Hunter (2014) for example found that women's community services, emerging in 2009 from the recommendations of the Corston Report have filled a gap in provision for low-risk females, effectively providing a range of gendered social capital required for effective desistance. This section now moves on to consider these types of alternative community provision, and particularly that experienced by the women in this study, Northshire WCs and the HfN Project, both of which provide, this research finds, *social* justice as opposed to *criminal* justice. (For an overview of the services provided, consult Chapter 3). The ability to make this distinction emerges from conversations with both staff and service users, particularly during a conversation with a group leader based in Weston, Maria. Maria noted that she would remind the women, "I don't work for probation; I work for the women's centre which is more about concern for wellbeing." This contrast was also evident in the narratives of the women who attended the women's centre group meetings¹⁰; Holly's quote was typical:

Holly: Yeah it's helped, the Women's Centre, 'cause like they're giving me a course in January so it's helping, that. They should do that, they should get you voluntary work or something, probation, just to make sure you're not going out during the day and doing crime and stuff like that.

¹⁰ The Women's Centre provides a number of services to women caught up in the formal CJS, from avert schemes at the point of arrest to through the gate services for women coming back to the community after imprisonment. This research focuses on women provided with specified activity requirements but it is clear additional research surrounding the effectiveness of all these services is required.

UB: So if you could change anything about your sentence what would you change?

H: Just my probation, like come to the women's centre instead of all the times I were meant to go there, like twice a week. (Holly, Age 24)

Whilst selection bias (see Chapter 4 for more) must be considered, it appeared during observations that both the Women's Centre provision and Housing for Northshire programmes were enjoyed by the service users; the atmosphere within Rebecca's office and during the group sessions and WCs throughout Northshire was welcoming, informal, flexible and on the whole, responsive to service users' needs.

Additionally, the provision of both the WCs and the HfN Programmes was seen to be more flexible than traditional justice programmes. Bridget was a 27 year old mother of two. She was one of only two women I came across during the course of this research who were arrested for violent offences. She had spent two short sentences in prison. Bridget had severe learning difficulties. She was mentored by Fran, a WC volunteer. When we met, Bridget had finished her specified activity requirement at the WC but was continuing to attend weekly group meetings. She met with Fran on most days. The other women in her group clearly looked out for Bridget and during one of our meetings when Bridget was running late, there was a fear amongst the group that she was not going to turn up. When she eventually did turn up there was laughing and joking amongst the women. Bridget talked about her desire to move away from her friends who were "a bad influence" on her. It was evident both in the actions of the women and in Bridget's narrative that in Fran, the other WC staff and her fellow group members she had found an alternative, pro-social relational bond. On top of this, Bridget attended money management programmes and was in the process of finding a new house to rent with Fran's help. Although Bridget had recently breached her license and tag, the WC was in contact with the police and magistrates to negotiate not returning to prison as there was a general feeling that this was not helpful to Bridget's desistance journey. This close and flexible relationship was only possible through an effective women-only provision. Healy (2012) has noted the importance of beyond-programme help. Carlsson's (2012) rhetoric around intermittency is also pertinent here; it is clear the WCs are playing a crucial part in bridging the gap between primary and secondary/tertiary desistance for Bridget.

Farrall (2002) noted that there was a fissure between the social bonds rhetoric of desistance and the actions (or inactions) of the CJS. It is this fissure that the WC and HfN Projects have been particularly positive in bridging. As a very brief overview, women involved in this research accessed counselling services, abuse support services, debt management programmes, art and exercise workshops, volunteering experience, college courses, housing, full time jobs and mental

health services through both the WC and HfN programmes. The HfN programme was particularly prudent in involving the women's families in their desistance journeys. Kelly-Marie, for example forged a new and improved relationship with her mother following encouragement from Rebecca.

Anyhow I got introduced to the Housing for Northshire Project and Rebecca Brown and my life's finally turned round. I've gone full circle, there's nothing else can come at me now... I'm just fortunate enough to have me family and still have me mum. I mean, me and me mum have sat down, we've talked. But what we've also done is interact; they've got somebody to interact with me mum to explain to her, from a drug addict's point of view. And they've involved her in my recovery and I feel like I've got a totally different mum now; I feel like I've got the mum I should have had years ago. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Community links were also a key focus of the HfN provision. Shelly discussed informal soup kitchens and provisions for community members who were struggling set up by Rebecca and helped by the other women. Michaela was also preparing to begin volunteering at the community café where we held our interviews.

Both services also provided support for cognitive level moves towards desistance; for example, as previously noted, neither service labelled women as 'offenders', their approach was very much 'strengths-based'. Additionally, the WC group sessions provided the women with a sense of hope for change, seeing their fellow group members and staff as positive role models. (The role of staff will be discussed further below). Stigma and shame were overcome by 'talking methods' in both projects.

Nonetheless, the provisions of both community projects were not perfect. Although the HfN Project was able to work with the family and community, the same was not the case for the WCs. Weaver and McNeill (2014) have highlighted the relational aspects of desistance; where these are missing from formal systems, this may be problematic. The sheer volume of women in the WCs as compared to the HfN service meant that this could not be catered for on the whole. WC staff would, for the most part, deal with women in a group setting and could not for example provide homeless women with housing directly. Mary, Criminal Justice Project Manager at the WC has found housing to be one of the project's central issues as her experience highlighted housing as a crucial element in desistance (as has the current research). The group provision of the WC was criticised even amongst staff members for not being suitable for every woman. For example, Maria talked about probation referring a woman with dementia and the difficulties this posed for the group-setting. Many of the women, Maria noted, required more one-on-one mentoring than the WC was often able to provide in the two week induction and conclusion. Certainly I witnessed group sessions where one or two women in the group did not

contribute to the group for two weeks. Jenny, a fellow group leader, also noted that the structure of the provision was often very rigid; women had to go through the motions of all the different courses. For example, many of the women were enrolled on a comprehensive education and employment course provided by the WCs yet also had to cover this topic as part of their specified activity requirement. Sometimes the women confided in me that they found some of the sessions irrelevant to their lives, or covered topics which they found to be common knowledge. To this end, the WCs were responding to this criticism, and Mary outlined developments which were forthcoming.

The plan is, obviously you still need your induction session, but to make, rather than eight sessions, some that are a bit fluffy... put it into six sessions, condense it a little bit and make it more meaningful and make the add on support, like the housing and debt, the access to benefits; which is a massive thing 'cause everything's got to be done online, equipping people with those kind of skills, and the counselling. And [making] the other move on groups more a part of it in those six sessions really, more of an engagement tool, helping them recognise what the issues are 'cause they may not well know what their own issues are because everything just becomes a big bubble of loads of issues and how do we address that? So just making it more condensed, more meaningful, to give an added value to the add on support as well, that's kind of what we're looking at. (Mary, Criminal Justice Project Manager at the Women's Centre)

This flexible approach from the WCs meant that it was adaptable to change and able to recognise and amend its faults in a meaningful way, arguably mirroring the ideal desistance journey. There were only three women interviewed who were clients of the HfN Project as well as two members of staff. The project is very small and to take a sceptical position would be to suggest that it is because of this small sample number that there were no critiques or complaints about the service from either staff or service users. On the other hand, the focused, one-on-one mentoring, housing model as provided by the service was difficult to critique. As Shelly noted, Rebecca was available for her clients 24/7. Certainly the service would not be suitable for all women with convictions. Many of the WC group were extremely minor or one-off offenders with stable housing and good community and/or family support. Nonetheless for the more prolific offenders and for homeless women, the support offered is crucial to desistance and the secondary desistance narratives of Shelly, Michaela and Kelly-Marie are testament to its successes.

The main challenges faced and anticipated by staff in both projects were surrounding TR and PbR. Although funding for the WCs came partly from the local CRC, Christine sensed that this would create a worrying potential for them to be swept into the system of putting a price on the head of each potential desister. In this way, it appears that drawing Maria's line between the 'wellbeing-focused' elements of alternative community provision and punitive traditional justice system is becoming increasingly difficult.

I think as far as barriers [to desistance] go, there is danger that we increasingly become part of the system. And I think the contract environment pushed us towards that, we're much more target focused, data focused, measurement focused. I would say as a manager there's benefits to that; it helps us get control of the process, really look at what's working and what isn't working, you know grow the skill set of the practitioners. But it can feel that there's more assessments and those can be barriers, and questions asked of women can be barriers. (Christine, CEO of the Women's Centre)

Overall both programmes provided an overwhelmingly positive, women-only 'desistance structure' or 'space' by engaging with both cognitive level themes and social bonds which have been shown to be conducive to desistance journeys. The importance of engaging with the social as well as the cognitive was summarised by Jenny, a group leader in the WC.

It's very rare that you would find a woman that goes out and thinks, "You know what I'm going to go out and I'm going to punch someone in the throat." No they don't do that, they don't go out and think, "I'm going to go out and rob summat". No, there's always an underlying issue and whether that is housing, accommodation, substance misuse problems, mental health problems, you know a bad relationship and things like that, there's usually something underlying that needs dealing with. (Jenny, Group Leader, Women's Centre)

Through providing a holistic women only-service, these two projects are 'dealing' with exactly the issues outlined above. Whilst neither project is perfect for all women, there is a recognition of these issues and attempts to overcome them. The ability to be flexible was evident in both projects and meant that 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999) was possible to some extent. To repeat Baroness Corston's (2007) finding, community-based approaches tailored towards the gendered needs of women enable women to feel supported at turning their lives around. Both projects studied in this research provide a tonic to the male-focused traditional system and they must be free to continue this holistic social justice provision in spite of wider changes within the CJS.

8.4 Staff Narratives Of Resilience And Survival

A further finding of this research was that all women experience gendered inequalities to varying extents and these inequalities can provide a relational bond which may provide resilience for desistance attempts. Certainly the staff interviewed and observed during the course of this research experienced gendered inequalities which reflected those experienced by the women with convictions. Indeed in all staff narratives there was a constant theme of 'it could have been me...'; for Rebecca, Housing for Northshire project manager, it *was* her, she did experience the CJS for herself. She truly represented Maruna's (2001) concept of the 'professional ex'. Many of the other staff had experienced the CJS inadvertently through experiences of friends and family members. The staff in in both the WC and HfN underwent their own resilience journeys which reflected the desistance journeys of their clients. The shared gendered inequalities and parallel journeys of staff and service users in both projects enabled empathetic and supportive

relationships. Shelly, Michaela and Kelly-Marie had such a close relationship with Rebecca that they all referred to her as a friend. Whilst this relationship did not suit every woman or staff member, I witnessed WC group sessions in which leaders would hug women who broke down after discussing mental health problems or on the other side of the scale, chatted to them about their children, reality TV programmes, makeup or the local council. Empathy was central in these relationships.

Much like the majority of the women interviewed for this research, staff members experienced low level offending during youth and young adulthood, something which they largely matured out of as they got older, reflecting the maturational theories of Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) and Glueck and Glueck (1950).

Not that I ever really did anything massive. I don't know... it's all a part of it, I suppose. I smoked a bit of weed and stuff like that with that kind of group of friends. And one of my friends that was quite a bit older than me took me shoplifting. And I did that once and nearly got caught and was so scared that I never did it again. Not anything like major. That and just smoking a bit of weed. (Mary, Criminal Justice Project Manager)

Mary's trajectory differed from that of Holly's and Anna's for example because of the social capital she had in place with supportive family and friends. Nonetheless, we have established that the women in this study travelled varying offending journeys; unlike the staff, many of the women such as Sue, Heather or Katie did not get involved in offending until later life and could not be termed 'life-course persistent' (Moffitt, 1993). However, the experience of offending at any stage did create empathy between the women; for example, Claudia, a group leader in Easton explained during a group session how she had been convicted of shoplifting at the age of 18 and was questioned about this during her interview to work at the WCS. Staff often shared negative experiences of the formal CJS or social services. This connection enabled the women to open up about their own experiences and discuss the perceived injustices of the CJS and wider structural inequalities. The staff were not viewed as 'other' as a result.

The social makeup of the lives of the staff was also not dissimilar to their clients' lives in that they were replete with gendered inequalities. Many of the staff discussed mental health issues such as anxiety and depression both in group scenarios and during interviews, they talked about alcohol and drug abuse, poverty, failed relationships and job opportunities due to pregnancies and caring responsibilities. Of the six women interviewed as 'staff members', five had suffered mental, physical and/or sexual abuse at the hands of former partners. For many of the staff the scale of the abuse was horrific and lasted for a period of years. Josie, a volunteer at the HfN Project talked about years of violence and emotional abuse at the hands of her ex-husband and father to her six children. Whilst Josie had no experience of offending, she felt her life experience

enabled her to do her generative volunteering work as she could see the parallels between her life and the lives of the women she worked with; she felt she was in a position to enable them to get to 'where they're going' much like she enabled herself.

But I always wanted, I wanted to go down the route of being a support worker like say with women who've been DV 'cause I've been there meself and I know meself when you go into there, and there's services like that, you've got to want to do it from your heart, you can't go in to do it financially 'cause it won't work because you are vulnerable and you don't want to open up to people and you've got to trust people before you start opening up. And you do have some people and they treat you like you've done summat wrong in a way. Well "no, it's not my fault I'm in here; I'm in here for whatever reason."... So I thought, "I wanna go there", 'cause I can't patronise anyone and I would never judge anyone do ya know what I mean? So I want to give summat back. I started a course in January... and then I found out about the Housing for Northshire Project. So I had an interview with Rebecca and like I said to Rebecca, "I can't understand the drug part of it because I've never taken drugs and I can't... obviously I've never worked with people in prison, I've never been in prison meself, I've never committed a crime." ***But it was about helping women get back from where they was to where they're going.*** And I do think, I think along the lines, or somewhere in there, there's something happening in their lives where they choose to go off the rails and say, "I don't care," I mean I know meself, I would probably have done the same if I didn't have the kids. I mean I can sit here and say; If I didn't have them two girls with me I wouldn't even be here now. (Josie, volunteer, Housing for Northshire Project, my emphasis)

This generative narrative was evident throughout the stories of staff in both projects; they often wanted to 'give back' what they had learned from their own experiences. For Jenny, group leader in the WCs, this came from her experience as carer to her younger brothers and sisters as her parents were both heavy drug users throughout her childhood. As the oldest girl in the family, Jenny felt pressure to live up to this generative role. When Jenny could not live up to this 'mother role' expected from her, she suffered from guilt and post-traumatic stress. She linked her recovery to her work in the WC and the supportive colleagues she had around her. Jenny received counselling from the WC. Throughout the group meetings, Jenny and other group leaders would relate the topic back to their own life narratives; this encouraged the women to tell their own stories related to the given topic. Furthermore this sharing of narrative encouraged what Rungay (2004) termed 'validation', in these cases not just of the emerging pro-social self, but also of the offending, victimised or non-ideal female past or current self, helping to overcome the 'double-deviance' of women with convictions.

As we have seen therefore, staff members could also be viewed as offenders, victims or survivors. However, the victimology narrative was largely absent or contested in the narratives of the staff to a greater extent than the women with convictions.

I would never think of myself as a victim 'cause then that is accepting that it's had triumph over you and it's not. But then if I were like, "yeah I'm a victim", that's victimising myself. I was a victim of circumstance but I don't have to be now. I've got

the, you know, power to change that so I don't see myself as a victim. (Jenny, Group Leader, Women's Centre)

This agency and self-efficacy was often missing from the prospective desistance narratives of the women with convictions. Perhaps this is unsurprising; staff members were able to come to terms with their past victimised self, much in the same way their clients were trying to. For women caught up in the CJS this was compounded by self- and socially-imposed 'offender' identities. Nonetheless, the staff narratives of survival and resilience were available as bricolage for the women and it was clear that they were sources of self-efficacy and agency. When we consider the overlapping nature of women as offenders and women as victims, we can see that Maruna's (2001) 'professional ex' idea can extend to staff members in another way which enables them to be role models and mentors. In many ways the narratives of survival and resilience as experienced by staff members overlap with narratives of desistance, survival and resilience of the women with convictions. Women cannot unfortunately 'desist' from the structural and gendered inequalities of being a woman. Nonetheless, the themes discussed in this research; maturation, social bonds, hope, shame and identity-change enabled staff members to travel their journeys of survival and resilience. As a result of this, they were able to act with empathy and understanding. This was central to the 'assisted desistance' journeys of many of the women with convictions and simultaneously, the 'desistance narratives' of women with convictions enabled a move towards survival. When we consider the relational element of desistance as considered recently by Weaver and McNeill (2014), the overlapping and reciprocal supportive relationships between staff and service users cannot be overlooked. Austerity measures and the new TR and PbR agenda cannot mean a diminution of this relationship role. Burnett and McNeill (2005) highlighted that this role declined during the 1980s and 1990s, a reflection of the managerialism arising from Thatcherism and the target driven approach to budgetary restraint as well as 'just deserts' punitive penal policy. Justice practitioners should be careful to avoid a repeat of this focus away from the relational element.

8.5 Conclusion

Jock Young, in his explanation of left realist approaches to crime control, noted that 'crime cannot be simply explained in terms of crime control agencies, and... the agencies involved in crime control are much wider than in the CJS' (1991: 152). Nonetheless, this chapter has noted that 'control agencies' can play a central role in the encouragement and containment of desistance journeys. Traditional justice systems, this research has found, have often done more harm than good in enabling desistance. Beginning with the police and courts, this research has found a worrying lack of understanding about the contexts of female offending. This misunderstanding about mental health, particularly within magistrates' courts, can have severe consequences as Heather and Katie's narratives illuminate. Just deserts and punitive rhetoric

are not the way forward (Radcliffe and Hunter, 2014). Certainly prison has a limited, if not detrimental, impact on desistance. Particularly, short-sentences for non-violent offences are more likely to have a detrimental effect on desistance attempts. Probation relationships, where they are flexible and encouraging, with an understanding of the social barriers to desistance, can be a source of hope nonetheless. Whilst there is no one-size-fits-all relationship model, there is a continual worry amongst practitioners and academics alike (Annison and Brayford, 2015) that the changes under the TR agenda may make flexible and supportive relationships less likely where the focus is on a binary measure of results and does not recognise incremental moves towards desistance. Current Justice Secretary, Michael Gove, in a recent speech at the Howard League for Penal Reform (November 2015) stated that he believed in redemption and giving people a second chance. Whether this can be achieved under TR and PbR remains to be seen.

What would a 'desistance paradigm' (Burnett and McNeill, 2005) for females with convictions contain? This research has highlighted that a flexible, women-only, holistic, strengths-based, partnership-working service with through-the-gate and post-programme support (Healy, 2012) would go a long way to producing 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999). Programmes should be aware of the social circumstances in which desistance does or does not take place (Farrall, 2002) and should support pro-social roles whilst recognising and applauding incremental moves towards desistance (Carlsson, 2012). Many of these features reflect what has already been considered as part of a male 'desistance paradigm' and it is clear the male system can learn much from female successes. Additionally, many of these features are present in both the work of the WCs and HfN Projects studied as part of this research. Whilst neither programme is a panacea and neither provide a 'one size fits all' model, the acknowledgement of what is 'known' both about desistance and female involvement in the CJS, provide them with a template to work from.

The Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 requires the justice secretary to make arrangements to meet the needs of females with convictions, and many of these needs could be gleaned from the above-mentioned projects. Yet in current times of austerity where women's services and mental health services are first on the line to go, alongside 'crackdowns' on benefit fraud and reductions of the welfare system, women are likely to be criminalised due to poverty, abuse and mental health issues. As the staff narratives highlighted in this chapter show, these issues are not only confined to women with convictions but are gender-wide issues of inequality and discrimination. The staff and service user narratives provide bricolage for desistance and survival. The power of the female narrative should not be lost in any discussion of desistance.

In many ways the systems of justice which provide the structural foundations for women's desistance are like the Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventure; they may have very long claws and a great many teeth, but they can also only give desistance directions to women who know where they want to go, whether this is to an offending-free future or just a less chaotic space, as free as possible from the structural disadvantages of being a woman. Nonetheless guiding this journey and enabling the journey to be as painless as possible is the role of these justice systems. The next chapter provides a discussion on the salient findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined desistance journeys as experienced by a small group of Northshire women as compared to what is already 'known' about desistance – largely from the dominant white, heterosexual, male perspective. Whilst there are overlaps, for example in the importance of relationships, work, hope and shame – there are also areas in which the female journey was distinctly different from the male experience; relationships must not stem from abuse, the pervasiveness of work should be examined, hope may be experienced differently and shame should be re-integrative, and importantly must not replicate wider patriarchal forces. That is not to say however that males do not experience many of the same injustices and disadvantages along their journeys. Indeed, much can be deduced about the male experience from female's narratives.

Here I bring together the themes which have emerged from this research. Although not a perfect mirror image, they reflect the 'stages' of desistance as applied to this group of women. The first three themes – 'Choice'; 'Fate and Doomed to Deviance' and 'Double Deviance' relate to the beginnings and continuation of offending. In the sections entitled 'Turning Points' and 'I know what I want, I just don't know how to get there', the beginnings of the road to desistance will be expounded. Lastly in the sections '*A Place where Everyone Matters*' and 'The Personal as Political' the maintenance of desistance and the contexts in which it occurs will be examined. Whilst many of these themes have theoretical origins elsewhere, for others it is the first time there is a link with desistance and feminist approaches.

9.2 Choice

Criminological theorists have pondered the link (or lack thereof) between deviant acts or behaviour and the abstract notion of 'choice' since the first inception of criminology. In particular, the early classical school and theorists such as Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham used utilitarian principles to construct humans as rational beings and therefore criminals as calculating, arguing for certain and swift punishment to be used as a general deterrence. These early theories found prominence for example in the work of Clarke and Cornish (1985). Later theories ranging from labelling and social constructionist theories, to critical theories including Marxist and feminist schools of thought, questioned this pervasiveness of choice. More recently desistance theorists have elaborated on the role of choice and agency within subjective narratives of self-change (Shover, 1996; Rungay, 2004). Yet whilst critical criminology has examined the role of choice in the beginnings of offending behaviour as it relates to power structures, this has not been sufficiently examined in the context of desistance. 'Choice' is

argued to be a contested value and feminist approaches can highlight its problematic usage in the discourse of desistance.

Nonetheless, to suggest that women's offending behaviour is never the consequence of rational choice would be to misrepresent women as agents and indeed as bricoleurs. Within Grace's narrative there was a strong rational choice discourse related to the beginnings of her deviant behaviour, particularly as related to growing marijuana.

I mean I asked and everybody I spoke to... I mean "If I get caught, will she get taken away?" and things like that, and I had people telling me they'd done it before, been caught and their kids were fine (crying)... there were nothing, as far as I could see that it would have risked, otherwise I wouldn't have done it, you know if there was any chance, you know if I thought there was the slightest chance, I wouldn't have done it... It was for her [Grace's daughter] I was doing it. (Grace, Age 31)

As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis, (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7) Grace's most recent offence surrounded concern for her daughter and was the result of careful consideration. Unfortunately for Grace, the retributive nature of the criminal justice system (CJS) alongside concern for her daughter's wellbeing meant she lost custody once sentenced for this offence.

Nonetheless, amongst other women beginnings or continuation of offending were associated with a lack of choice. Paula, for example, links her offending with her alcohol addiction. Shelly and Michaela also linked past offending with heroin addiction and the necessity of funding these addictions.

It wasn't pre-meditated or anything like that, it was just there at the time. (Paula, Age 36)

For those with benefit fraud convictions: Heather, Katie and Ruth, choice was not an offending rationale. However, Karen's narrative is replete with references to her offending being a personal choice. Yet it is difficult to locate within this narrative of abuse, rape, alcohol and drug addiction any moments of clarity which would have allowed for a rational choice to occur. It often appears that Karen's narrative is shaped by the discourse of others. Certainly within the WC sessions there was, at times, a presupposition that crime was a rational choice for the women involved. Responsibilisation of women and the discourse of 'choice' were particularly clear in observations of the 'Thinking and Behaviour' session where offending was linked to 'quick and seemingly easy decisions' to solve problems and emphasis was placed on problem solving. At times this led to overestimation of the choices and agency that the women have by the WCs. This narrative of choice nonetheless remained central in staff narratives when considering a woman's propensity to desist. As Eileen noted,

And I do really want to help people but sometimes people just don't want to be helped. You know they need to help themselves. (Eileen, Group Leader, Women's Centre)

Yet at other times within the WCs and amongst the staff there was a deep understanding of the complex realities of women's daily lives and the sessions were clearly largely informed by this holistic view of both offending and desistance. It is often easy to consider both offending and desistance as something which those caught up in the CJS choose. But this utilitarian discourse masks the complex and patriarchal realities of women's lives as they travel both offending and desistance journeys and this must be recognised in any desistance intervention.

9.3 Fate And Doomed to Deviance

Maruna (2001) noted that within the 'persistence scripts' of former prisoners were a view of the individual as a victim of life circumstances (Maruna, 2001). These individuals appeared 'doomed to deviance' whilst their desisting former inmates, who were also victims of the cycle of deviance, nonetheless could find their way out of, with the help of a friend, family member or criminal justice staff who 'always believed in them', alongside agentic feelings which often emerged from a generative project or behaviour. As noted above and in previous chapters (see in particular Chapter 7), Karen's narrative was replete with references of being doomed to deviance.

And I just feel like, my path was set out at a young age and I followed it, and here I am now, you know in a train wreck. (Karen, Age 36)

Whilst Karen hopes for a time that she can live the 'normal life' her mum wants her to lead, she feels that she does not have the agency to do so, this is beyond her.

My mum actually wants to see me get accommodation, live properly, go shopping, live a normal life, do things that normal women do. I don't seem to have that in me, I just feel you know, incomplete. (Karen, Age 36)

Considering the social contexts of Karen's journey (see Appendix 1), it is perhaps no wonder that she feels this lack of agency. It falls therefore on justice interventions and wider networks of support to light this way for Karen, to provide support in the areas she needs, not least her housing issues, to offer her the bricolage needed to complete her sense of 'normality' and illuminate the possibility of alternate pathways.

Even amongst those whose narratives were not 'doomed' was the presence of a fatalistic sense of self. For these women however, fate was on their side. Their narratives promoted a picture of themselves as essentially good people who had taken a wrong turn in life. This sense of an essentially 'good self' finds echoes within Maruna's (2001) study and Braithwaite's (1986) concept of re-integrative shame. Kelly-Marie, for example, found an agentic sense of self

following her entry into the HfN Project, finding 'someone who believed in her' in Rebecca and working in a collaborative setting with her mum to overcome drug addiction. She had generative hopes for working with women 'in a project' in the future and was therefore had a strong belief that fate was on her side for the future.

There is something else out there for me, and when the time's right it'll be there. (Kelly-Marie, Age 48)

Both Karen and Kelly-Marie had backgrounds of abuse, drug addiction and loss of children. Their shared beginnings are reflective of many women caught up in the CJS. For these women the exit point of the cycle of deviance is often not illuminated. Women caught up in the CJS are likely to exit into poor employment outcomes, are often coaxed into voluntary positions, experience a lack of secure housing, and return to being sole carers or into abusive relationships (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). Kelly-Marie's narrative indicates hope and self-efficacy for women. Promoting service-user led interventions which provide 'scripts for safer survival' (Rumgay, 2004) alongside real and tangible practical support and advice avoids outcomes being left to fate.

9.4 Double Deviance Desistance

Throughout this thesis there have been myriad references to the 'double deviance' thesis as developed by Worrall (1990), Heidensohn and Silvestri (2012) and Leverentz (2014) amongst others. This idea suggests that when women break the law, they are demonised not only for breaking the social contract but also for breaking the 'gender contract' which paints women as passive, meek, caregivers. Summarising the differences between male and female desistance pathways, Matthews et al. (2014) note that there are four factors which can explain the difference. Firstly, informal relations and supports are more important for women. Women are also more likely to seek conventional roles of a partner or parent. Thirdly, women are more concerned with seeking roles with social approval. And finally, women appear to be able to change their lifestyle more quickly than men. As has been seen here, desistance literature may be blind to the patriarchal forces at work when women tell and re-tell their desistance narratives. Whilst other feminist criminology literature has moved forward, desistance literature is lagging dangerously behind. Desistance literature which uncritically finds women's pathways out of offending as being linked to the supposed natural caring instincts of women is in danger of replicating the double deviance women face when entering the CJS.

This thesis has highlighted that women's pathways out of offending can be situated in their desire for independence, just as much as their pathways into offending can turn on their desires to be a 'good mother'. Women's apparent desire to seek conventional, pro-social roles can actually mask a patriarchal system which promotes women as gentle, caring and 'feminine'.

Perry (2013) for example found that discourses used by CJS practitioners continue to situate rehabilitation of female law-breakers in conformity to traditional 'feminine' gender norms. Desistance practice should not just replicate social and structural inequalities. Women should be offered alternative roles to mother or partner. Voluntary work, whilst not without its merits, is often put forward as a panacea for women caught up in the CJS. Yet this notion stems from a patriarchal construct of what it is to be a woman. Finally, women's apparent hastier desistance journeys need investigation; if this is true, there is much that men's desistance theory can learn from their female counterparts. If this apparent rapid change masks women's desire to be seen as good and conventional, the patriarchal system is the one which deserves investigation. The much-critiqued patriarchal justice system must not lead, in turn, to a patriarchal desistance system where women's 'hyper-moral' (Matthews et al., 2014) are identities are promoted and where 'goodness' is linked with femininity.

9.5 Turning Points And The 'Power Of Yet'

Some desistance theory places much emphasis on the existence, or otherwise, of 'turning points' in a deviant career which lead to a move away from offending. Their existence is particularly salient within the social bonds literature (Sampson and Laub, 1992). Whilst women involved in this research often indicated key turning points, examination of their desistance narratives showed that the complexities of their lives meant that turning points were unlikely to exist in the sense in which the authors describe in the social bonds literature.

For Anna, Karen, Holly, and Michaela, having children occurred during a time where they felt pressure to 'settle down'. Nonetheless, all four women experienced horrific abuse at the hands of partners. During these periods of abuse, offending for the women lessened. Following the end of these relationships, offending resumed or increased in all cases. For Michaela and Karen, offending revolved around funding heroin addiction. When we met, Michaela had been released from prison, having met her new partner, Shelly and had moved into the HfN Project. She had resumed contact with her son and was in the process of building a new life for herself with Shelly. Karen on the other hand, experienced an epiphany whilst in prison and caring for her friend who died. Upon her exit however, Karen entered temporary accommodation with an agency from which she noted she experienced little support. She was having difficulty maintaining visits with her children, struggling with her methadone prescription and mental health issues. For Anna, it was her second pregnancy which came nearest to a 'turning point' alongside the death of her mother. Yet, her life-long friendships involved her getting caught up in a joint enterprise burglary offence. For Holly meanwhile, resuming care for her daughter once her daughter's father was released from prison, alongside help and support from the WC marked the hopeful beginnings of her desistance journey. Whilst there were numerous potential turning

points in each of these women's lives therefore, their journeys were marked by periods of intermittency (Carlsson, 2012).

As much as the existence of Damascus-style conversions is a tempting concept, women's lives are complex and complicated things. Their journeys are peppered with potential exit signs on the often seemingly endless cycle of deviance. These attempts to exit are not always successful. However, any efforts to move away from offending should be recognised and promoted. Any attempts which do not succeed should not be noted as failures, but examined for potential pitfalls and supported holistically. Women should not be seen as failures but should be taught to believe that they can improve. Psychologist Carol Dweck (2014) considers 'the power of yet', particularly relating this to the achievements of children in education. Perhaps 'the power of yet' should construct the new language of desistance, as 'turning points' when not successful, can often have a detrimental effect on potential journeys of change.

9.6 "I Know What I Want I Just Don't Know How To Get There"

In Chapter 7, it was noted that women attempting to make desistance journeys often have the will to change but are bereft of the ways to make such a conversion. This feeling is encapsulated in the above quote from Grace. In stark contrast, the women who have established both the will and the ways to travel this journey have their feelings encapsulated by Kelly-Marie's quote, "I just take each day as it comes, I know where I'm going, I know what I want and I know what I need to get there." It is the task of social agencies to bridge this gap between the potential beginnings of hope for desistance and its destination, a desisting identity and what Maruna and Farrall (2004) refer to as 'secondary desistance'. The outlining of such a bridge is explored in the implications of the research section in the next chapter.

Kelly-Marie was arguably at a much later stage in her desistance journey; she was attending drug treatment services, importantly alongside her mother, she was gaining housing support from the HfN Project as well as friends and mentors within it, she had developed a business plan embedded in a generative goal, saw her daughters and granddaughters regularly and was receiving daily support from Rebecca. Grace meanwhile, had recently lost her battle to keep custody of her daughter, was no longer receiving weekly support from the WC, although was attending debt management courses alongside counselling. Grace wanted to move out of her 'draughty' home, enjoyed working at her temporary voluntary employment and desired to go to college but was worried she could not afford it, had little contact with her family but had a very good relationship with a best friend who "... stood by me through everything." Grace noted during our interview, "I miss... having a reason to get up." Yet Kelly-Marie had a more prolific offending career than Grace, had been in and out of prison and had been a former heroin addict.

Grace had only one formal criminal offence on her record, had never been in prison and no longer smoked cannabis. Yet her life, which was already difficult, was thrown into chaos following her conviction. Despite some clear sources of light at the end of the tunnel, particularly in her friendship but also in the courses and desire to gain education, these must be supported fully to allow for a good chance to 'get there'. We must not wait for women to hit rock bottom before they get the support they deserve. Desistance therefore does not always centre solely around the move away from criminality. Instead desistance is associated with (re)building lives and making women feel like they matter. This idea will be further explored below.

9.7 A Place Where Everyone Matters

The third chapter of this thesis situated the research in Northshire and indicated some of the inequalities within the county, including educational outcomes as well as highlighting the fact that the county lags behind the majority of the country in terms of life expectancy and child poverty indicators. The county's slogan, nonetheless, is '*A Place Where Everyone Matters*'. Place is an important theme within desistance literature (Farrall et al., 2011; Caverley, 2013). This thesis has highlighted the importance for example of welcoming and open, inclusive places and spaces for desistance journeys to be planned for and debated. These places were largely available to the women involved in this research in both the Northshire Women's Centres (WCs) and Housing for Northshire (HfN) Project. I have also discussed the implications of space for my research (in Chapter 4), both in terms of the layout of the WCs and their desistance spaces as well as the implications of being an outsider to the area.

Space, place and community were consistent themes raised by the women in interviews and observation sessions. Women had a close relationship with their area and largely with their communities. Most of the women interviewed were born in Northshire (Karen was born in Y, a Scottish city and had moved to Southton at a young age, Shelly was born in X, a large city near Northshire and moved to Easton to be with Michaela following her most recent prison sentence) and although some moved around during their lives they all moved back. Marie, for example lived in Rivertown, outside Easton, all her life. She talked about being moved to school in Central Town as a child when her mum changed jobs. She did not like the move to the larger school without her friends and, in hindsight, did not enjoy this period of her life. A move is certainly something which can affect the course of a life and something which social bonds theorists are particularly concerned with as being desistance-inducing (Sampson and Laub, 1992). Later on in her life, and a few months before our interview, Marie moved from one part of Rivertown to the other. This move has contributed to her desistance goals.

I've moved from the bottom of town, which were rough. It went rough, should I say. So we moved out of the way 'cause me mum was up the top end so it's alright, I like it, yeah it's grand. (Marie, Age 40)

Marie found that she did matter in Northton and particularly within her own small community. When this community did not provide an ideal desistance context, Marie was able to move. The end of such a short move within Northshire, indeed within a small community such as Rivertown, was not the desistance destination for all women involved in this research. For Heather and Katie who had been tremendously failed by the CJS and wider institutions within Northshire (solicitors, schools and family), the only possible space to attempt to begin desistance journeys was out of Northshire and indeed out of the country; Heather to Belgium and Katie to Spain. The women had lost all hope in their towns, counties and counties being able to support them. Certainly for Katie and Heather, as well as for other women involved in this research, their narratives did not show Northshire to be '*A Place Where Everyone Matters*'. All women involved in this research suffered personal, sociological and structural inequalities, as a result of 'not mattering', either to themselves, to others or to society as a whole. Arguably it was often the result of these inequalities that the women found themselves caught up in the CJS. This thesis has shown that Northshire can be a place where people matter. When people fall by the wayside, there are systems of support available to them, not least of these being the WCs and HfN Project. Yet it is important to note that other women did not feel they mattered in Northshire. Particularly when they were faced with the CJS, this exacerbated their problems and they were led to view escape as the only way forward. We must let these women know they do matter, deal with their problems at a point before they reach the CJS and provide holistic support for them if and when they do. Desistance journeys are best located within supportive communities. Desistance involves direction and it can also seem to involve a destination. For women in Northshire, this direction and destination must be in a place where they truly do matter.

9.8 The Personal As Political

'The personal is political' was a rallying slogan of second wave feminism and the slogan is particularly poignant when related to the experiences of women travelling or attempting to travel desistance journeys (Hanisch, 1970). In its original conception, the slogan was a challenge towards a patriarchy which promoted family values and women's position within the domestic sphere. The feminist movement has made exponential gains since this first rallying cry. However, the message here is worth repeating. For women travelling desistance journeys, who are often the ones who experienced the deepest inequalities promoted by patriarchy, the personal is

political, their seemingly subjective everyday experiences and the inequalities they face emerge from structural inequalities and discriminations.

For women involved in this research, family was central to desistance. Sommers (1995: 42) noted that women within the CJS tended to internalise the myth that mothers 'are endless founts of nurturance' (see also Rich, 1996). When they themselves did not live up to this myth, the sense of stigmatising shame was palpable. The mothers with convictions involved in this research constantly related their narratives of shame back to their apparent 'failures' as mothers. Rebecca and Paula for example both linked their identities as mothers as being their greatest source of shame following entry into the CJS. The move towards desistance requires a cognitive shift in discourse around motherhood. For women caught up in the CJS, the perpetuation of the double deviance thesis, as discussed above, limits their chances of discovering desistance. Within the male literature for example, fatherhood is presented as a route out of offending, much like motherhood (LeBel et al., 2008.) Yet the shame men feel is constricted by the patriarchal discourse around offending. For mothers in the CJS, desistance is political because it is linked to shame surrounding identity, particularly care-giving identities.

Furthermore, romantic relationships were problematic for women navigating desistance journeys because of the pervasiveness of abuse and violence within their narratives. Feminists have long discussed the political nature of this 'domestic' abuse (Collins, 2000). When abuse is discussed and heard, a woman's sense of identity changes and she is no longer alone. Therefore, within this research, violence and abuse, very personal experiences, became political within the contexts where they were discussed and shared. Our society must take all possible steps to eliminate abuse and violence, yet it must also allow for spaces for this abuse to be discovered and discussed, allowing for women's personal experience to become political and pave the way for abuse-free desistance journeys (Radcliffe and Hunter, 2013).

Mental health is an additional, seemingly personal, ubiquitous element of women's lives evident within their narratives of desistance/persistence. Within my sample of women with CJS experience, fourteen of sixteen talked about mental health issues, as did most women within my 'staff' sample. These issues ranged from anxiety and depression to suicide attempts. Most of these women who discussed mental health also discussed medication that they were on to help with these issues. Whilst the majority of these women discussed the positives of medication, most also found that discussing their problems and practical problem-solving were the most effective methods of controlling mental health matters. There does appear to be a culture of medicalising the marginalised. When women (and men) have mounting problems surrounding poverty, abuse, child loss, work issues etc., there is more and more likelihood that

these problems will be medicalised. I do not claim to be a mental health expert and it is clear that medication is helpful for many people experiencing dire mental health issues. Yet we need to do more. Negating against systematic inequalities which emerge from being both a woman and an 'offender' would certainly appear to be a good place to begin. When these inequalities do lead to despair, we must have counselling systems, without long waiting times, as well as practical, problem-solving support in place. Only then can desistance be possible.

As discussed in Chapter 6, work and employment are themes which social bonds theorists positively link to desistance (Sampson and Laub, 1992; Farrall, 2002; Horney et al., 1995; Carlsson, 2012; Verbruggen et al, 2012). Employment is certainly a theme which can be described of as political yet it is also very personal in its consequences. This thesis has argued that women caught up in the CJS, particularly in the current political context of 'Help to Work' Programmes, are often funnelled into voluntary, crucially unpaid, positions. Employment can be viewed by both theorists and practice as a panacea for solving problems. Yet for many people work is not the answer to their problems. Whilst meaningful employment opportunities need to be created, we should be wary of viewing work as an answer to all desistance issues. On the other hand, housing must always be central to any desistance related intervention. Those without adequate housing, such as Ruth, must not be penalised for the disadvantage. Justice agencies must centralise housing as a key priority but also, government must provide adequate, affordable housing for all and not penalise those who not receive it. Here we see that poverty is political. The neo-liberal, patriarchal society in which we exist must be held accountable for bringing women into the CJS and also must be held accountable for paving the way out. Carlen (1983) noted that it was not that women of lower socio-economic status were more likely to break the law, but it was more likely that they would be criminalised as a result. Arguably this is even truer today with the continued fascination with benefit fraud that is currently pervasive in media and political rhetoric. This dialogue must be critiqued. We must not see any more Heathers, Katies or Ruths entering the doors of the courts. Help needs to be provided for women in the form of welfare support. Certainly poverty is political. If desistance is to be fully embraced, first we must stop the war on the poor which results in so many poor women in the CJS.

For women caught up in the CJS, their personal circumstances are very much linked to their desistance journeys. Issues surrounding abuse and violence, motherhood, mental health, poverty, housing and employment often appear insurmountable. Indeed they are insurmountable alone. There must be recognition within desistance theory and practice that these are structural inequalities that women face on a daily basis, within and outside the CJS, which are created by neo-liberalism and a patriarchy that views women as second-class citizens

seen solely within the confines of relational identities. What is required here is a move towards a greater equality. These are political issues which women cannot face singlehandedly.

9.9 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together some of the most salient themes examined in the previous chapters. I have argued that discourses of 'choice' within the CJS and desistance theory can be problematic. We must recognise the complexity of women's lives if we are to help them along desistance journeys. I have argued that these complexities alongside discourses of choice have often resulted in women appearing 'doomed to deviance'. Desistance for women therefore should not just replicate the gendered inequalities which lead to their involvement in the CJS in the first place, desistance should not mean conformity to gendered norms and we should recognise desistance journeys also as journeys of resistance against these norms. The support which projects provide therefore should be women-focused and allow women who have realised their goals to achieve them by providing support in the right places. Desistance should be viewed as a journey, which might have deviations along the way, yet which is always visible up ahead. In this manner we should embrace and promote 'the power of yet' for women who are having difficulties finding the way. Desistance does not occur in a vacuum. The places and spaces where desistance journeys occur are central to their continued maintenance and promotion. These spaces and places must be somewhere where women feel valued and ultimately supported or else they will root their journeys elsewhere. Finally, we must realise that the personal inequalities and problems faced by women do not appear from nowhere but are the result of systematic inequalities promoted by patriarchal and neo-liberal systems of advanced capitalism.

To this end, we must not neglect macro and structural inequalities in any discussion of desistance. Indeed, it is here where our discussion should begin. At the level of systems of justice, net-widening should be avoided at all costs, social issues should not be solved in systems created for punishment and retribution, no matter the apparent goals. The WCs and HfN programmes provide good examples of desistance spaces for women. The positive features of these must be promoted system wide. We must learn about desistance from those attempting to travel the road as it is these people who are aware of the possible deviations as well as potential desistance shortcuts. These implications will be expanded upon in the final conclusion chapter. This thesis does not provide an answer to all desistance and gender related issues. To this end, I will elaborate on some of the areas for future research in the next chapter. In addition, the next chapter concludes this thesis by returning to the original questions and aims proposed.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has addressed questions around gender and desistance by considering the desistance narratives of a small group of Northshire-based women. In the course of this thesis, a review of the literature included exploration of the history of desistance research as well as the contested meaning of desistance. The three emergent explanations for the 'how' and 'why' of desistance theory were then presented; maturational, sociological and subjective theories emerged as three distinct but interlinked explanations. Connections were made between 'what works' research and desistance in terms of practice. Finally the issue of female desistance was explored through an examination of the emerging literature on desistance experienced outside the hegemonic white, heterosexual, male experience. Standing firmly on the shoulders of desistance giants, an introduction was provided to the social and economic context of the current research, with the particular place of desistance broadly examined. Here there was an introduction to the Women's Centres (WCs) and Housing for Northshire (HfN) project as these community services provided the specific backdrop of the research. Next, the methodological aspects of the research were presented with emphasis placed on the narrative research method. The next three chapters in turn examined the three theoretical perspectives which emerged as salient in the male literature, examining in detail the desistance narratives of the women involved in this research and whether desistance for this group of females was similar or different to what was known about the male experience. An additional chapter considered how female desistance narratives can inform justice systems. The previous chapter tied together some of the most salient themes emerging in the research. In this final chapter, I present the research findings, implications and recommendations for future research. In order to do so, I will first return to the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis. Prior to this however, it is important to set the research in its context by referring to the specific location of the research, as well as its context in the wider reading. Following this, a conclusion will be posed.

10.2 Context

This research has explored the process of desistance through the narratives of Northshire-based women travelling or attempting to travel desistance journeys. A review of the contemporary literature quickly revealed that there was a gap of female voice in what was 'known' about desistance. Indeed what was 'known' about desistance appeared at once very male and pale (Rumgay, 2004). Where there was a female voice, this tended to be heard in a Scottish or

European context. The central aim of the research therefore was to give voice to the plurality of female experience of desistance, particularly the desistance journeys travelled by a group of Northern English women. In giving voice to these narratives, the thesis attempted to address the below questions.

10.3 Research Questions

How and why do females desist from offending? What factors serve as barriers to maintaining abstinence? How do criminal justice interventions influence the process of desistance, if at all? Offending is a transient occupation dependent on both individual and structural factors. How do individual and structural factors interact to influence desistance? Are these factors inherently different for males and females? What are the linking factors and what are the differences for males and females in the process of desistance?

10.4 Findings

In order to address the above questions, I spent a year observing weekly group work sessions aimed at encouraging desistance in a range of Northshire WCs. Following this I conducted narrative, life-course interviews with twelve women attending the groups as part of specified activity orders. Additionally, I interviewed four women at the HfN Project, including the project manager. I also interviewed a volunteer at the HfN Project and four staff members at the WCs. I additionally carried out two six-month follow up interviews with two of the original WC-attending women. Observation notes and interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed using N-Vivo software. Analysis consisted of monitoring for prominent themes from the desistance literature as well as themes from feminist analysis and any emerging points of interest.

Within this research I have found myriad similarities with the male literature. I have found that for women, whether they have experienced the criminal justice system (CJS) or otherwise, offending or deviant behaviour usually peaked in young adulthood and declined thereafter. In terms of the social bonds thesis, there were many key points of similarity in what helped to promote male and female desistance journeys. Employment, for example, emerged as something which was particularly important. Where this employment was meaningful and generative, it was painted by the desisting narratives of this group of Northshire women as being a central aspect of desistance. Linked to this, education was also important. There are very clear routes out of offending which the government can provide therefore and education and employment opportunities must be provided and encouraged by any CJS with desistance at its core. This research also found that desistance was relational; positive, pro-social relationships were central and justice interventions must encourage maintenance of these relationships,

romantic or otherwise. Secure and stable housing was a particularly important desistance element as were supportive communities and safe locations. Here we can see that desistance is not a one-way process. Desistance must involve communities and governments must provide the social capital required to make desistance a cross-gender reality. Ultimately however, desistance journeys are travelled by individuals (ideally with strong support along the way). Themes of hope, self-efficacy, shame, remorse and identity change were all crucial in affecting change. What is clear is that we must learn about desistance from those making desistance journeys, only then can we learn how these cognitive changes interact to produce change or stagnancy. Already, key themes were interlinking (with male desistance explanations) to highlight the way forward for desistance practice. Community justice which enables probationers or ex-prisoners to be close to families, friends and communities is central to desistance promotion. Prison sentences, particularly short-term sentences for non-violent offences are wholeheartedly critiqued.

However, by applying a feminist lens to desistance research, several intricacies within the 'how' and 'why' of desistance as experienced by females emerged. Desistance was not something which happened naturally (Glueck and Glueck, 1950) in this small population of Northshire-based women, but required maintenance. Additionally women entered the CJS at various life stages and were increasingly entering as 'one-off' offenders, usually for transgressions related to benefit fraud. In terms of social bonds, employment was not always a straight forward route out of offending for the women studied herein. Often issues surrounding mental health or homelessness suggested that other vulnerabilities required a solution first of all. Volunteering, it is argued, may be promoted by agencies operating under the presumption that women wanted to take on 'hyper-moral roles' (Matthews et al., 2014). It is suggested that this promotion is a wider consequence of patriarchal systems which promote women's roles as caregivers and unpaid workers. Indeed the social bonds literature, women's narratives of desistance revealed, is teeming with gender prejudice. Women's position as relational beings is questioned in the context of desistance journeys. Women's romantic partnerships were not generally the point around which desistance pivoted. Women involved in this research were revealed to be the non-protagonists, considered within the male literature, to be the pro-social partners of deviant men. This pressure brought with it its own difficulties, particularly when women are facing myriad other social and economic struggles alongside their own criminalisation. Domestic abuse is a topic which cannot be divorced from any discussion on desistance. Often periods of abuse quantitatively produced periods of desistance. This issue clearly highlights that more must be done to address women's issues before they culminate at the doors of courts and police stations. Help and support for women's services must be ring-

fenced in these times of austerity. Furthermore, an exploration of women's narratives also revealed that independence was often the key to desistance for many women, both in terms of romantic partnerships and friendships. It is argued that this is a result of the nature of women's offending which tended to be a solo endeavour as well as the social reaction thesis which highlights women's offending as somehow worse than men's. Nonetheless, friendships could be a key support to desistance journeys and indeed could form a basis of resistance against a male dominated justice system. Additionally, this research did not find that becoming a parent was related to desistance but rather motherhood, at times, offered a 'script' (Rumgay, 2004) for desistance maintenance. Becoming a parent nonetheless was often related to beginnings or continuations of offending. As noted above, housing emerged as being a central desistance theme. Yet widening of the CJS net to solve welfare issues, such as housing, must be avoided at all costs. Structural reform however must be a key concern of governments aiming to reduce offending. Inequality is intimately linked with offending and therefore any attempt to address inequality, including gendered inequality must be central to desistance discourse. Patriarchal culture is unlikely to attract meaningful social bonds for women.

Hopes for the future described by the women in this research were modest, surrounding families, jobs and housing, yet these modest hopes were largely unrealised. The material deprivation and patriarchal culture which means that women are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence, yet they are more likely to be affected by austerity, once in the CJS they are likely to suffer mental health issues mean that there is a gap between hope and self-efficacy. This gap between 'the will' and 'the ways' is crucial in any consideration of desistance. I have found that shame is a gendered phenomenon. Shame can be produced and reproduced when related to gendered victimisation and inability to conform to ideas of a 'good woman' through criminalisation of victims. The 'double deviance' effect means that women are stigmatised negatively even when they are attempting to desist. Women create their own systems of meaning to negate against this shame and stigma. Justice agencies should also help to create these meaning systems and help negate stigmatising shame for these women. Leading on from this, discussions around desistance cannot ignore women's victimisation whether this is a result of abuse, mental health problems, poverty or emerging from contact with the CJS itself. Women caught up in the CJS do not easily fall into the victim/offender binary. Yet when women travel desistance journeys, they are doing so as more than survivors, this research strongly suggests that they are bricoleurs of their own fate, using social and psychological bricolage to travel these journeys. Women need to be offered alternative identities as 'scripts' however, outside the realm of caregivers and unpaid voluntary workers. Often CJS interventions link desistance with conformity to femininity (Perry, 2013) and this is particularly evident in the

promotion of women's roles as caregivers or non-paid workers. Just as men inhabit a variety of identities through which to travel desistance so too do women and this requires recognition.

The rhetoric of the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) agenda to include Payment by Results (PbR) is unhelpful to women attempting desistance journeys. I have found that desistance is a journey, not a destination. Desistance requires maintenance and may include deviations. When employing binary measures of re-offending, failure to comply, will inevitably result in re-stigmatisation. Additionally PbR threatens to draw funding away from the smaller female proportion of the CJS in favour of concentration on male outcomes which are often more likely to produce results (Broad and Spencer, 2014). Resistance to social and gendered constructions of what it means to be a woman can form a central part of desistance journeys just as it can form a part of offending transgressions. The CJS therefore must not equate desistance with conformity to socially constructed ideals of what it is to be a 'pro social' woman. Where 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999) is successful, it is through interventions based on good staff-service user relationships amongst women with similar life experiences (importantly including gendered inequalities), in women-centred agencies which provide a holistic approach to desistance. Desistance is a process of maintenance and requires through the gate and post-programme support. This was largely available to the women in the WCs and HfN Project considered in this thesis and many lessons can be learned from their experience.

It is evident therefore that whilst there are many similarities between the desistance narratives of men and women, within the nuances of these theories are crucial gendered differences. Nonetheless, many of the inequalities and victimisations experienced by women caught up in the CJS are also experienced by their male counterparts. There are individual, sociological and importantly, structural elements to desistance. Journeys can certainly be made in the absence of any of these factors, indeed women have been travelling desistance journeys in the absence of structural inequality since time immemorial. Yet these journeys are particularly difficult. The implications of these findings will now be considered.

10.5 Implications Of Findings

'Equality of opportunity is not enough. Unless we create an environment where everyone is guaranteed some minimum capabilities through some guarantee of minimum income, education, and healthcare, we cannot say that we have fair competition. When some people have to run a 100 metre race with sandbags on their legs, the fact that no one is allowed to have a head start does not make the race fair. Equality of opportunity is absolutely necessary but not sufficient in building a genuinely fair and efficient society' (Chang, 2011: 46).

As noted in the paragraphs above, equality must be a central goal of desistance theorists and practitioners. We cannot deal with the micro whilst letting the macro inequality gap widen and widen at the current rate. There must be pressure on politicians to control market de-regulation which allows for corporations to control, allowing for zero hours contracts, tax avoidance and slavery-under-a-different-name in 'Help to Work' programmes. We must tackle 'domestic' abuse at the source and provide mental health services for those most in need. The inequality gap does nothing for desistance whether it comes from advanced capitalist or patriarchal constructs. We cannot talk about desistance without talking about (in)equality.

Focusing in on justice services, I recommend avoiding net-widening. Chapter 8 discussed the implications of punitive justice systems and the power of discourse surrounding benefit claimants who are further marginalised in our society. We must tackle these issues whilst avoiding a net-widening system which brings women into the CJS for 'their own good' to help with wider social issues such as abuse and housing. This recommendation echoes that of Scraton and Moore in their 2004 investigation into women's imprisonment in Northern Ireland. In the research, the authors discuss the death of a prisoner, Roseanne Irvine, who had been put in prison 'for her own safety'. The echoes within her story with Ruth's experience as well as Heather's, Katie's and Karen's are poignant. The CJS must not be a place where women can go to receive help. It is a dangerous, violent system which lessens chances of receiving employment and family help, even where women are given community sentences. This thesis has shown that problems must be solved before women reach the prison gate or probation door. Where women do appear in courts charged with minor offences such as housing underpayment or minor benefit fraud, they should be offered help elsewhere to enable them to gain the bricolage needed for survival.

Yet many women are sentenced with community orders and access services such as the WCs or leave prison into programmes such as the HfN Project. When they do, there is much potential within these services. This thesis, and particularly Chapter 8, has shown that where services are women-only, holistic, provide mentoring and counselling services as well as practical help, particularly with housing but also with issues such as money management and social activities and provide help following the end of programmes, they can provide ideal structures for 'assisted desistance' (Rex, 1999). The particularly positive practice of both the WCs and the HfN Project in providing support for women often at their lowest ebb must be revised, supported and continued. Austerity measures cannot allow these programmes to suffer. On the other end of the scale, the Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) rhetoric which promotes a binary approach to desistance 'outcomes' should be rejected by these programmes. Desistance has been shown to be a journey not a destination. This research accepts Runggay's (2004) definition of desistance

as a process of maintenance; any movements towards desistance should be supported and encouraged by justice systems. The support provided for holistic systems which allow for setbacks must be allowed to flourish.

Finally, we must learn from service users and those experiencing the CJS what works best for them in terms of desistance promotion. Desistance literature has placed much emphasis on maturity, relationships, work, shame, hope, self-efficacy and identity transformation. These themes are also prevalent in women's narratives about their desistance journeys. Yet when we allow space for women to voice their own personal experiences, only then can we see the make-up, shape and intricacies of desistance pathways. At this point we can help others travelling to build their own roads, allowing them to take ownership of their own journeys. Women entering the CJS have narratives which reflect the experiences of women in general. Their narratives echo the experiences of other women, such as the staff that work with them. Rebecca provides an important example of how narratives can be transformative. She embodies the 'professional-ex' as described by Maruna (2001). It is women like Rebecca who have experienced the CJS first hand who must be leading lights of desistance pathways.

10.6 Recommendations For Future Research

Throughout this research, themes emerged and issues were raised that did not have space for elaboration within the confines of this thesis. For example, women talked about their experiences of restorative justice interventions and this possible link with desistance theory, particularly the gendered context of desistance, needs full elaboration elsewhere. The problematic nature of restorative justice interventions for survivors of abuse and rape should not be neglected. In the course of this research, there have been rapid political changes across the CJS. For example the recent changes to joint enterprise convictions as decided by the Court of Appeal, are particularly salient to the experiences of women within the CJS. This, alongside changes to legal aid, not least the recent developments within the Court of Appeal of changes to legal aid support for domestic violence victims has much to offer the field of desistance theory and practice. On a wider scale, the impacts of the Transforming Rehabilitation Agenda and the wider impact of privatisation across the CJS, particularly within probation and prison systems requires much more focus, the level and the timing of which this thesis was unable to explore.

This thesis found that intersectionality was not something which was experienced 'sectionally' for women within and outside the CJS. For example, women's desistance experience did not solely revolve around their identity as a lesbian nor as a Christian, yet these identities did have a fluctuation effect on their desistance journeys (for example religion is much explored in the literature whereas sexuality is not – indeed a heteronormative approach is employed by most

social bonds theorists –see for example Sampson and Laub’s focus on heterosexual marriage (1992)). This thesis was largely focused on the desistance experience of white, working-class women. Desistance as experienced by women of different ethnic backgrounds and of different social classes requires elaboration elsewhere.

Finally, the temporal experience of this research did not allow for a significant follow-up of these women’s journeys. This is certainly something which must be considered. This thesis has argued that desistance is not experienced as an ‘event’ nor a ‘turning point’ but something which requires consistent maintenance and attention, as well as potential deviations. For this reason, follow ups are required.

10.7 Conclusion

A brief glance at desistance literature shows that, much like wider criminological research in the past, it has paid scant attention to ‘the woman question’ (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988). The normative view in criminological research on desistance appeared to be that gender had no significant implication. Yet this research has found the social construction of gender to be central in desistance journeys. This research adds significantly to what is known about desistance generally and desistance of females more specifically. Men’s desistance theory and practice can learn much from women’s narratives. This thesis has enabled a view of desistance as a complicated journey, replete with stops and starts and reactions to structural (often gendered) inequalities. The ‘power of yet’ must be promoted in any concept of desistance theory or practice.

Women caught up in the CJS lead complicated lives. Desistance is not something which occurs naturally but occurs within the complicated social structures of their daily lives. Desistance for these women requires hope and self-efficacy as well as recognition of and addressing the realities of their lives, whether these are issues related to relationships, housing, poverty, abuse, mental health or an amalgamation of them all. Any intervention must address these social issues as well as promoting cognitive changes and identity change. Cognitive changes are difficult however in a society which sees women law breakers as ‘doubly deviant’ and simultaneously penalises women for being women (through greater austerity measures). Therefore structural changes also need to be addressed in order to effectively promote women’s desistance. The fact that gender is socially constructed is intimately linked to the theory and practice of desistance. The women travelling these desistance journeys face the same inequalities and day to day struggles experienced by all women. Yet their narratives have shown that women can make wonderful contributions to what is known about desistance. The fact that they are travelling

these journeys at all should be commended and celebrated. Women's desistance can challenge patriarchal and neo-liberal constructs just in the same way women's offending often does.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix One: Profiles

Grace

Grace was 31 at the time of our interview in August 2014 and had been living in the “nicest part of Northton” for the past five or six years. Grace is a former construction worker who currently volunteers in a local charity shop, a hangover from her community service which she kept up when her requirement was over. Grace is a timid young woman who speaks quietly. Our interview took place in the same room of the Northton Women’s Centre where Grace had been attending her group meetings. She describes her offence as being “the wrong thing but for all the right reasons.” Grace had been growing cannabis in her home when the police were alerted by a social services worker who was visiting Grace and her two and a half year old daughter. She describes her decision to grow the cannabis as a rational, considered choice. She stated that the house she was living in was cold and prone to draughts and the cannabis farm helped to heat it. Grace poignantly describes how she would be paid for the cannabis in two instalments, one just before her daughter’s birthday and the other just before Christmas. She states that she spoke to many people who told her that her daughter would not get taken away even if she was caught. As a result of the discovery initially by social services and reported to the police, Grace’s daughter was taken into care. Grace fought for custody until November 2013, a year after the discovery. At the time of the interview, Grace had just received a letter stating that social services had found adoptive parents for her daughter and also stated that she was “happy”. In addition to losing her daughter, Grace received a 12 month suspended sentence for two years and 150 hours community service. Nonetheless, it is clear that Grace is completely distraught about the loss of her daughter and this is the main cause of her pain. She breaks down crying numerous times throughout the course of the interview, particularly when her daughter is mentioned.

Grace was born the eldest of four children; she has two brothers and a sister. She does not currently speak to any of her siblings. Grace describes herself as a quiet child who enjoyed primary school and sat at the “top tables.” However once she entered high school this began to change. According to her own narrative, Grace began smoking weed and drinking at weekends “to the point of passing out” at 12 or 13, a result of becoming friends with the “wrong people”. At age 15 she was thrown out of the family home and at 16 was arrested for shoplifting food. The police did not charge her at this

stage as they recognised she was shoplifting to survive. Instead, they took her home to her mother however by this stage her relationship with her mother had completely broken down. Until the most recent offence, this was Grace's only run in with the police and courts. Nonetheless she describes herself as a regular cannabis smoker. Grace gave up construction work when she became pregnant with her daughter. At the time of the interview, Grace is negotiating a paid position in the charity shop she works at due to a paid staff member going on maternity leave. She is also researching funding opportunities for attending a local college but is worried that she would be unable to claim benefits whilst studying and would therefore be unable to fund gaining GCSEs. In the future she hopes to be a social worker or a counsellor. "When you've been there you can sympathise with the person, obviously give them advice that I wish I'd have had when I was starting out sort of thing."

Grace describes her dad as the only member of her family who has not judged her, although she admits they have lost touch in recent years. The main person in her life is her best friend, Sarah who comes to stay with her every weekend from Thursday until Sunday. During these weekend stays Sarah and Grace do "childish things" like rollerblading or feeding the ducks. Grace met Sarah several years ago through an ex-boyfriend. It is clear that Sarah is a kindred spirit who was similarly quiet as a child yet now, when they are together "you can't shut us up". Grace describes Sarah as having always stood by her. Grace describes Sarah as someone who has never been in trouble with the police and indeed laughs at the suggestion. Grace describes herself as suffering from low moods particularly when her daughter was taken away, she recalls staying in bed for two weeks. Despite being offered medical help, she is wary of taking antidepressants; "like you're not going to take this and then be fine. It's not like that." Instead Grace finds the best method is talking about her problems. At the time of the interview she is seeking to start receiving counselling at the Women's Centre but in the meantime finds solace in talking to her friend Sarah. Grace lives by herself during the week and does not mention any desire for a romantic relationship. Other than being with Sarah, Grace enjoys spending time alone and does not see this changing in the next five years. Grace has "everyday hopes" for her future "carrying on with further education. I don't want to be stuck in a dead end job, I want to have a nice job, get driving, a nice house. "

Katie

I first met Katie at her last group session at Northton Women's Centre. For our first interview, Katie and I meet in a busy shopping centre café in Central Town. Katie also

lives in Northton but was coming to Central Town that day in August 2014 for some shopping. For our second interview in February 2015, we returned to the familiar setting of the Women's Centre. During both interviews, Katie was very emotional when talking about her offence and breaks down crying multiple times throughout. In February 2013, following an arrest in March of the previous year, Katie pleaded guilty to a benefit fraud charge. Since the arrest, Katie states that she has attempted suicide on numerous occasions; her 37 year marriage has broken down; she has been paranoid and suffering from panic attacks. At the first interview Katie said that most days she would not leave the house, although at our second meeting, a year into her eighteen month supervision order, her mental health had improved somewhat.

Katie is 60 years old and has lived in Northton throughout her entire life other than a year spent in Y in her teenage years when her father, a miner had to move for work. Her mother was a weaver. Katie describes her childhood as a happy but strict one. The family returned to Northton after a year as Katie's father did not like the new area. At this stage, Katie and her younger sister went to live with her grandmother whilst her parents ran a pub. Talking about her grandmother, Katie says; "She was a big person in my life when I was younger... She was more like a mother really than my mother." There were no incidents of offending in Katie's younger life as she claims her parents were so strict she was scared to do anything wrong. In later years, Katie found out that she had two uncles on her father's side that were in prison but her father no longer spoke to them. Katie performed well in school, but was forced by her mother to leave after age 15. She had wanted to go into nursing as a younger woman, but her mother would not allow it as it would mean having to live on the hospital grounds. "She said, 'If you live on campus, you'll end up being a prostitute because there's nobody there to tell you what to do and what not to do, so you'll just do what you want, because you're not very knowledgeable about boys.' And that was her attitude. It was really difficult, really strict." Katie felt that her parents were stricter on her than her younger sister, which she felt was explained by her mother, as once her father had died; she explained that Katie had always been the favourite and that was the reason for the caution surrounding her behaviour.

After getting married at the age of 22 to a former soldier and long distance lorry driver, Katie followed the family tradition and became a licensee at a working men's club. She had three children, all girls. Katie and her husband also became foster parents once they moved back into her parents' 6 bedroomed house. Following a hysterectomy, Katie put on a lot of weight, going up to 19 stone by the end of the 1990s. She became diabetic and needed a wheelchair to get about; as a result, Katie was put on Disability Living Allowance and had to give up her job. Her doctor prescribed a new drug, Byetta which

helped Katie control her diabetes and lose weight. As a result in 2003/2004, Katie applied to go back to work; she went to college and began a catering course, with a key worker from the job centre assisting her. Following the course, Katie got offered a job supervising a cleaning team. Eventually, Katie started work at a local Michelin starred restaurant and hotel as a supervising housekeeper. Katie told me that during the job interview, Katie stated what she could and could not do and this was cleared with the job centre, who stated that she would be on disability allowance indefinitely unless there were any changes in her circumstances. Around this time, Katie began struggling in her work. She described the work as arduous, despite being exempt from heavy lifting and buying equipment to help with the work. At home over Christmas, Katie had a fall and as a result started overdosing on prescription painkillers to help with the pain and to help her do her job. She started taking 16 painkillers a day. She was not enjoying the work and felt that she was bullied by the other staff. Katie left work in March of 2012. Two days later, Katie was arrested. During our first interview, Katie described in great detail the day of her arrest; the knock on the door at 6.30 in the morning and her fear that her husband had been in an accident; her collapse in the police station; vomiting in her cell as she waited to be interviewed for 6 hours without food or water or access to her medication; the interview process where she was shown police footage of herself out shopping, in college and taking her daughter to the hospital walking without a walking stick in parts and was aggressively questioned about this for two hours and her eventual release on bail. In the three months following the arrest, Katie's weight dropped to 9 stone from 12, and she began to get depressed, anxious and paranoid. In June 2012, she was told that she would either be charged in the next 12 months or the case would be dropped. In the intervening period, Katie attempted suicide on numerous occasions. After Christmas, she received a letter informing her that she would be charged. Katie stated that she had seen a counsellor at this time who advised her that she was not well enough to go through a court case; as a result of this advice, Katie pleaded guilty to the benefit charge brought against her despite the wishes of her barrister. Katie received an 18 month supervision order, was ordered to pay £145 in charges and pay back the £12,000 benefit, which she has been paying back at a rate of £5 per week.

Since her arrest and charge, Katie has been told she can apply for benefit again but is terrified of doing so. She is constantly depressed and anxious, receiving a course of counselling at a local mental health unit. Katie and her husband are on an Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA) to avoid bankruptcy, something which predated the case. She describes her financial situation as "knackered...Well, we've just no money...we're

paying out £275 more than what we've got a month so we're really in dire straits." On the day that we had our first interview, Katie's youngest daughter was moving back into the home and Katie suspected it was to keep an eye on her, to make sure she does not do "anything stupid". Katie also lives with her granddaughter and two grandsons; her husband comes home on Saturday evening and leaves very early on Monday morning. When we met up for the second interview, her grandson's friend had also moved in with the family after getting kicked out of his own home. At the second interview, Katie's 19 year old granddaughter, Natalie, had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Katie is extremely upset by this development. Katie feels her family relationships; particularly that with her husband have broken down since her charge and arrest. In the second interview Katie describes herself as "friends" with her husband but states that they are no longer in a relationship. Under the terms of the IVA, they have to live together but once this is up in September 2015, Katie said that she does not know what will happen although she'd like them to get back together. She also described a disconnect with her daughters as she feels they don't understand her depression. "I said to my daughters; they're the same, you know, 'I don't feel well'; 'Oh get over it, stop being so stupid.'" Her relationship with her younger sister has also broken down. She has a friend that she's had since childhood, Rose and she states in both interviews that the friendship has remained strong and it is clear that she finds comfort in this relationship. Katie is on a myriad of medication including antidepressants and diabetic medication as well as very strong painkillers. During our first interview Katie described not getting out of bed all day most days but by February 2015, Katie had taken on a part time volunteering role at a local charity shop one day a week, as encouraged by her counsellor. She enjoys being in the shop, where she manages the till and chats to the regular customers. During the first interview Katie states that above all she wants to leave England and ideally move to Spain. She has lost all faith in the police and CJS. This desire remained during our second interview but has been complicated by her granddaughter's illness.

Paula

Paula was 36 at the time of our interview at the Rose Centre in Easton in August 2014. Our interview had been rescheduled due to her 7 year old son having an accident at the park which resulted in an operation on his arm. Paula also has a 5 year old son. At the time of our interview Paula was coming to the end of a 12 month supervision order which is part of her 2 year suspended sentence for burglary. Initially Paula was also given a six month prison sentence but this was appealed; in total Paula spent 6 days in X Prison. She describes her offence as a "one off"; Paula is an alcoholic who stole and

sold on some expensive jewellery from her grandmother's house. She handed herself in for the offence to the police. As a result of the sentence, Paula accessed rehabilitation services and now describes herself as "out of addiction." Through the contact with the Women's Centre, Paula has accessed employment support but had not yet found work. Paula is upbeat and friendly throughout our interview.

Paula grew up in Weston in a Catholic family, the oldest of seven children. She describes a difficult childhood with an alcoholic father. Her father and birth mother separated when she was 1 and her father separated from her step mother not long after. Paula did not know that she had a different mother to her siblings until she was 13 when her mother "showed up". Since then her birth mother has been in and out of her life. She describes this as a triggering factor for her alcoholism. "I think it's just one of those things that you block and block and block, and then you explode... and the drink took it all away." Paula was brought up by her grandparents, her father's parents, and her aunt. She describes herself as a well-behaved child, with her first memories of offending as stealing 50p from her father and feeling so bad about it that she didn't spend it and put it back.

Paula describes her ex-partner, the father of her children, as a particularly negative force in her life. Her children currently live with him during the week and come to stay at her four bedroomed rented house in Easton at the weekend. The children were taken to live with their father as a result of Paula's alcoholism. Paula has suffered domestic violence in the past which she describes as "just one of them things." Paula does not speak to her siblings nor her birth mother and her father died seven years previously. Paula notes that the offence caused her to reconsider some of her friendships and has lost contact with some of these previous friends as a result. Nonetheless, Paula made new friends in rehab and she speaks to them "every day". A lot of her new friends have had trouble with the police in the past. "I think that's why we get on so well, because we all understand each other and don't judge each other." Paula is seeing a new partner for about two months although she describes the relationship as "early days". He does not know anything about the offence; Paula is pragmatic about this however and states; "If they're a keeper, they're not going to be bothered." A significant relationship in Paula's life is the relationship with her grandmother. It was her grandmother's belongings that Paula stole but she states that their relationship has since improved. "It's like it never happened, to them. I still struggle a bit." She describes her grandmother as a positive influence in her life who has dealt with both her son and granddaughter's addictions. Paula's ambition is to become a drugs and alcohol counsellor and she wants to go to college to study for her qualifications. Although her mental health was affected by her

addiction, Paula states that rehab has turned her life around. "Before I went to rehab, I was ready to chuck myself off a bridge but now because I think I've put everything in perspective and dealt with everything, all my issues, I'm feeling really good."

Sue

I met Sue at the first Women's Centre session I attended in Southton and our interview took place in the middle of August 2014, in a café in New Town precinct. Our original interview was rescheduled due to a death in Sue's family. Sue was a 40 year old living in Southton, originally from Central Town. Fourteen months prior to our interview, Sue had been charged with drink driving, she had had an argument with her then husband and was driving down the motorway "erratically" after having a drink. She was sentenced to 140 hours community service, an 18 month probation supervision, was given a 2.5 year driving ban and was ordered to attend a Drink Impaired Driver (DIDs) Course. She had just finished the DIDs course the week before our meeting. Much like Paula, she described her offence as a "one off". She states that she had never driven after drinking previously and she would not do it again. Sue's divorce was finalised in February 2014 and when we met she was in the process of selling off the marital home whilst living in her cousin's spare room and had recently purchased a new home.

Sue described herself as having been a quiet, reserved child. The eldest of two girls, her father was an accountant and the family were relatively well off. Although she attended the local primary school, Sue went to private school as her parents "just wanted me to have a good education." As a result, Sue lost a lot of her school friends as she became known as the "posh girl" amongst former associates. Nonetheless, Sue made good friends at private school. When she was 16, Sue's mother died from cancer. She described this as the first of many "turning points" in her life. At the time Sue was considering going to the local high school for her A-Levels but following her mother's death was advised to stay on in private school where she had the established support network of teachers and friends. Following this, Sue went to university, which she states brought her "back to myself." Following university Sue got a job at an airline doing air tours. Sue stated that once Sue and her sister had left for university, their father struggled to live on his own and began drinking. Although he had been remarried twice, Sue noted that he never got over her mother's death. Sue's father died at the age of 61 when Sue was 30. This was another turning point in her life. She entered counselling and was prescribed anti-depressants. She gave up paid work and as a result of her inheritance from her father, was able to work voluntarily full time. She worked as a teaching assistant in a primary school and then when she moved to Southton she began

working for a children's hospice. She described the volunteering work as having been a very positive pursuit. "And the voluntary work was something that actually helped me because I was actually doing something that I actually wanted to do." Sue told me that she has been in long term relationships since the age of 17; two four year relationships which ended due to entering university and leaving university respectively. She then entered a ten year relationship whose ending she blames on herself for having become a different person when her father died. "I started with panic attacks and anti-depressants; he just couldn't deal with it. He eventually had an affair, which completely destroyed me as well but obviously that happened for a reason as well." Following this, Sue met her husband, Mark, but the relationship fell apart soon after they were married. Sue suggested that their argument was to blame for her actions on the day of her offence; "for me it's obviously an emotional issue".

Sue purported that the offence and sentencing has been a "wake up call, made me address a lot of things." Sue completed an eight week counselling session at the Women's Centre alongside a self-esteem and assertiveness course. Her flexible voluntary work and financial stability enabled Sue to attend these courses alongside the DIDS Course, Women's Centre group sessions and probation meetings. She hoped to attend an emotions course in the future. Nonetheless, Sue stated that she feels "all coursed out" at times.

In March 2015 I had contacted Sue to request a follow up interview. I received no reply but did not find this strange as this had happened with many of the women. In November of the same year I received a text from Sue's sister informing me of her sudden death in March following a brain haemorrhage. Sue was the first woman I spoke to who gave her agreement to be interviewed and was a big support in my work. This thesis is partly dedicated to Sue's memory.

Anna

Anna was 36 when we met for our interview in October 2014. When I first contacted her Anna invited me to her house where she lives with her two children and a pet rabbit. Inviting me via text she stated "happy to meet anywhere. I've no secrets. I'm a very honest person." In the end we decided it would be better to meet for lunch in a local independent café in Central Town where she lived. She had just come from visiting a friend who had recently become a widower. She was taking him some food. In my notes I describe Anna as "friendly, funny, sociable and bubbly." Throughout the interview she cracks jokes and laughs even when talking about her difficult childhood and relationship abuse. She had been arrested in December 2013 for a joint enterprise burglary charge.

She had been driving the car at the time but insisted that she hadn't known what was happening when her friend robbed a house. This was her first offence. Nonetheless she had been drinking and taking drugs from the age of 11 or 12 and had been involved in fraud in the past. "If you'd have caught me 10 years ago I'd have deserved everything." For her most recent conviction however, Anna received a two year suspended sentence, probation with a supervision order attached, the 10 week course at the Women's Centre and another mentoring community project for which she was referred from probation. Anna describes herself as having been a "goody two shoes" until the start of her second year in secondary school when she started drinking, smoking and taking drugs such as LSD. She describes her father as quite strict. Nonetheless, herself, her older brother and sister and younger brother managed to break the rules as her parents weren't aware of alcohol and drugs. Anna's older sister has been "poorly" all her life; "everything's like a black and white situation to her. Everything's black and white, there's no in between, she's kind of like stuck at a young age in her head, she's never matured." Anna's older brother on the other hand has been taking drugs for as long as Anna can remember and introduced Anna to that way of life at a young age. In a similar way, Anna introduced her younger brother to a similar lifestyle when at age 14 he came to live with his 18 year old sister. "I got him in with my mates, as you do, and twice now it's happened, he's gone down the wrong path... He become like from a very lovely talking boy to a very angry, need to prove himself... And I still see the fault now." When Anna was doing her GCSEs, her father went to prison; "it kind of like blew me into a world of criminality to be honest with you because he'd went down for guns. They'd made him out to be some big gangster as well the papers. Aw yeah, it spiralled, my life, out of control 'cause then you get all the naughty ones coming forward then it's like, "oh guns"! It's like a big thing." Guns had been normalised throughout Anna's and her siblings' childhood. "It was never like talked about, it were only when you got to the teenage stage and you were like, 'hang on... let me think, they are illegal'. Every time he would ground us, we'd make the ammunition, so we used to sit grinding, and put gunpowder into the shells, lubing the ends and putting the little lead ends into them." Anna has since had a difficult relationship with her father who has been in and out of prison throughout her life. Anna credits her mother with providing the household with normality and describes her mother as a positive influence in her life. Anna's mother died in 2010 and prior to this, Anna had been her mother's carer during her illness. After her mother's death, Anna found it difficult to cope.

When she was 22 Anna became pregnant with her daughter. Her daughter's father abused Anna "in every single way". She describes physical, mental and sexual abuse at

his hands and this resulted in Anna having health issues with her back, the result of slipped disks. When this relationship ended, Anna later got pregnant with her son from a one night stand. Her son's father lives in the same estate but does not take any part in her son's upbringing. Her son has ADHD and problems with allergies and as a result Anna "has a lot of stuff in the house to maintain." Prior to her sentence, Anna had also been taking care of her niece, her younger brother's daughter. However following her conviction, custody over her niece was granted back to Anna's brother and his partner. Anna has had a difficult relationship with social services throughout her life. Anna has worked in food vans until she became a carer for her mum. She is also a trained reflexologist. Due to her health problems she is currently not working. Although finances have been tough in the past, Anna has seen a recent improvement due to receiving disability benefits for herself and her son.

Throughout her life Anna has gone through many "turning points." With the birth of her first child Anna attempted to turn her life around. However following years of abuse from her daughter's father, the relationship broke down. Anna turned to alcohol and what she described as "a criminal lifestyle." Anna described an incident where she almost stabbed her younger brother and describes this as a further turning point. "I were proving a point back then, I wanted to be better than my brothers, I wanted to be in that big crowd, I wanted to be there with the gangsters do you know what I mean? And I did it one day and I got there looked at them all and I thought, "What am I doing here?" I thought, "I've got here now. I've achieved it" And it was no fun, it were full of dickheads. Not for me." Nonetheless, this lifestyle was not easy to escape. Throughout Anna's narrative, she longs for the day when she can "be me". She wants to disassociate herself with her family and former acquaintances, move out of the estate she has lived in most of her life and raise her children elsewhere; " I want a new area where no one knows me name and I can be me, not whatever everybody expects me to be. 'Cause that's part of life that. You can't change if you're still expected to be the same cow you've always been. I don't wanna be like that, I don't wanna be a criminal, all my friends are doing that. I want normal friends and you can't find them in the estate at all, I'll tell you, there's not one person who is legit." Although Anna states that her life is currently "a bit messy", she goes on to note; "I think it's getting better. It'll never stay messy for long though, I'm a bit OCD, you know even when it comes to life. And... it's alright, it's getting better yeah, the only things I care about is the kids. If they're happy I'm happy."

Karen

Karen was 36 when we met for our interview in the "Housing for Ex-Offenders" unit she was living in in Southton. I had first met Karen at a Women's Centre meeting the previous week. She had arrived late to the meeting and was extremely apologetic; she was limping asked for the door to be open as she was on medication that makes her sweat. She talked openly about a previous violent relationship at the group session. Much like Anna's, Karen's most recent offence was a joint enterprise offence for burglary. She had been staying at a friend's house when he woke her in the middle of the night to ask for help moving stolen goods into his flat. Karen has been in trouble with the police throughout her life, from a young age and ever since beginning her heroin addiction. However this was her first burglary offence, her previous offences were for "just for being petty, just for stupid things." This notoriety within the CJS helped with the sentencing of the most recent offence; her friend had been trying to suggest that she had been violent and threatening; "but luckily the police have known me for years and they said "look you know Karen's not like that." So they didn't believe it because they know I'm not like that." Karen's sentence was a 6 month prison sentence and 6 month community license including working with probation and the Women's Centre as well as a Christian voluntary service once a week which works with men and women to address "personal, relational or sexual issues." She has been offered voluntary work with the service but this is dependent on her health improving.

Karen moved to Southton from Y (a Scottish city) when she was "6 or 7" with her parents and her younger sister. Karen's mother had given her father an ultimatum to leave his friends and gang-related lifestyle. They went to live with Karen's grandmother who was working in Southton hospital at the time. She describes her family as a "good Catholic family." She no longer speaks to her sister and describes their relationship as "like chalk and cheese." Her relationship with her mother has been rocky but her mother now looks after 3 of her 4 children. Karen describes herself as being a "boisterous tom boy" as a child and "hard work." She got excluded from high school at an early age and was out of education for a year before the education department forced her mother to send her on a residential course or else risk a fine. Karen ran away to London whilst she was younger and lived in a property which was attacked by "yardies" and ended up in custody. She states that she was lucky to get out of London alive. Although she began low level offending from an early age, her more serious offending started during her early twenties, after the breakup of her first son's father, before her heroin addiction properly started. "I think it's 'cause I looked up to older people and I was always with the lads, I did what they did... And I think they buzzed off it 'cause I was a girl." Karen had her first son to her partner of five years, Tom at age 18. During this time, Karen

“never went out, I was quite family orientated.” With the breakup of this relationship however she restarted offending and “basically re living my youth”. During this period, Karen also began forced street prostitution for drug dealers. Karen met Sean and got pregnant with 3 further sons during their 10 year relationship. Again, she “settled down” for a few years but over time, Sean began to abuse Karen physically, mentally and sexually. Although the police were informed, Karen didn’t press charges “so it looked bad on me for the children.” She was in and out of refuges at this time. Karen later went to live with her mum and 3 youngest children whilst her oldest son went to live with his father’s parents. Karen’s mother then kicked her out of the house because of her drinking. Her children often blame Karen’s mother for kicking her out and this has resulted in Karen being unable to see her children. “I’ve not been seeing them now because my mum doesn’t like me seeing them, they get upset, they don’t want me to go, and then they just take it out on my mum. Because they remember me and my mum arguing because my mum doesn’t like me drinking.” Karen admits that her mum has been doing “an amazing job” at raising her children. As Karen has only recently split up with Sean, she is not interested in getting into a new relationship as she is scared of what he would do if she was with a new partner. Karen does not work due to her health; she has deep vein thrombosis and anxiety issues with panic attacks which she relates to a rape and being locked up for two weeks by Sean. She had been living at the accommodation for ex-offenders since her release from prison in June 2014 and hopes to get permanent accommodation soon. However she feels that the agency does not do enough to help her by getting her on housing lists for social housing, “I feel like I have to tell her [the accommodation staff] what to do which is shit really.”

When in prison during her most recent sentence, Karen met a woman, Louise who was critically ill with cancer. Louise was moved to Karen’s unit two weeks after she came to prison. Karen was not happy with the treatment Louise received in prison. As a result of prison staff shortages, Karen effectively became Louise’s carer; “So I started getting her up, getting a flannel, washing her... and basically just getting her up and back, getting her in the chair and making her feel like one of the girls for as long as I could . I used to take her round, push her round the prison.” Karen negotiated higher medication dosages for Louise and looked after her until her death. Karen described this experience as “an eye-opener... You know just seeing her losing her family you know, seeing that she didn’t have a choice.” At the Women’s Centre, Karen appeared confident and genuine, as she did throughout our interview. However at the end of the interview she broke down crying saying, “I just put a front on all the time, and it’s hard work, it’s

horrible. Deep down I'm so soft... I've to keep this front on because of the lifestyle that I've lived and I'm tired of it now, I'm drained, I've had enough."

Ruth

Ruth was 31 at the time of our interview at Southton Women's Centre in October 2014. Ruth was currently at "no fixed abode" but came from the area originally. Our interview took place following a Women's Centre meeting with Ruth, Karen and another woman, Helen, led by Jenny. The subject was family and relationships and Ruth was quite quiet throughout. However, what answers she did give made it clear that she had negative relational experiences. I had first met Ruth the previous week when she was the only woman to turn up to the group, led by Jenny on housing and money management. Although she was obviously a bit more talkative at this initial meeting, it was clear that Ruth is generally a reserved person. When I initially asked her to do the interview, she replied that she'd be happy to although she didn't know if it would be much use as she was not a reoffender and it was a one off offence "that I didn't even realise I was committing." Ruth's first time offence was about an over payment of housing benefit, income tax and income support. She had been paying off the over payment since December 2013 but was taken to court in July 2014 as a result of suspended repayment. Ruth's sentence was a 12 month probation order, served through the Women's Centre. At the time of our interview Ruth had been coming to the Women's Centre for eight weeks. When asked her opinion of the sentence, Ruth replied that she thought it was "harsh considering I'd never had a criminal record before, I've never been in trouble before and now I've got a criminal record for something that was their mistake." It appeared to Ruth however that there may be a double motive in the sentence; "they said it was to make me aware that the overpayment was wrong but it was also to open other doors to help me find accommodation because I have been homeless the past 10 month."

Ruth was the youngest of 4 children. Her mother died when she was 6 months old because of heart failure related to alcoholism. Her father was addicted to heroin at the time. Although her father is "still around somewhere", he left the family after her mother's death. Although she made an effort to get to know him at 18, she felt the effort was not reciprocated and gave up the attempt to make contact. Her mother's parents raised Ruth and her siblings although her granddad died in 1990, her grandmother lived until 2010. Nonetheless Ruth did not have a perfect relationship with her grandmother; "My grandma was there for everything else but the emotional side." Ruth has two older brothers; one who has been a heroin addict for the vast majority of his life and another

who died at 24, the result of heroin overdose. She also has an older sister, Fiona whom she had been close to until recently. When Ruth's 9 year relationship broke down in December 2014, she went to live with Fiona. However Fiona's husband kicked her out and Ruth has not spoken to her since. Prior to her 9 year relationship, Ruth had two children, Harry who was 14 and Niamh who was 11 at the time of our interview. Their father's parents currently have custody of the children. "I let them go to their grandma and granddad for the single fact it's more stable than they'd get. And with the upbringing I've had, I wanted better for them than what I got." Ruth visits the children once a week. Since December 2013, Ruth has been homeless and has been sofa surfing as well as living on the streets. Ruth had been working 55 hours a week; 40 hours as a cleaner in a school and 15 hours in a bar job, which carried on for 2 months after Ruth was made homeless. However in February 2014, Ruth gave up work as she "couldn't physically do it any more, I was just so tired." Despite always working since leaving school, Ruth has since been "on the sick." She has had mental health problems since becoming homeless and on Mother's Day 2014, Ruth attempted to kill herself. "Even though I got letters at the time off the doctors stating my frame of mind hasn't been brilliant since Christmas, it still hasn't made me a priority because the medication I've been on hasn't been strong enough for me to be put on the priority list." Nonetheless this attempt has made Ruth address some of the issues that she faced and no longer holds anger towards her brother for killing himself.

Although Ruth is understandably negative about her outlook for the future, she does hold out hope of getting a house and a job in the future. Her children are her main source of hope and the main reason she keeps going. "They're [the children] the only thing, the only two things keeping me going at the moment, I haven't got a whole lot to smile about at the minute, as you've been aware. But hopefully something will change, very soon."

Marie

Marie's interview takes place at her home in Rivertown, outside Easton in November 2014 where she lives with her 17 year old daughter, Jo and wife of 8 years, Claire and their two dogs. I meet both Claire and Jo at different points in the interview. Marie is 40 years old. She has moved to the house in the 6 months prior to the interview, moving from the bottom of the town and an area she describes as "rough" but is enjoying the new house and area. The day prior to our interview, Marie had her tag removed which

she had been wearing for the previous month. Marie had been charged with handling stolen goods, a charge she received as a result of “flagging”; stealing stone flags, mainly from building sites. On top of the curfew and electronic tag, Marie also received a 12 month probation order including 10 weeks at the Women’s Centre and a 6 month driving ban. It was the loss of her license which hit Marie the hardest; as well as creating a barrier to “flagging”, it has also halted Marie from driving a friend who also lost his license around his farm, taking her mother to the hospital, helping with her dog walking business and escaping from the fights her and her Claire have been having. A month into the sentence, Marie notes; “I haven’t driven yet. I’ve been good.”

Marie was born in Easton and moved to Rivertown when she was 4 and her parents split up. She lived with her mother, stepfather, 2 older brothers and younger half-brother. When she was younger, Marie’s mother had a shop in Central Town. Marie describes her mother as her “best mate.” She still sees her father now and again; he has now moved to Southton. One of her older brothers owns a manufacturing company in Easton and Marie describes him as a “millionaire.” Marie has recently fallen out with him; “he thinks he’s something... I don’t agree with what he’s like.” Her other brother lives abroad in Kuala Lumpur and she has a good relationship with him. Her youngest brother is 27 and a teacher in Easton. He lives with their mother as he is “in between at the moment.” Marie describes herself as a “comic” “a bit of a bugger” and “the class clown” in her younger days. Her first memories of offending are shoplifting sweets at age 11 or 12 from her mother’s shop but states that her real offending has only been since the age of 30. “I were a bit of a bugger but I weren’t really bad. I weren’t as bad then as I am now.” After school, Marie worked for St John’s Ambulance for 10 years in a volunteer role, teaching first aid. When the St John’s Ambulance Service in Rivertown closed, Marie went back to college to do A-Levels; she got a diploma and went to nursing college. It was at this stage Marie became pregnant with her daughter which resulted in her dropping out of nursing college. Afterwards, Marie ran a pub and hotel in Easton with her ex-partner, Joan. When the pub was robbed, her partner attacked the robber, ending up with 3 years and 10 months in prison. Marie also almost got sentenced to prison herself but told the court that she had actually saved the robber’s life; “I stood my ground; he would have been dead if it weren’t for me... But she beat the shit out of him, he were nearly dead.” This incident marked the end of Marie and Joan’s relationship.

Following the loss of her pub, Marie moved to a house beside a building site and a friend offered her money for stealing insulation “So I started half inching it, didn’t I? And I were making a fortune off it. And I started going all over, started going on other work sites

and that. Anyway I didn't get caught doing that. And then I started hiring tools and it just got... it grew shall I say?" During this time Marie and Claire got in trouble with the police after an incident at a house party where she was arrested and served a night in the cells for being abusive towards a police officer. "And since then it's just escalated really." For the past ten years Marie has been in and out of trouble with the police. In 2014 she served a month in X prison for stealing stone flags. She describes the reasons she continues offending as being for both "the money" and "the buzz". She has carpal tunnel syndrome as a result of the heavy lifting involved with "flagging". Marie contrasts her daughter's personality with her own; "She's really sensible, she's really, really placid and how she put up with me I don't know. It's the other way round you see." Marie had been having troubles with Claire, partly due to her continued offending, when we had our interview and the reason we did not have a second interview was to do with the fact she was having "domestic issues." Although Marie said she would contact me when things were sorted out, this did not happen. I later learned from another woman in the group that Marie and her wife had split up. Recently, Marie and her daughter have taken over her mother's dog walking business. Marie has stopped drinking and hopes in the future to "sort meself out, get the operation done [for the CPT] and behave meself, make enough money to plod on." Nonetheless, Marie talks about offending in the present tense, she is aware she needs to "learn how to say no", but this is an ongoing process.

Holly

Holly was one of the younger women interviewed at age 23 at Easton Women's Centre in November 2014. She lives in Easton. Her most recent offence was shoplifting – an activity which she carried out 3 or 4 times a week for the past 5 years. Holly's sentence was a 12 month suspended sentence with 6 month supervision including attending the Women's Centre. This was Holly's second sentence to attend the Women's Centre. Holly stated that she found the Women's Centre provision more useful than probation, because she only has to attend probation for "5 or 10 minutes a week".

Holly's father died on Christmas day of a heroin overdose when Holly was 2 years old. Holly's parents had split up just before Christmas "that's why he took an overdose." She believes that his death affected her older brother more than herself due to her age at the time; "I were so young, I didn't really know 'cause I grew up without a dad." Holly's mother has been a heroin addict for all of Holly's life; Holly says of her mother; "I see her, like I love her and stuff but I don't really bother with her." Her mother currently lives across the road from Holly's maternal grandparents who raised herself and her

brother. She describes her grandparents and especially her grandmother as the biggest positive influence. In the past, Holly's brother, Stephen who is a year older has been in prison for 3 and a half years "for fighting and stuff." However Stephen has since got a job as a plumber and a new girlfriend who was pregnant at the time of the interview. "He's settled down now; he hasn't been in trouble for a few year now." Holly, on the other hand was excluded from school in year 10 for taking time off "skiving". Following this, Holly and a friend beat up the girls who told on them which resulted in permanent exclusion. At the time Holly felt "happy... 'cause all my friends were excluded." Since then Holly had been involved in "bits and bats" of offending and had been in trouble with the police for criminal damage and drunk and disorderly charges. In the past five years, Holly relates her offending to smoking cannabis and shoplifting. In the past this was something Holly did with her friend Ciara, but when Ciara became pregnant this became a solo habit. Four years ago Holly also had a daughter, Lilly. Holly has been in an "on and off" relationship with her daughter's father, Nick for the past eleven years. Nick was sentenced to prison when Lilly was 9 weeks old; he had been in prison for all of Lilly's life except for a period of 2 months. Whilst Nick was in prison for the first time, Holly entered an 8 month relationship with a man whom she moved in with, Kevin. Kevin was very abusive and Holly's grandma took custody therefore of Lilly. "He took amphetamines and he always bullied me and stuff so that's why my grandma had to take the child because he were beating me up and stuff." Following the end of this relationship, Kevin also was sent to prison. Upon his release he continued the abuse "he started annoying me to death... 'cause he were kicking the door down and were putting knives to me and stuff like that." Holly has since suffered from depression and self-harm. She has since been on anti-depressant medication. In the month prior to the interview, Nick had been released from jail and they have rekindled their relationship and moved into a new home together. On the day of the interview, Nick was meeting Holly after to shop for new curtains. Holly and Nick see Lilly and Holly's grandmother every day and hope to regain custody in time.

At the time of our interview, Holly had been hoping to start a hair and beauty course in a few months through the Women's Centre. She had stopped smoking cannabis and it had been "5 or 6 months" since she last shoplifted. She credits this change to her the rekindling of her and Nick's relationship following his release from prison as well as their slightly better financial position. "We're sorting everything out now, settling down."

Julie

Julie was 59 at the time of our first interview and meeting in November 2014. She had recently had her 60th birthday by the time of our second interview 4 months later. Julie attended the same Women's Centre meetings as Holly and Marie in Easton and lives in Rivertown. Both interviews took place in Julie's large house on a middle-class cul-de-sac. Julie also has a dog which was in the room with us throughout both interviews. My notes on Julie describe her as a "respected member of her local community." Julie's most recent conviction was for fraud. She had been working as town clerk for Rivertown town council at the time and had taken a leave of absence due to depression following the death of her mother. When an audit was carried out, it was discovered that between 2007 and 2011, "there was a shortfall in the money. But it only related to my salary. Well, tax and national insurance as part of my salary because of the way I'd done the calculations." Julie frames the context of the offence in terms of her depression and stressful job. When the fraud was discovered, Julie began paying back what was owed as well as interest and she stated that the council were happy with this. However, six months later Julie was informed that the crown prosecution service were pressing charges. When she was finally sentenced towards the end of 2014, Julie received a 10 months suspended sentence for two years with a curfew and electronic tag for 5 months alongside the Women's Centre sessions.

Julie has lived between Easton and Rivertown all her life. She describes her childhood as a happy one. She was the oldest of two siblings and has a brother 5 years younger than herself. Her father was a policeman and her mother worked in a solicitor's office. She described a close relationship with her grandmother who also lived nearby. Julie herself is married to a solicitor, Kenneth and describes a good relationship; "he's stood by me all the way, in everything" and has two children in their mid- 20s; her son is a student doctor whilst her daughter is a newly qualified solicitor. Both children live in other cities but visit often. She described a very close relationship with her son, Daniel and an improving relationship with her daughter, Martha. Martha will be married in 2016 and especially during our second interview Julie described her and Martha's relationship as getting better, despite some disagreements in the past about boyfriends and schooling. Julie herself also studied law; she worked as a legal executive and in private practice before working for the council. She discussed a negative relationship with her former employer in the council. In our first interview Julie talked about her hopes to begin an accounting course in the Women's Centre. Julie described in our first interview a history of mental health issues like depression, panic attacks and anxiety. She also has problems with her heart and blood pressure. Herself and her husband are prominent Church members and Julie's Christian religious belief is a big part of her life; "But it's been my

life and not just that, the fact that there's been someone to rely on and pray to, and I don't know where I'd be without that. And so, I've stuck to that. I don't always get the answers I want. But you know, I feel that I've been looked after.”

When I met Julie for the second time there had been both improvements and disappointments in her situation. She had recently had her electronic tag removed and had celebrated with a party for her 60th birthday. Although the accounting course had fallen through due to poor interest, Julie had signed up to work at a Church related charity. On the other hand however, Julie had during that week been contacted by bailiffs who were forcing her to pay back the legal aid she had previously been granted. This was not something she had yet discussed with Kenneth although she did plan to and had discussed the issue with Martha. This had caused stress and anxiety. “I mean until that has been mentioned, we were doing OK.” Julie also described in this second interview a deteriorating relationship with her brother. The difficulties in this relationship were to do with inheritance money as well as what Julie perceived as her brother’s overbearing attitude towards her following her conviction and mental health diagnoses.

During the first interview, Julie had mentioned a statement from the council in the local press and advised me to look this up. Upon doing so, I came across another article which suggested Julie’s involvement in an arson attack in 1999. The article suggested Julie had set fire to the car of the boyfriend of a teenage girl she had become “obsessed with” through some voluntary work. The article also suggested Julie had mental health issues and problems with alcohol. When I brought the incident up, Julie accepted this was herself. “I still to this day do not remember. I underwent treatment at X Rehab centre and it was apparently an attempt on somebody's car. But I... I don't know, I was told I was lucky that I hadn't killed myself.” It was the result of this incident being raised by Julie’s Church minister years after the incident that Julie and Kenneth moved Churches. “The only time I ever have thought about it is when the Minister who came in in the September of 2011, 10, 11 years after the incident actually started to rake it up. Subsequent to that, nobody ever mentioned it. The Church, they knew because when I went poorly, they knew about it, I never covered it up, I had no reason to because it had happened but I could do nothing about it.” As a result, Julie and her husband moved congregations and she confirmed that she was much happier at the new Church.

Julie has learned a lot about herself and other people, particularly her fellow women centre attendees, during her offending and desistance journeys; “I needed to try and start again, not completely but... If it happened like that, [clicks fingers] you wouldn't have experienced the pain that you need to have gone through to understand other

people.” Julie looks forward to a time when her convictions are spent. “I’ll reach a point where, before Christmas 2016 everything will be finished and I can think, ‘yeah, just try and behave yourself. And don’t do anything you shouldn’t’. But you know it’s difficult isn’t it because... you can easily just do something that without... or get involved in something where you’re trying to help somebody else and you get yourself caught up in it. And one thing I have got to do is keep myself safe.”

Michaela

Michaela was 34 at the time of our interview in December 2014. Herself and her partner, Shelly, are the first clients of Rebecca Brown’s Easton-based Northshire Housing Project which was opened in September 2014. Whilst in prison, Michaela was referred to Rebecca through the “Revolution” project which refers women from different parts of the CJS. Shelly was also taken in as Michaela’s partner. Our interview took place in a local café on the same street as the project. Michaela and Shelly are well known in the café and throughout my interview with them both we are brought teas and coffees. I have described Michaela as “friendly” but she is not as talkative as her partner, Shelly. She often gives one word answers. In July 2014, Michaela had been sentenced to a 4 month custodial sentence for shoplifting and served 2 months of that offence. Michaela describes herself as shoplifting “every day” from the age of 22 to support her heroin addiction. In that time, Michaela had been in prison 22 times; her longest sentence was 5 and a half months.

Michaela describes her childhood as “pretty good”. She was a “cheeky child” who enjoyed sports such as cross-country running and finished school. She is the third oldest of 7 children, having 4 sisters and 2 brothers. Michaela’s parents are no longer together. Although Michaela has a very good relationship with her mother, she states that her father “wasn’t there when I needed him.” Although she is not close to all her siblings, she states that they have “just linked back in again.” A brother and a sister are addicted to drugs so Michaela tends to avoid them but will “say hiya” if she runs into them in Easton. When I speak to Rebecca in May she states that Michaela’s brother has begun volunteering work at the project helping run the male project. Michaela also has an 18 year old son, Luke and it was when Luke’s imminent 18th birthday that caused Michaela to re-evaluate her life and begin a methadone programme 16 months prior to our interview. At the age of 22, Michaela met her ex-partner John and began using heroin. She says of the relationship; “Wrong person at the wrong time that had come out of rehab and I ended up addicted on heroin.” Michaela describes her partner as being an alcoholic who was violent towards her. He forced her into shoplifting and Michaela felt

she could not leave the ten year relationship. Although Michaela had given up shoplifting to feed her own habit, she was still offending on behalf of John. Since going to prison and opening up to the “Revolution project”, Michaela left her violent relationship and entered into a relationship with Shelly whom she met in X Prison. She finds this to be a very supportive relationship and credits both Shelly and Luke with her change in behaviour. Michaela’s biggest regrets are that due to her addiction and prison sentences she has missed her son growing up. She has also fallen out with family and friends as a result. At the time of our interview, Michaela had not offended for 5 months. She was considering voluntary work at the café. Ultimately she hoped to get some paid employment but feels happy with the current trajectory of her life. “My life's in a good place at the moment.” Although I had arranged another interview with Michaela and Shelly in May, on the date they had to cancel because Michaela was having back problems. Rebecca confirmed that this had been an ongoing health issue for a while but that both Michaela and Shelly were doing well and had not had any trouble with the police or courts since our last meeting.

Shelly

Shelly’s interview took place immediately after Michaela’s in the same Easton café. Shelly is 53 years old at the time of our interview. Although Michaela warns Shelly not to “babble on”, our interview takes over an hour as opposed to Michaela’s less than 20 minutes. In my notes I describe Shelly as a “down to earth, magnetic and interesting person and it is easy to believe her when she says ‘everyone likes me’”. Shelly came to the Northshire Housing Project after serving some time in prison for a charge of theft from a person. She appealed the charge and was declared not guilty. It was whilst she was in X Prison waiting on her appeal to come through to the Crown Court that she met Michaela. She served a total of 4 months and 1 week on remand before receiving the “not guilty” verdict. Shelly left custody homeless but was picked up in X2 by Michaela and has been living at the Northshire Housing Project with Michaela ever since. Prior to this, Shelly had been in prison in November 2013 for assault on a police officer; after being made homeless, Shelly returned to her ex-partner’s house to find she was not on the tenancy agreement on the house they shared, her ex-partner had called the police and it was then when Shelly became violent. This was Shelly’s first prison sentence in 20 years.

Shelly grew up in X (a large city, outside Northshire), the middle of 9 children. Her mother was English and her father Saudi Arabian. Shelly was sick as a child with bronchial asthma which was diagnosed at the age of 7 and has been with her all her life.

At age 9 Shelly was taken into care. Both her parents had died by the time Shelly was 28. She has lost contact with her siblings. Shelly stated that she liked and was good at school. However she did used to run away from care a lot. When she was younger, Shelly slipped a disk in her back. At the time the doctor put her on Dihydrocodeine or DF118. Slowly, Shelly became addicted to DF118; her doctors became aware of this and would not write a prescription so Shelly began buying the medication from the streets. When her dealer went away for a while, Shelly's girlfriend at the time, Jenny gave her some heroin to ease her pain. "And in the end she done me a couple of lines and sure as eggs is eggs, the pain went like that, 'cause you just have to have two lines... Anyway, after the two days of them [DF118s] running out, I ended up buying like the odd bag of heroin and before I knew it, I was caught, 28 years of age, a heroin addict." Around this time, Shelly began shoplifting to support her addiction. "I was in and out of jail every six weeks starting a new prison sentence, every six weeks right? For shoplifting... because then if you'd been nicked for shoplifting, on the third time you were nicked, you were back obviously it was an automatic prison sentence. So every six weeks I was back in jail." Shelly stated that she did not know how many times she'd been in prison at that time; she had "lost count". After a few years of using heroin, Shelly states that she decided "enough was enough" and began a methadone prescription. Around this time Shelly met a new partner, Dawn and moved to X2 (another large city outside Northshire). Dawn and Shelly had an 18 year relationship. Shelly was very close to Dawn's grandchildren and has clearly felt their loss. She described the grandchildren as being the main reason she stayed in the relationship so long and described the abuse she suffered at her partner's hands. "When I first met her, I had no idea that she had mental health issues because she had breakdowns because she was on crack cocaine and all that. I would never have got involved with that woman if I had known that at the time, I'd never have got involved. But I did end up, I am badly scarred now, you know on both shoulders and like across." When this relationship broke down and Shelly was made homeless in April 2013, she started drinking a bottle of vodka and coke to keep warm on the streets. After a few days, Shelly noticed that she did not feel the need for methadone and did not turn up for her prescription. When she went to prison on the assault charge, Shelly went on a Librium detox. At the time of our interview, Shelly had been free from drugs for a year and a half.

Shelly and Michaela live in one of Rebecca's houses with another woman. They have lived there since September 2014. Shelly credits Rebecca and Michaela with the changes in her behaviour and outlook; "it's like Rebecca doesn't sleep because she's like there 24/7. There's an emergency number if there's like any emergencies that happen... She

is just so unbelievable what this woman does I cannot believe.” Although Shelly describes a more stable life with Rebecca’s project and a happy relationship with Michaela and her son, there are still negatives in Shelly’s life. She has coronary obstructive pulmonary disease and melanoma. Doctor’s had recently found lymph nodes and were testing for cancer. She is also on Triazepine for depression. Although Michaela did not mention it, Shelly tells me that Michaela is suffering from depression and anxiety also which is connected to Shelly’s illness. Shelly is on “zero tolerance” following an incident at her doctor’s in X2 when she used abusive language in the waiting room towards a receptionist following an argument about methadone. This means that a male security guard attended her every doctor’s appointment and this process has followed her to Easton. Despite these setbacks, Shelly states that she feels happier and more settled than she’s ever been. “And I feel good, I feel like I've got my life back now, I really do. Feel like I've got my life back yeah, I really do.” Talking about her hopes for the future, Shelly notes; “I want Rebecca to stay my landlady and she's going to get me and Michaela a two bedroomed house or two bedroomed flat, right? And she's going to continue the support and like I said, next year me and Michaela are getting married in July and Rebecca's giving us away.”

Bridget

Bridget was 27 at the time of our interview in April 2014 at Northton Women’s Centre. Her interview is conducted with her assistant Fran present as Bridget has severe learning difficulties and cannot read or write. In the summer of the previous year, Bridget started “hanging around with the wrong people.” Around this time she started getting in trouble with the police for drug dealing. She has recently spent two sentences in prison; her first in November of the previous year for “10 or 11 weeks” and the second for another short sentence of less than 6 months. At the time we spoke, Bridget was on an electronic tag which meant she had to be at home for 9 o’clock each evening. The tag was the result of a previous breach of a curfew order. On the week prior to our interview, Bridget had breached this curfew yet again. She had hidden from the police when they came to her door. She was extremely worried and paranoid about being sent back to prison. After the interview she was seeking advice from the women’s centre about how to handle the breach but was planning on handing herself into the police the next day. Our interview was quite a difficult one and Fran tended to answer questions on Bridget’s behalf or prompt Bridget as to what to say. Nonetheless, Bridget was friendly, if shy and clearly wanted to help me out. Fran says of Bridget; “She’s not a bad person, she’s just easily led and people take advantage.”

Bridget grew up in Northton the oldest of six children, she has four brothers and one sister. Bridget remembers herself as being good at school and never getting into any trouble. Recently Bridget has fallen out with one of her brothers whom she describes as a "bully." Bridget has 2 children, a 7 year old and a 5 year old, who live with her mum across the street from where she lives. Bridget sees her children every day. Bridget stated that her relationship with the children's father ended "when I had the two kids." Bridget has never worked and has described her financial situation as something which worries her. Over the past few years, Bridget has been drinking more and taking drugs such as "tablets, cocaine and legal highs". Bridget links this behaviour with a new group of friends whom she met through a counselling programme in Northton. "People got me into trouble, starting picking on me and that. I kicked off and then people started robbing stuff off me, robbed me hat and that, winding me up. And police arrested me, and still people hanging around, still same people hanging round, trying to get me in trouble." Bridget describes prison as "stressful" and since her two sentences she has been paranoid about getting back into trouble with the police.

Bridget wants to go back to college and get her English and Maths qualifications and eventually do a Painting and Decorating course. However, Bridget's original plan had been to become a police officer, although she states this has now fallen through due to her offences. Bridget has continued coming to the women's centre despite her specified activity requirement being finished. She has found that the women's centre has helped her. She has been getting help to move to a different area and away from her former group of friends. Bridget recognises that this is the key to her desistance pathway. When asked about her hopes for the future, Bridget's immediate response is "keeping out of trouble." It is clear she is now aware of how to do this, putting it into practice will be the more difficult element.

Heather

Heather's interview also took place in April 2015 in a café in Northton. Heather was 24 and lived with her partner and her sister in Northton. She has lived in Northton for the past 7 years, in her rented house for the past 2. Prior to this she had lived in other Northshire towns and villages. Heather wears gothic style clothes and dark makeup. In March 2015, Heather had been sentenced to a community order for 12 months including attending the 10 week women's centre course and to pay a £180 fine for benefit fraud. She speaks of the offence; "I filled in a little section wrong, I put an "X" instead of actually not doing, that's all I did... Yeah, 'cause it says, "Does your partner work?" I just put an "X" there instead of saying anything." Heather had been advised to

plead guilty by her solicitor whom she stated made her feel like a court would not believe that it was a mistake.

Heather grew up the oldest of 8 children; she has 5 brothers and 2 sisters. She describes herself as “quiet” and “reserved” as a child. Heather stated that she had found primary school “alright” but once she moved to secondary school this changed and she dropped out of school in year 8 due to severe bullying. Heather refers to the bullying; “I used to get followed to and from school. They used to spit on me, throw stones at me. They just used to bully me throughout and then it got to the time where it'd have to be a half day 'cause then I don't get followed home. And in school they just used to bully me on how I looked and just basically on how I was.” Heather stated that she got no help from the teachers, whom she felt also felt bullied by. At this point, Heather refused to go to school. She was therefore eventually transferred to a mental health school in Easton. Here she found school easier with smaller classes and more understanding staff. When she was 12, Heather’s parents split up, she went with her sisters to live with her mother and her brothers lived with their father. Prior to this Heather had faced abuse at the hands of her father, which her mother also suffered; “my dad was very abusive, to me and my mum. And then my mum would drink all the time and then she'd become violent. And it were just a vicious circle all the time.” Heather began having mental health problems as a result.

At this point, Heather’s mother met a new partner, but due to Heather’s lack of trust in men because of her father’s abuse, Heather moved in with her grandmother. When she did go back home to her mother, their relationship deteriorated. Heather now no longer speaks to either of her parents and has an injunction against her father since speaking to counsellors about the abuse. Heather has faced a myriad of mental health issues throughout life. Although she did go to college to study catering, business and administration as well as art and design, Heather described how 3 years previously her life “went out of control” resulting in her leaving college and her voluntary employment. Heather began to self-harm and developed obsessive compulsive disorder to the extent that she was frightened to go out of her house. At the insistence of her partner, Heather eventually sought help from her doctor and was assigned a mental health nurse. Heather has since been out of work. She also began attending a group at the women’s centre in 2014 to help cope with depression. Heather stated that this group was helpful but had now finished.

After finding out about her offence, Heather explained how her life took another turn for the worse. She explained the financial implications of her sentence which have been a source of much worry alongside a decline in her mental health. “When I got to find

out that I had to go to court and everything was up in the air, it didn't go too well. My mental health deteriorated again. I tried to commit suicide as well with it. I explained to my doctors and things like that what was going on. And it just felt like everything was frozen, like the time had stopped, nobody could help me. And when I was in the courts I was absolutely petrified. Yeah... 'cause I'd never been there before so... it's a scary place." Heather has also recently been diagnosed with split personality... When we met, Heather described how her mental health has deteriorated further recently when she went out at night and her drink got spiked and was raped by a stranger. Although the police had been involved and were supportive, Heather found that she didn't want to "drag [the case] through the courts." This has been a further source of pain for Heather and has destroyed her confidence. In the fortnight prior to our interview, Heather's 17 year old sister, Jane had moved in with her; Heather described this as being the result of a fall out with her mother due to her mother's "drinking and bringing home different men." On the weekend prior to the interview Heather's sister had fallen out with her boyfriend and cut herself with glass whilst drunk. When Heather took her to the hospital, Jane had attempted suicide by hanging. It was clear that Jane's wellbeing was Heather's foremost concern during the interview.

Although Heather stated that she does not have friends, she has been with her partner, Ryan for 8 years. She describes Ryan as being "really supportive, like when I went through the breakdown I wasn't a very nice person to be around but he stuck by me." "Indeed the café we conducted the interview in was where Ryan had proposed four years previously. Heather stated that they are planning to get married soon. Heather speaks of the women's centre groups as something which she finds also supportive. Prior to our interview she had attended the session on employment and training. "It does help me because I understand what I can do with my goals and what I can improve on." Although Heather admitted to having a problem with alcohol, she stated that this was something she was working on with Ryan's help. She has recently discovered Paganism, and stated that this is another source of strength. Ryan is originally from Belgium and the couple eventually want to move there. Speaking about her life on the day of our interview, Heather stated; "I feel like it's in turmoil at the moment, it's neither good or bad it's just in the middle." Nonetheless Heather has pragmatic hopes for the future; she wants to "get better" before getting married, having children, making sure her sister is well before moving to Belgium.

Kelly-Marie

Kelly-Marie was 48 when we met for our interview in May 2015. Our interview takes place at the Easton-based Housing for Northshire offices. In my notes, I describe Kelly-Marie as “self-assured, determined, confident and straight to the point.” Throughout our interview she speaks slowly and considers every word. She comes across as an extremely strong person but breaks down crying when talking about her relationships with her grandchildren and with her mum. Kelly-Marie has been in prison “5 or 6 times” throughout her life, the most recent of these was for a 28-day recall for reoffending following a 7 year sentence for a shoplifting offence. For the 6 weeks prior to our interview, Kelly-Marie has been living at Rebecca Brown’s Housing for Northshire Project.

Kelly-Marie was the oldest of 3 children; she has a sister and a brother. She is still close to them both, especially her sister. Kelly-Marie describes herself as being a “tomboyish, boisterous, happy-go-lucky” child. She also stated she was a “daddy’s girl” but felt starved of attention from her mother. At the age of 11, Kelly-Marie started shoplifting “for no apparent reason ‘cause I didn’t need to.” She now links this to feeling like she was not getting the attention she needed from her mother. Around this time, Kelly-Marie ran away from home with a friend. When her mother found out, she was angry and violent. She ran to her father, “me mother turned round to me and said, "I don't know why you're hugging him for, 'cause he's not even your dad." Well that were it, my world fell apart.” From this incident on, Kelly-Marie began to run away from home. She was put on 28 day interim care orders, going into care for a month at a time. She stated that she was always disappointed during these sessions that her mother did not come to pick her up. At the age of 16, Kelly Marie left home and met her eldest daughter’s father, Brian. Brian was 18 years older than Kelly-Marie and she described him as “a bit of a buggler”. By the age of 19, Kelly-Marie “wanted for nothing” in terms of money, clothes, jewellery and cars. Brian was involved in a large scale fraud deal following the birth of their child, Frankie, “Well I just had Frankie and the first I knew that he was a criminal were when the police were at my front and the back, and me doors were going in and I'm feeding the baby going, what's going on?” Brian served 3 years in prison. Kelly-Marie suffered from post-natal depression and her mum took over raising Frankie as a result. Whilst Brian was in prison, Kelly-Marie began going out and reliving her teenage years. She started taking amphetamine. When she missed her daughter’s third birthday, Kelly-Marie fell out with her mother. At the age of 22, Kelly-Marie divorced Brian and met James. “He taught me the values of working, mortgages and values if you will. But them values came with consequences. He was very abusive and violent. More mental than anything.” After Frankie, Kelly-Marie had been told she couldn’t have any more

children. But James wanted children and insisted on IVF Treatment “So I'm just going along with it, just to keep him quiet.” Kelly-Marie did not want more children as she knew this would mean a life-long tie to James. Before they had gone for the treatment, Kelly-Marie found out she was pregnant with her second daughter, Emma.

One morning, Kelly-Marie took Emma and collected Frankie from school taking the children to her sister's house, leaving James. However, James took her to court and won custody over Emma when he cited Kelly-Marie's amphetamine usage. Around this time, Kelly-Marie tried to commit suicide. She was admitted to a mental health ward; “And this is when all the diagnoses came in, the depression and the drugs and the bipolar and this that and the other.” Her main concern however was that she was free from James. Next, Kelly-Marie met Johnny; this is where her life “went totally off the rocker.” Describing the time, Kelly-Marie states; “It were all high life and everything; do you know what I mean? It went from amphetamine, to cocaine, to ecstasy, LSD, heroin; you name it, I were taking it.” As a result, Kelly-Marie fell out with her family. By the time Frankie was about to go to secondary school – “I've got an habit, I've got no job, I've got no money, me family don't agree with Johnny. I'm off the rails, nobody can tell me any different and I've started committing offences.” Kelly-Marie committed a robbery and was sentenced to 3 years 9 months in prison. From this point, Kelly-Marie was in and out of prison, returning to Johnny when she was out. “And from Frankie being 16 to me grandson being born, I was in and out of the courts, the cells, prison and just reoffending, taking drugs and I didn't really give a shit whether I lived or died basically.” Once Frankie became pregnant with Kelly-Marie's grandson however, she began to look at her life differently and decided it was time to make a change. She ended her relationship with Johnny and came off drugs for 7 years. After this period, Johnny came back into her life yet Kelly-Marie remained clean. Eventually Kelly-Marie began to sell drugs again. Following a horrific road accident, Kelly-Marie began taking heroin again and received a 7 year prison sentence for dealing drugs. This sentence prompted another turning point. “So I've gone to jail and I thought, "Right, better sort me shit out now." And I've got there, I've got meself clean, I got meself into education, I've come out after two and a half years a qualified beautician and hair stylist . I was interlinked with recovering addicts, I was a recovery mentor. I got meself a full time job wi' Timpson's. But I took meself off all me medication.” 3 weeks following her release however, Kelly-Marie's mindset began to change. “I started to think, ‘I don't want to be out here; I can't cope out here. I'm not ready to be out here.’” After 7 months, Kelly-Marie began using heroin again and was hoping to go back to prison, even asking her probation officer to send her back. Eventually, Kelly-Marie received a 28 day recall for a

shoplifting offence. On her way back from prison, Kelly-Marie decided she wanted to go into shared accommodation and asked her probation officer if she knew of anywhere she could go. Her probation officer introduced her to Rebecca Brown.

Kelly-Marie is now back on a methadone prescription and attending drug counselling. She stated however that she is actively avoiding peer mentor work – “I want to pull myself away from the addiction and what goes on with it 'cause you can quite easily slip back down the road.” She credits her 4 grandchildren with inspiring her to turn her life around. She has reconnected with her second daughter Emma who also has 2 children. She states that her sister and her daughters have been the positive influences in her life. Since joining Rebecca’s project, Kelly-Marie has acquired a better relationship with her mother through working with her on drugs counselling courses. She has been on a methadone prescription for the past 2 months. Kelly-Marie has a business plan to work up a hair and beauty business. She now looks forward to the future. “I've gone full circle, there's nothing else can come at me now. I had to do it for me, and I had to be ready for me and I'm just fortunate enough to have me family and still have me mum... My family's healthy, me girls are healthy, me grandchildren are healthy, I'm healthy. And I've got more today than I had yesterday, than I had in the last six months, 'cause the last six months prior to this I had nothing. I had no sense of reason, I couldn't give a shit. Do you know what I mean? And I don't know, it's like a light's switched”.

Rebecca

Rebecca was 46 when we met for an interview in May 2015 at the offices of her Housing for Northshire project. At the age of 42, Rebecca was arrested and charged with credit card fraud. She was given a 9 month supervision order alongside a year’s suspended sentence and 60 hours community service. This resulted in a relationship breakdown with her then fiancé, Paul, which caused Rebecca to move to a rented property. When the cheque Rebecca paid with for her rent bounced, her landlord reported her to the police. She was also accused of stealing money from the landlord to which she pleaded not guilty. In June 2013, Rebecca was recommended by her probation officer for another year’s suspended sentence which the judge agreed with. Apart from a shoplifting charge at the age of 13, Rebecca had had no contact with the police until this time.

Rebecca was born to an Irish mother and English father in Easton. She also had a younger brother, Tim. She described herself as a “studious” and “fairly quiet” child. At the age of 8, Rebecca’s parents split up and she effectively became her mother’s carer. Rebecca’s mother was later diagnosed with schizophrenia. “So at the age of eight I had to become a carer. So I've always been a very practical person. You know I had to sew, iron, wash,

clean.” At age 10, Rebecca’s father won custody of Rebecca and Tim. Rebecca’s father then re-married which she found difficult. Rebecca has not had a good relationship with her step mother and at this stage she began to rebel. Although she continued to do well in her school work, Rebecca admits she became “a bully”, describing herself as “very manipulative” with the other girls. This behaviour resulted in expulsion from school at 14. Rebecca was then “packed off” to an international boarding school run by a friend of her grandfather’s in Belgium. After a settling in period, Rebecca began to work hard and enjoyed the school and the international culture. At the age of 18, Rebecca moved back to Easton, and began work for a catering company and eventually opened up a restaurant. Rebecca moved around for a few years working at hotels and restaurants and eventually went to university to do a Hotel and Management degree. She then moved down south to work at a hotel in Southern England at the age of 21 and met her ex-husband, Gareth and had son, William and daughter, Sophie. During this time, Rebecca worked for an international human resources company; “so i had a bit of a wild life and a lot of money, I was able to have quite a successful run with that.” Rebecca worked in New York and Bahrain. As her husband also worked for an international hotel company they were able to move around and the children were sent to international schools. At the age of 32, Rebecca moved back to Southern England and commuted to London whilst her husband continued working away; Rebecca began “enjoying the London lifestyle” and began drinking to excess. “So my dependency, I'd prefer to call it a dependency, was a behaviour as opposed to a habit. You know or an addiction... That was where I started losing my sight. So while I still got up for work, what it was doing was draining my finances, it was affecting my marriage, it was clearly affecting my children and it began to affect my life, it began to affect my health in terms of my skin as just awful, obviously the mental impact of alcohol at quite substantial levels every single day, it began to affect my work, you know the tired, the not wanting to get up in the morning. So and that was the decline then.”

At this point, Rebecca’s marriage broke down and her husband took William and Sophie back to international schools. Rebecca went through the courts and racked up legal fees trying to get the children back, but was ultimately unsuccessful. She then “ran away from it all” moving to Austria whilst in the grip of the alcohol dependency and spending all her money. Eventually Rebecca got in touch with her father who advised her to move back to Easton to move in with him and her step mother. Rebecca describes herself as “quite broken” at this stage in her life. On her return to Easton, Rebecca found out that her mother had been made homeless and was living on the streets of Easton. Rebecca’s debts caught up with her and it was at this point that she committed credit card fraud

in step-mother's name. "I knew it was wrong; I was not like you know... I was just trying to you know, I paid it off for a while so until my money ran out and then it all caught up with me." As mentioned above, following her sentence she breached her suspended sentence by paying for rent with a cheque which eventually bounced. Rebecca then waited 2 years to be sentenced for the second offence. In the meantime, Rebecca had been doing freelance work translating and consulting. She had moved back down to the south of England and had lost many friends when they found out about her sentence. Rebecca ended up homeless and living on a canal bank. She handed herself into police but the warrant for her arrest was not yet out. "I thought, 'There's something here not right about women and why I can't get any help.'" Rebecca instructed her solicitor to issue a warrant for her arrest so she could get back to Easton as she did not have the money to travel back. Rebecca's case was taken to the crown court and she was again given a suspended sentence.

In the meantime, Rebecca squatted on her mother's couch. She began writing for Criminal Justice blogs and journals. Rebecca considered her own experience; "'I've got to do something for women in the CJS. I am going to do something.'" Rebecca's Housing for Northshire project opened in September 2014 mainly for women in the CJS, but also for women with nowhere else to go. Rebecca herself has since reunited with Paul and they live together in Easton. Paul helps with the running of the male side of the project and they hope to get married in the near future. Rebecca's alcohol dependency and offences have resulted in the breakdown of relationships including with her children, her brother, her step-mother and father. In particular she has not seen her children for 11 years. Rebecca's mother died in October 2014. Following her conviction, Rebecca has given up drinking, "A. I didn't have the money and B. You know, I'd had enough of it, I'd had 8, 9 years of hitting it hard, so I'd had enough, I just didn't want to drink any more." Although Rebecca runs the project she does not take a salary from it and herself and Paul live off his pension. It is clear however that it is through the project and particularly the women she works with that she finds strength. Again her hopes for the future are fairly conventional. "I don't really look too far into the future 'cause I live for the here and now and I can only deal with... I haven't got any long-term plans to you know have a cottage in the country with a little rose-framed fence around it. I'd like to you know go back to a bit of writing more or less when the project is embedded and running itself, Paul and I to take a step back and relax a little bit."

Appendix Two: Participant Information Sheets

Observation Research

Research Title: Voicing Desistance: Female Angles on Giving Up Crime

Participant Information Sheet

Observation Research

You are being invited to take part in a research study on desistance and female experiences of giving up crime. You have been identified as someone who would be valuable to the study by either the Northshire Women's Centre or Northshire Probation Trust. Please read the following information carefully and feel free to discuss any part of it with me.

What is the research for? Research will be carried out as part of the researcher's PhD. In general, I am interested in hearing the stories of women who have given up offending and observing the work of the Northshire Women's Centre in general.

Who will carry out the research? Una Barr from the University of Central Lancashire, School of Education and Social Science. I am a researcher and *DO NOT* work for the ELWC, police, probation, or social services.

What happens during the observation research? Research will be carried out over a period of 8 weeks. Observation research will entail

- a.) Scene setting; describing the surrounding of the centre and setting the scene
- b.) Observation of the relationships between the service users, between the users and the staff and amongst the staff
- c.) Observation of the various activities and the participation/ non-participation of them

d.) How the researcher is viewed

What happens to the information collected? During the observation, I will make notes on the above. I will be keeping an observation diary of notes. The notes and analysis will be stored on a password protected computer. The consent form will be the only thing that uses your real name and that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and separate from the actual interview. Otherwise I will only refer to you by a pseudonym and will not use your name in any presentations or written publications that may result from the study.

How is confidentiality maintained? The information I collect is confidential. This means I will keep your information safe and you will not be named or be able to be identified when I write up the research.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind? It is completely up to you whether or not you wish to take part and you are can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. If you do not want to be involved in the observation research, you may still take part in all activities; data will not be recorded about those who do not wish to be involved. All those involved in the research will be identified by a sticker. All observation research participants may or may not be identified to prospectively continue to the phase 2 (focus group research) and phase 3 (individual interviews) of the research project at the sole discretion of the researcher. You may withdraw your consent from these at any time and participation in one phase does not mean you have to participate in any other phases. Each phase will necessarily become increasingly personal but there is no obligation to participate in any phase.

Where will the research be conducted? At the Northshire Women's Centres

Will the outcomes of the research be published? As the research will inform a PhD thesis, this is the main function of the data for the time being. However, some of the findings and quotes may be included in publications later on.

What if something goes wrong? It is very unlikely that something should go wrong, or you should feel unhappy with the research. But if you do have concerns or wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the research, the university complaints procedures and names of contacts will be made available to you. If any distress has been caused by this research, you can speak to a counsellor at the Northshire Women's Centres NWC can be contacted at:

[Information provided]

Contact for further information If you have any questions about the research please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor.

Una Barr
e-mail: ubarr@uclan.ac.uk

Supervisor: Martin O'Brien
Tel: 01772 89 3095
e-mail: mao-brien@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

If you are happy to take part in this study we would like you to complete the research consent form.

Interview Research

Research Title: Voicing Desistance: Female Angles on Giving Up Crime

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study on desistance and female experiences of giving up crime. Please read the following information carefully and feel free to discuss any part of it with me.

What is the research for? Research will be carried out as part of the researcher's PhD. In general, I am interested in hearing the stories of women who have given up offending.

Who will carry out the research? Una Barr from the University of Central Lancashire, School of Education and Social Science. I am a researcher and *DO NOT* work for the WCs, police, probation, women's centre or social services.

Why have I been chosen? You have been chosen as either you have nominated yourself following the observation research or have been nominated as someone who may have something to say about the experience of giving up crime.

What happens during the interview? The interview will last about 1 hour, no longer than two and a half hours. I will ask you about your experiences of giving up offending and your life more generally. The interview will be recorded with your permission.

What happens to the information collected? After the interview, I will listen to the recording and transcribe (type up) what has been said so I can re-read and analyse it. The recordings and typed up interviews will be stored on a password protected computer. The consent form will be the only thing that uses your real name and that will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the university and separate from the actual interview. Otherwise I will only refer to you by a pseudonym and will not use your name in any presentations or written publications that may result from the study.

How is confidentiality maintained? The information you give is confidential. This means I will keep your information safe and you will not be named or be able to be identified when I write up the research. The only people to listen to your interview will be me and the project leader. Please note that I am very interested in what you have to say but as a researcher, I have an ethical obligation to notify the police should you discuss crimes you are currently involved in or are planning, so please do not do this.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind? It is completely up to you whether or not you wish to take part and you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.

Where will the research be conducted? At a time and place that is convenient for you.

Will the outcomes of the research be published? As the research will inform a PhD thesis, this is the main function of the data for the time being. However, some of the findings and quotes may be included in publications later on.

What if something goes wrong? It is very unlikely that something should go wrong, or you should feel unhappy with the research. But if you do have concerns or wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the

research, the university complaints procedures and names of contacts will be made available to you. If any distress has been caused by this research, you can speak to a counsellor at the Northshire Women's Centres. The NWC can be contacted at:

[Information provided]

Contact for further information If you have any questions about the research please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor.

Una Barr

e-mail: ubarr@uclan.ac.uk

Supervisor: Martin O'Brien

Tel: 01772 89 3095

e-mail: mao-brien@uclan.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

If you are happy to take part in this study we would like you to complete the research consent form.

Appendix Three: Consent Forms

Observation Consent Form

Research Purpose & Procedure

The purpose of this research is to understand the process of desistance, or the move away from crime, amongst females.

The research consists of observation conducted by the researcher at the Northshire Women's Centres. Observation research will entail the researcher shadowing a caseworker and making notes about the following:

- a.) Scene setting; describing the surrounding of the centre and setting the scene
- b.) Observation of the relationships between the service users, between the users and the staff and amongst the staff
- c.) Observation of the various activities and conversations
- d.) How the researcher is viewed

All the research is completely voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage. If you do not want to be involved in the observation research, you may still take part in all activities; data will not be recorded about those who do not wish to be involved. All those involved in the research will be identified by a sticker.

All observation research participants may or may not be identified to continue on to the phase 2 (individual interviews) of the research project at the sole discretion of the researcher. You may withdraw your consent from these at any time and participation in one phase does not mean you have to participate in any other phases. Each phase will necessarily become increasingly personal but there is no obligation to participate in any phase.

Counselling services are available from the NWC if you are affected by the research or for any reason.

Confidentiality

All data will be coded so that your anonymity will be protected in any research papers and presentations that result from this work. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants and research notes will be password protected and coded. All voice recordings and transcription will be kept under lock and key and password protected and coded.

Finding out about the research

If interested, you can find out the results of the research by contacting the supervisor, Dr Martin O'Brien after January 2016. His phone number is +44 (0) 1772 893 095 and email address is mao-brien@uclan.ac.uk. The researcher is Una Barr and can be contacted at ubarr@uclan.ac.uk.

Record of Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have understood the information about the observation research and consent to your participation in the recording of data based on observations. The participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty. This does not waive your legal rights. You should have received a copy of the consent form for your own record. If you have further questions related to this research, please contact the researcher.

Participant	Date
_____	_____
Researcher	Date

Interview Consent Forms

Research Purpose & Procedure

The purpose of this research is to understand the process of desistance, or the move away from offending amongst females.

The research consists of an individual one to one interview, during which you will be asked to give your opinions and life experiences to the researcher. At all stages you may withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer questions which may be sensitive or difficult to answer.

Topics that the interview is likely to cover will be youth, education, offending, experience of probation and the CJS, accommodation, finance, lifestyle, relationships with family, friends and partners, neighbourhood, community and society, emotional well-being, values and beliefs, health, victimisation and aspirations for the future. Staff interviews will also include questions about your work.

Please note that interviews will be recorded.

Confidentiality

All data will be coded so that your anonymity will be protected in any research papers and presentations that result from this work. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants and research notes will be password protected and coded. All voice recordings and transcription will be kept under lock and key and password protected and coded.

Finding out about the research

If interested, you can find out the results of the research by contacting the supervisor, Dr Martin O'Brien after January 2016. His phone number is +44 (0) 1772 893 095 and email address is mao-brien@uclan.ac.uk. The researcher is Una Barr and can be contacted any time at ubarr@uclan.ac.uk.

Record of Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have understood the information about the interview and consent to your participation including recording of the interview. The participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time with no penalty. This does not waive your

legal rights. You should have received a copy of the consent form for your own record. If you have further questions related to this research, please contact the researcher.

_____	_____
Participant	Date
_____	_____
Researcher	Date

Appendix Four: Observation and Interview Schedules

Observation Schedule

Observation research will take place at the Women's Centres. The research has been approved by the Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Centre, Christine Smith¹¹. The research will be carried out by shadowing a caseworker from the centre. The methodological account will be comprised of:

- a.) Scene setting; describing the surrounding of the centre and setting the scene
- b.) Observation of the relationships between the service users, between the users and the staff and amongst the staff
- c.) Observation of the various activities and the participation/ non-participation of them
- d.) How I am viewed

Throughout the observation research stage, steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the service users and caseworkers. Pseudonyms will be used in all cases and research notes will be encrypted and password protected.

¹¹ Pseudonym here for ethical purposes

Interview Schedule: Service Users

1. Introduction

Aim: To introduce purpose of interview

- Introduction of purpose of interview – to explore giving up crime from a woman’s point of view. Research has tended to be about explaining how people get into crime and much less on how and why they stop. Worse, is that nearly all the research is about men’s ideas and there’s hardly any from a woman’s point of view. What I’m trying to do is to let women give their own ideas and opinions on desistance.
- Explain: Confidentiality, do not have to participate/divulge information, can stop at any time, recording of interview (re-confirm consent when recorded is running), length (probably no longer than 90 minutes, but as long as you feel comfortable) and nature of discussion (life-course analysis, but informal in style), reporting and data storage issues. Go through consent form.
- Life- course analysis (Mc Adams, 1993; Maruna, 2001); this is an interview about your life story, if you like. I will be asking you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -to tell me the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your future. It might focus on a few key events, a few key relationships, a few key themes. What I’m interested in is things about your life that you believe to be important in some fundamental way -- information about yourself and your life which says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are. I hope you enjoy getting the chance to tell it from your point of view.
- Any questions?

2. Background

Aim: As this is life-course analysis it will be necessary to begin at the beginning, tracing the background of the participant

- How old are you?
- Where do you live now? Is this where you grew up? If not, tell me about where you grew up.
- What we’re going to talk about first is your background, your family, community and school and so on. What were you like as a child?
- Describe your family, do you have any brothers and sisters?
- Do you get on with them? Any one of them in particular? Do you have a favourite? If so, why: tell me about it.
- Did you have a best friend growing up? What were they like?
- What were you like at school?
- What was your first experience of offending? (I don’t mean to pry, share some personal examples) How did you feel after this – guilty, exhilarated...

3. Offending and the CJS

Aim: To examine the type and level of offending and experiences of CJS

- Did you ever get into trouble at school?
- (Share some of my own stories...) Did anything like that ever happen to you?
- And what happened then?
- Did it bother you?

- (Bringing up to present day) If you are willing, I'd like you to tell me about what brought you into contact with the police and the courts most recently.
- Was this a regular thing? Was it something you did before you got caught? (Depending on offence)
- (if reporting persistent pattern) Were there any periods when you stayed out of trouble? What do you remember from that period? Are there any circumstances that you would see yourself committing this offence again? Why/ Why not? What would be the biggest influencing factor in continuing or not?
- Have you been in trouble with the police and courts before for other things?
- What sentences or other punishments have you had? Tell me about these.
- What is your opinion of sentences and other programmes you have received?
- If you could change anything about the intervention(s) you received what would it be?
- How has your sentence affected your life? (Family, Friends, Job?)
- In my opinion, we are all to a greater or lesser extent offenders; some of us have criminal records whilst others don't; some of us have committed really minor offences and others more serious ones... Do you see yourself as an offender/ former offender? Why/ Why not?
- How do you think other people see you?
- Has there been someone/ some people in your life who has been influential either positively or negatively? Who are these people/ this person?

4. **Present circumstances**

Aim: To explore the participants' current life and wider social networks. Any current barriers to desistance or circumstances that have helped maintain desistance?

- Current housing
 - Tell me about your housing.
 - Where you currently live?
 - How long have you lived there?
 - Do you live alone/ with others?
- Employment
 - Tell me about your employment situation.
 - What is your current employment status? Full-time/ part- time/ unemployed
 - Have you taken part in any further education or training schemes?
 - Has your most recent offence affected your employment?
- Relationships
 - Tell me about any significant relationships in your life.
 - Do you have a partner? Since when? Children?
 - Are your parents still alive? What about siblings? Are you close?

- Have your relationships with your parents and siblings changed since you were a child/teenager? In what way? Do you see your friends on a regular basis? Have any of your friends had any trouble with the police? Do you have the same friends you had when you were at school or have you made new ones? What are they like compared to the old ones
- What kind of things do you like doing with your family and/or friends?
- Finances
 - Tell me about your financial situation
 - How do you see yourself financially?
 - Do you have any financial difficulties or debt?
- Health
 - Tell me about your health Probe about alcohol/drugs
 - What is your general perception of your health?
 - What about your mental health?
 - Any difficulties
Only probe if major illness is disclosed – using discretion regarding level of detail explored
- Neighbourhood, community and society
 - Tell me about your neighbourhood/ community
 - Do you get involved in your community or neighbourhood?
 - What is your opinion of your community?
- Victimization
 - Would you describe yourself as a victim?
 - Tell me about any experiences you have had of being a victim
 - Have you ever been a victim of a crime or anything else?
- Values and beliefs
 - Tell me about any beliefs you hold
 - Do you have any religious beliefs? If so, have this had an impact on how you, or others, reacted to your offending or your choice to desist
 - Do you have any strong political opinions?

5. The most important things in your life

Aim: To examine the most important things in the respondents life, the things that make a person who they are and how these relate to offending/desistance

- OK. This is a really hard question in some ways but I just want you to have a think about what's really important to you in your life.
- How do you feel about your life at the moment?
- Suppose the world ended tomorrow, what would be the one thing about your life you'd like to keep?
- (If needs prompting – It can be a person, a feeling, an object, an emotion etc....)
- That's quite difficult isn't it? Ok suppose you were allowed to keep 2, what would they be?
- What if you were allowed to keep 3?
- Like I said, that is a very hard question! Can we think about what other things you'd miss if the world ended tomorrow?

6. The future

Aim: To explore the participants' hopes for the future and if this has been affected by past

- What are your hopes for the future/ where do you see yourself in 5 years' time? What will you be doing? Who will you be with? Where will you be living?

7. Debrief

Aim: To answer questions/ reassure confidentiality etc. where to go for help

- Explain: Where to get help if needs be, re confirm confidentiality, how data will be stored etc. Hand out debriefing sheet
- Any questions?

Interview Schedule: Staff

1. Introduction

Aim: To introduce purpose of interview

- Introduction of purpose of interview – to explore giving up crime from a woman’s point of view. Research has tended to be about explaining how people get into crime and much less on how and why they stop. Worse, is that nearly all the research is about men’s ideas and there’s hardly any from a woman’s point of view. What I’m trying to do is to let women give their own ideas and opinions on desistance. Additionally I’d like to hear about your experience as staff members and your opinions on the services the women’s centre provides.
- Explain: Confidentiality, do not have to participate/divulge information, can stop at any time, recording of interview (re-confirm consent when recorded is running), length (probably no longer than 90 minutes, but as long as you feel comfortable) and nature of discussion (life-course analysis, but informal in style), reporting and data storage issues. Go through consent form.
- The first part of the interview follows a life- course analysis (Mc Adams, 1993; Maruna, 2001); this is an interview about your life story, if you like. I will be asking you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -to tell me the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your future. It might focus on a few key events, a few key relationships, a few key themes. What I’m interested in is things about your life that you believe to be important in some fundamental way -- information about yourself and your life which says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are. I hope you enjoy getting the chance to tell it from your point of view. This part of the interview will be very similar to the interviews already conducted with the women. The second part of the interview will focus more on your work, particularly SHE for women.
- Any questions?

2. Background

Aim: As this is life-course analysis it will be necessary to begin at the beginning, tracing the background of the participant

- How old are you?
- Where do you live now? Is this where you grew up? If not, tell me about where you grew up.
- What we’re going to talk about first is your background, your family, community and school and so on. What were you like as a child?
- Describe your family, do you have any brothers and sisters?
- Do you get on with them? Any one of them in particular? Do you have a favourite? If so, why: tell me about it.
- Did you have a best friend growing up? What were they like?
- What were you like at school?
- What was your first experience of offending? (I don’t mean to pry, share some personal examples) How did you feel after this – guilty, exhilarated...

3. **Offending and the CJS**

Aim: To examine the type and level of offending and experiences of CJS

- Did you ever get into trouble at school?
- (Share some of my own stories...) Did anything like that ever happen to you?
- And what happened then?
- Did it bother you?

- Have you ever been in trouble with the police or courts?

IF YES....

- *Was this a regular thing? Was it something you did before you got caught? (Depending on offence)*
- *(if reporting persistent pattern) Were there any periods when you stayed out of trouble? What do you remember from that period? Are there any circumstances that you would see yourself committing this offence again? Why/ Why not? What would be the biggest influencing factor in continuing or not?*
- *What sentences or other punishments have you had? Tell me about these.*
- *What is your opinion of sentences and other programmes you have received?*
- *If you could change anything about the intervention(s) you received what would it be?*
- *How has your sentence affected your life? (Family, Friends, Job?)*
- *In my opinion, we are all to a greater or lesser extent offenders; some of us have criminal records whilst others don't; some of us have committed really minor offences and others more serious ones... Do you see yourself as an offender/ former offender? Why/ Why not?*
- *How do you think other people see you?*

- Has there been someone/ some people in your life who has been influential either positively or negatively? Who are these people/ this person?

4. **Present circumstances**

Aim: To explore the participants' current life and wider social networks. Any current barriers to desistance or circumstances that have helped maintain desistance?

- Current housing
 - Tell me about your housing.
 - Where you currently live?
 - How long have you lived there?
 - Do you live alone/ with others?
- Employment
 - Tell me about your employment situation.
 - What is your current employment status? Full-time/ part- time/ unemployed
 - Have you taken part in any further education or training schemes?
 - Has your most recent offence affected your employment?
- Relationships

- Tell me about any significant relationships in your life.
- Do you have a partner? Since when? Children?
- Are your parents still alive? What about siblings? Are you close?
- Have your relationships with your parents and siblings changed since you were a child/teenager? In what way? Do you see your friends on a regular basis? Have any of your friends had any trouble with the police? Do you have the same friends you had when you were at school or have you made new ones? What are they like compared to the old ones
- What kind of things do you like doing with your family and/or friends?
- Finances
 - Tell me about your financial situation
 - How do you see yourself financially?
 - Do you have any financial difficulties or debt?
- Health
 - Tell me about your health Probe about alcohol/drugs
 - What is your general perception of your health?
 - What about your mental health?
 - Any difficulties
Only probe if major illness is disclosed – using discretion regarding level of detail explored
- Neighbourhood, community and society
 - Tell me about your neighbourhood/ community
 - Do you get involved in your community or neighbourhood?
 - What is your opinion of your community?
- Victimization
 - Would you describe yourself as a victim?
 - Tell me about any experiences you have had of being a victim
 - Have you ever been a victim of a crime or anything else?
- Values and beliefs
 - Tell me about any beliefs you hold
 - Do you have any religious beliefs? If so, have this had an impact on how you, or others, reacted to your offending or your choice to desist
 - Do you have any strong political opinions?

5. **The most important things in your life**

Aim: To examine the most important things in the respondents life, the things that make a person who they are and how these relate to offending/desistance

- OK. This is a really hard question in some ways but I just want you to have a think about what's really important to you in your life.
- How do you feel about your life at the moment?

6. **The future**

Aim: To explore the participants' hopes for the future and if this has been affected by past

- What are your hopes for the future/ where do you see yourself in 5 years' time? What will you be doing? Who will you be with? Where will you be living?

7. Additional Staff Questions

Aim: To explore staff opinions on the services they provide, explore the link between the CJS and desistance including recent changes in probation; explore the idea of "professional exes" and the link between desistance stories and the general experiences of women

- Can you tell me a bit about the services you provide for people and particularly women involved in the CJS?
- How do women come in contact with you?
- What do you find are the most common barriers to women's rehabilitation?
- What kind of things do you think help women stop offending?
- Where do you see the role of your services in this?
- I have found that desistance for women can and should be much more than about diverting women from the CJS and more about helping with underlying issues – housing, poverty, education, domestic violence etc. Would you agree?
- I have also found that female offenders "desistance stories" are very similar to the general experiences of women, in terms of narratives of victimisation and survival, do you agree?
- I have found that instead of addressing these issues and supporting women often the CJS exacerbates the issues of violence, poverty, employment, relationships etc. etc. would you agree?

8. Debrief

Aim: To answer questions/ reassure confidentiality etc. where to go for help

- Explain: Where to get help if needs be, re confirm confidentiality, how data will be stored etc. Hand out debriefing sheet
- Any questions?

Interview Schedule: Follow Up Interviews

1. Introduction

Aim: To introduce purpose of interview

- Introduction of purpose of interview – to explore giving up crime from a woman's point of view. This second interview allows us to catch up on your progress since the last interview and journey from conviction and sentencing onward
- Explain: Confidentiality, do not have to participate/divulge information, can stop at any time, recording of interview (re-confirm consent when recorded is running), length (probably no longer than 60 minutes, but as long as you feel comfortable) and nature of discussion (informal in style), reporting and data storage issues. Go through consent form.
- Unlike the last interview which explored your life story, this interview will pick up on where we left off the last time, talk about any significant events in your life since and again explore your hopes for the future
- Any questions?

2. Present circumstances

Aim: To explore the participants' current life and wider social networks. Any current barriers to desistance or circumstances that have helped maintain desistance? This is a repetition of the questions asked in the last interview and this is done on purpose to explore change

- How old are you now?
- Current housing
 - When we last spoke you were living in X. Tell me about your housing.
 - Where you currently live?
- Employment
 - When we last spoke you were X. Tell me about your employment situation.
 - Have you taken part in any further education or training schemes?
- Relationships
 - When we last spoke you were X. Tell me about any (*other*) significant relationships in your life.
 - Do you *still* X on a regular basis? Do you ever see any friends or family from X?
 - Have any of your friends had any trouble with the police since we last spoke?
 - What kinds of things do you like doing with your family and/or friends?
- Finances
 - When we last spoke your financial situation was X is that still the case?
 - How do you see yourself financially now?
 - Do you have any financial difficulties or debt?
- Health
 - When we last spoke your health you mentioned X, how did that go?
 - You also mentioned that you were on X, is that still the case?

- You also mentioned X, is that still the case?
- Do you drink?
- Do you ever take illegal drugs?

- Neighbourhood, community and society
 - When we last spoke you said X, is that still the case?
 - Do you get involved in your community?
 - What is your opinion of your community?

- Victimization
 - You also talked about X, do you mind expanding on that a bit?
 - Would you describe yourself as a victim?
 - Have you had any experiences of victimisation since we last spoke?

- Values and beliefs – Only include if mentioned previously
 - Do you X have religious beliefs? You mentioned X. How do you feel now?
 - You mentioned your political opinions the last time, how do you feel about politics now? Are you going to vote?

3. From then until now

Aim: To bring the respondent's life story up to date, to explore their desistance (or persistence) journey from then to now

- When we last spoke X you were on X... where are you up to now? Do you still see the probation officer?
- Have you been charged with any offences since?
- Have you committed any offences since?
 - If yes... is this a regular thing?
 - If no... has it been difficult to stay out of trouble?
- What is your opinion of sentences and other programmes you have received?
- If you could change anything about the intervention(s) you received what would it be?
 - When we last spoke you said you saw yourself as X. How do you see yourself now? If this has changed, why?

4. Clarification/ Probing of any issues/ themes that were unclear from last interview

Aim: This section will probe about any significant desistance-related themes raised in last interview which need clarification or expansion. May not be necessary to include in every interview

- When we last spoke you mentioned x, how did that come about?
- You also mentioned that you were x? Did this then stop the offending? How many times had you been in prison? (for example)
- You mentioned that you were trying to get in contact with X the last time we spoke; how is that going?

- Are you looking forward to X? Could you expand on this? Do you think this is still a significant issue for you?

5. The most important things in your life

Aim: To examine the most important things in the respondents life, the things that make a person who they are and how these relate to offending/desistance

- Just like in the last interview, I want you to think about your life at the moment. How do you feel about your life at the moment?
- Has this changed since we last spoke? Why/ Why not?

6. The future

Aim: To explore the participants' hopes for the future and if this has been affected by past

- What are your hopes for the future/ where do you see yourself in 5 years' time? What will you be doing? Who will you be with? Where will you be living?

7. Debrief

Aim: To answer questions/ reassure confidentiality etc. where to go for help

- Explain: Where to get help if needs be, re confirm confidentiality, how data will be stored etc. Hand out debriefing sheet
- Any questions?

