

A Brighter Future: Understanding Desistance in Young Irish Men

By

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“There’s a radical- and wonderful- new idea here... that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people’s ideas, analysers of evidence and makers of their own personal marks on the world. It’s an idea with revolutionary implications. If we take it seriously.” – Deborah Meier

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the young people who have changed their own journey, by looking inwards, seeing their own strengths and knowing they are worthy and brave enough to make better choices; ensuring them a better future.

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Brianna Connaughton, 2016

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in consideration for any degree.

Signed _____ (Candidate)

Date _____

Statement

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated

Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed _____ (Candidate)

Date _____

Signed _____ (Supervisor)

Date _____

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research is to understand the factors which led to desistance in young men from the South East of Ireland, who were involved in offending between the ages of 12-18. The participants of this study will be those who desisted from crime prior to any involvement in the formal judicial and penal systems and they will be aged between 18 and 23 at the time of engaging in the study.

An extensive review of the literature was carried out. Through conducting this literature review it became evident that desistance studies in Ireland have been limited to the experience of older adults and those who have been incarcerated. This research aims to respond to this gap identified in the research. The hypothesis of this research is that if we better understand the elements which lead to the desistance of offending in young men then we can better support them and/or other young people in similar circumstances, to maintain their desistance in the long term.

The epistemological stance of the researcher and the study is based on the constructivist paradigm. This study was carried out using a Descriptive, Cross-sectional Correlational research design. Primary qualitative data was gathered using semi structured interviews. Participants for the study were selected using Non-Probability Convenience Sampling Design. The data was then analysed using NVivo 10 and the findings and recommendations are discussed on the back of this analysis.

The results of this study show that there are a lot of similarities between the experiences of the participants during their teen years. There is a commonality in how they perceived their communities, in how they felt about education and in the types of offending that they were involved in. Through analysing this data, common trends in terms of the factors which the participants feel leads to desistance were also evident such as increased levels of empathy, changing peer groups and spending more time outside of their community.

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CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter seeks to set the context of the research by detailing the background and the rationale to the research, by identifying the research problems, and confirming the need for this research. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the structure of the proposed study. This chapter is to clearly outline the flow and focus of the study.

Background to the Research

At present the age of criminal responsibility (*doli capax*) in Ireland, as stated in the Children's Act 2001, is 12 years old. An individual younger than 18 years' old and who is involved in crime will be treated as a youth offender and dealt with under the remit of the Irish Youth Justice System until such time that they turn 18 years old, at which point they become an adult and are dealt with as such. In her dealings for well over a decade with young people who are involved in crime, the author has observed two types of young offender. The first kind is the young person who is involved briefly and minimally in offending, but who gets caught for one such instance. Typical offences are shop lifting, underage drinking or trespassing. This type of young person is at low risk of reoffending and their temporary problematic behaviour is most commonly a form of experimentation. The second type of young offender is the young person who is regularly involved in offending and anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour is normalised and minimised, often part of the young person's culture and/or pro- criminal attitude. These young people tend to be involved in offending on a regular basis and for prolonged periods of time, whilst the nature of their offences tends to be more violent and anti- social, for example assault, drugs, public disorder, burglary and theft.

This phenomenon would seem to fit Moffit's (1993) theory relating to Adolescent- Limited offenders and Life- Course persistent offenders (Moffit1993, P. 676). Moffit identified the Adolescent- Limited offender who only offends for a short period of time marginally influenced by society and peers and who then stops offending. Life- Course offenders on the other hand are those identified by Moffit as the individuals who will offend for a longer period of time and are influenced by different factors such as personality traits impulsivity, community or cultural influences and cognitive deficiencies.

The author can confirm, from her experience, that of the young people in this second cohort only a small percentage go on to court for their offences or become career criminals. A significant proportion of them change their behaviour before they enter the justice system and therefore never become a "statistic", which in turn means that no research is done to understand what changed for those young people. This research will set out to understand what changed for those young people. What were the significant factors which led to their initial and ongoing offending, what were their experiences were the factors which led to their initial and ongoing desistance from offending.

Rationale for the Research

Of the many studies on desistance which have been carried out to date there have been very few carried out in Ireland. Deirdre Healy carried out the first research on desistance in Ireland and published her findings in her book *"The Dynamics of*

Desistance: Charting Pathways through change” in 2010. Healy’s study, like most other studies of desistance concentrated on the experiences of those in young adulthood in terms of their desistance. “Young adulthood” as defined by Erickson (1950) is the psychosocial developmental stage of those who are 18-40 years old. However, in modern society, the stage at which a young Irish man at 18 years old is at in their life regarding education, relationships, job/ career, marriage and parenthood differs largely in comparison to an Irish man at 39 years old. The researcher feels that studies which encompass this vast age bracket may not always be accurate to the experiences of all within the cohort. To this end this research will look at desistance relating specifically and exclusively to those in “Emerging Adulthood”. Emerging adulthood as defined by Arnett (2000) is the period of time between adolescents and young adulthood. He recognises emerging adulthood to be a stage when a person is no longer an adolescent but also does not feel that they have made the transition into adulthood as is suggested by “young adulthood”. This period is from age 18-25. To look at young people in this age bracket exclusively in terms of research we gain a clearer picture of the needs and challenges for this cross section of the population without the impact of the needs and challenges for those in their 30’s, whose lives are more often than not very different to those in emerging adulthood. To date, no desistance studies have been carried out exclusively on those in emerging adulthood. This research will focus exclusively on young Irish men in this age bracket to gain a better understanding of their experiences and to give them a voice.

Another characteristic of research to date is that nearly all of the studies carried out have used participants whom have been incarcerated for a considerable period of time, on one or more occasions, for their offending and are either out of prison and on

probation at the time of the study or are still incarcerated. These individuals' criminal careers are sophisticated and developed. This study is concerned with understanding desistance at a much earlier phase of offending and what leads some young men to desist from crime at younger age. The participants for this study will be those who began their offending under the age of 18 and have since ceased their offending behaviour before turning 25 years old. The participants for this study will have come to the attention of the Gardai for their crimes, have been involved in the Juvenile Diversion Programme, may have been in court for their crimes and may be on probation or have community sanctions. However the participants will not have served sentences in prison. These young people will have, at most, 6 years involvement in crime i.e. aged 12-18 years old, as juvenile offenders.

Statement of the Problem

Upon initial review of the literature gaps in the research have become evident. As highlighted earlier in this chapter studies in this area are limited in terms of the age of the participants and also the level of involvement in crime and engagement in the Justice System. There is no research done in the Irish context specifically within the age category targeted for this study and also with young people prior to their entry into the justice system and/ or incarceration. This study aims to aid in the emergence of an understanding of the research topic presented.

Purpose of Research, Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study and motivation to look at this population is with the hope of practice development in terms of early intervention and prevention of offending. It is

also hoped that if we develop our level of understanding in this area that we can also support prolonged behaviour change that enables desistance. If desistance begins during late teens into early adulthood, but current national and community based interventions for young people involved in offending stop at 18 years old, i.e. Garda Youth Diversion Projects, then is there a gap in our services? How can we continue to support this process of change that a young person has begun to engage in? Is there a need for an interim project that can continue to support young people in the immediate years after they turn 18 years old?

The study also aims to do this in order to better understand the complexities of the process of Desistance and how this can impact on future practice in responding to the needs of young people involved in offending. This study will explore the links between factors which lead to offending and factors which lead to desistance.

The objectives for this study are:

- To review the literature relating to crime, youth justice systems and desistance
- To gather qualitative data through 6 in depth semi structured interviews
- To analyse the data using NVivo and to identify emerging themes and sub themes
- To document and understand the experiences of the participants of the study
- To identify the factors which lead to offending

- To identify the factors which lead to desistance
- To make recommendations on findings and what needs to happen next
- To give young Irish men in this sample a voice

Structure of the Thesis

As previously mentioned this chapter opens the study with an introduction to the research topic as well as setting the context for the study and outlining the structure. The second and third chapters are concerned with reviewing the literature relating to the topic. Chapter 2 sets out to explain youth crime by developing an understanding of the development of criminology and crime causation theories through the ages. In doing this some discussion is had regarding the links between crime causation theories and their possible links to the concept of desistance through the “nurture vs nature” debate. This chapter also sets out to identify and discuss the link between risk factors and crime. The beginning of Chapter 3 concerns itself with reviewing and understanding the development and current standing of the Irish Youth Justice System and the system in which Irish young people find themselves in should they become involved in offending. A brief cross cultural comparative analysis of the Irish, American (namely New York) and Scottish systems is explored to demonstrate where the Irish system stands in relation to the broader international context. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the literature in relation to “Desistance” as a concept.

Chapter 4 looks at the research design and methodology for the study. This chapter will look at the aim of the research as well as the research question and

hypotheses and the epistemological approach. The chosen research design, method of data collection and chosen approach to analysing the data will all be discussed. Sampling, ethical issues and challenges of the design will also be discussed. Chapter 5 will progress to analyse the qualitative data gathered. In doing this a demographic profile of participants will be provided and themes and sub themes which emerged from the data will be identified and documented. NVivo 10 will be used to analyse this data and prepare the data for the discussions in later chapters. The beginning of Chapter 6 will focus on the extensive in-depth discussion of the information which is presented in the analysis in Chapter 5. Chapter 7, the final chapter will provide a summary of findings from the study and will make recommendations on the back of the findings. Chapter 7 will also provide a conclusion to the thesis. The study will conclude with a bibliography and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO- EXPLAINING YOUTH CRIME

Introduction

Many factors have been identified in modern Irish society which may lead a young person to become involved in offending. Such factors include early involvement in anti-social and pro-criminal behaviour, educational problems, anti-social peers, drug and alcohol misuse, boredom, behaviour problems, family and parenting issues, family involvement in offending, community, attitude and orientation problems. (Hoge & Andrews-Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory Screening Version).

Braithwaite (1989) posits two universal criminological “truths”:

1. Crime is committed disproportionately by males.
2. Crime is committed disproportionately by 12-25 year olds.

If one accepted these as truths, it would have a marked impact on any analysis of crime and its causation. Accordingly, as Braithwaite’s thesis has been accepted by mainstream research for its accurate analysis of modern trends, current research is often premised on these two ‘truths’. As such these ‘truths’ need to be tested in this work, given that the research subjects are contained within Braithwaite’s parameters. However, before this can be attempted, it is necessary to analyse these dominant theories.

The understanding of youth crime as we know it today was a process which began in the eighteenth century with the introduction of a new discipline: Criminology. Siegel (2011: 4) defines Criminology as

“the scientific study of the nature, extent, cause, and control of criminal behaviour.” Walklate (2007) similarly discusses criminology as multidisciplinary rather than uni-disciplinary, due to the many areas of interest within the study of crime, for example the sociology and psychiatry of crime.”

Walklate states:

“It is not defined by a particular unit of social reality (as psychology is definitively concerned with the individual or sociology with social relationships) but by a substantive concern: crime. Consequently, it is a discipline inhabited by practitioners, policy makers and academics, all of whom share a common interest in that substantive issue but all of whom may be committed to quiet different disciplinary ways of thinking about it.” (Walklate, 2007, P2)

The focus of this chapter will be on crime causation theories with a view to better understanding the origins of youth crime, within the specific context of the “nurture versus nature” debate. This emphasis will be corroborated in further chapters where consideration will be given to possible links between crime causation theories and crime cessation theories.

The chapter begins with a historical snapshot of crime and criminology. This is followed with an overview of the criminological theories in relation to crime causation. The dominant focus of this chapter is to gain a clear understanding of the factors which lead to an individual offending.

UNDERSTANDING CRIME AND CRIME CAUSATION

Brief Historical Overview of Criminology

The Oxford Dictionary (accessed 12/01/13) defines Crime as being “an action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable by law” or “an action or activity considered to be evil, shameful, or wrong”. The development of social norms and values in any society means there will be crime, although how crime is dealt with has varied over the centuries. In the Middle Ages (1200-1600) people who committed crime or engaged in criminal behaviours were believed to be witches and were often met with extreme punishments and physical torture such as whipping, maiming or execution in an attempt to extract a confession or to draw out the demons which caused the person to offend (Siegel, 2007).

The study of crime as we know it only began in the eighteenth century and social historians, social philosophers and sociologists have since been fascinated by the concept. Historical studies of crime have been concerned with many elements such as crime causation, age/ crime correlation, crime and punishment, reform, diversion, understanding the criminal and the crime, crime and class structure, penology, incarceration, rehabilitation and re-integration of prisoners just to name a few elements (Siegel, 2007).

Criminology has developed through the centuries with the leading theorists of their day being Bentham, Beccaria and Quetelet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; Darwin and Lombroso in the late nineteenth century; Marx and

Durkheim in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and finally Glueck and Glueck in the mid twentieth century. Each century and each theorist brought new knowledge and understanding to the world of criminology and what factors lead to an individual committing a crime.

Leading Theories of Criminology

Classical criminology

Some of the first theories of criminology were developed in the 1700's through the Classical views of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794). Both Bentham and Beccaria were the first to begin to explore the idea of man committing crime as a result of a choice they make. They believed that man was a calculating animal who made deliberate choices regarding their own behaviour. These 'Utilitarians' believed in the pain/ pleasure paradigm, which posited that all behavioural choices were motivated by man's desire to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. Beccaria (1764) believed that should a person see the potential gain of committing a crime as outweighing the potential pain this would encourage the criminal act. Beccaria was the founder of what we today call "deterrence theory" – namely he argued that the possible consequence (the punishment or sanction) should counterbalance the crime- hence deterring offending as the punishment would fit the act. This school of thought is one we commonly refer to today as Classical Criminology (Williams, 1994).

In summary, the four main basic elements of Classical Criminology are:

1. People have free will to choose criminal or lawful solutions to meet their needs or settle their problems.
2. Crime is attractive when it promises great benefits with little effort- people choose to commit crime for reasons of greed or personal need.
3. Crime may be controlled by the fear of punishment and criminal sanctions.
4. Punishment that is perceived to be severe, certain, and swift will deter criminal behaviour (Siegel, 2011, p10)

Some of the derivative schools of Classical Criminology include Rational Choice Theory, Routine Activities Theory, General Deterrence Theory, Specific Deterrence, and Incapacitation (Siegel, 2011)

Classical theory can simply (and simplistically) be described as the premise that crime is intentional, a choice, and that man has control over these choices. It is a deliberate choice made by man for the potential gain that they see in return for the crime. This could on one hand be said to largely tie in with a nurturer perspective as those in this school of thought believe that to be a criminal is not something that man is born into but rather decisions they make, in a very calculated manner. However, Bentham [(1782) 1982] viewed the criminal process in a more mechanistic fashion:

“Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as determine what we shall do.”

This school of thought holds the belief that through severe, swift and certain punishment people will be deterred from such behaviour. In such cases, the proposed or expected threat of punishment outweighs the possible gain for the individual. A flaw in this theory is that it does not recognise the inherent subjectivity of this process. A potential punishment may seem severe to one person but may not seem so severe to another; in turn not deterring them from becoming involved in the crime. For example, the fear of incarceration may a very good deterrent to most. However, for someone who has been incarcerated in the past or whose close family members have been incarcerated- there may be less fear of this as it may be more normalised, and therefore is less of a deterrent.

Despite this fundamental deficiency of the utilitarian model, it can be useful in order to explain a person ceasing their offending behaviour i.e. they would just decide to stop offending. To presume that to become involved in offending a person made a deliberate and intentional decision after weighing up the possible pain versus possible pleasure, then would it not be true that a person would or could equally make that deliberate and intentional decision not to offend? However, in order for one to want to make the decision to stop offending, as per this school of thought, there would require a shift in the balance of potential pain to pleasure. This school of thought holds the individual responsible for their offending, but sees the responsibility of desistance as dependant on external factors such as incarceration, punishment and community sanctions. It might be argued that this school of thought empowers the individual in terms of crime causation but disempowers them in terms of crime cessation. Internal choices cause them to offend however only the influence of external factors can cause them to stop. This underlines the inherent contradiction of the utilitarian model.

Positivist criminology

Theories of criminology in the early nineteenth century were heavily influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin in his published work “The Origins of the Species” (1859). Concepts of evolution soon became topical across many fields of academia. Inspired by these ideas, Cesare Lombroso began his search for “the criminal man”. Like Darwin, Lombroso believed in theories of evolution and that almost all criminals were “born criminals”. These views were very different to those of Bentham and Beccaria who believed in choice and decision in terms of offending. Lombroso believed

that a criminal was a throwback in the evolutionary chain and that the criminal reflected our lower and more primitive ancestors both through his physical characteristics and through his mental inferiorities (Williams, 1994). Lombroso considered criminals to be atavistic, a term coined by Darwin (1859) and he viewed criminals to have similar physical features such as unusual size ears, excessively long arms, sloping foreheads and twisted or flat noses.

It was in 1861 that Lombroso published his first series of papers, and he published his first draft of *L'Uomo Delinquente* (The Criminal Man), a book which he would later revise and edit four times until the publishing of the 5th and final edition in 1897. Over these 21 years the book went from its original 252 pages to 1,903 pages as he developed his theory and began to broaden his view to include new contributing factors to what makes a man a criminal (Williams, 1994).

In Lombroso's (1876) early work he focused only on the "born-criminal". As his works matured he began to entertain the idea of influencing factors on the criminal other than biology. He began to give attention to other environmental factors such as climate, sex, church organisations, rainfall, laws, marriage customs and structure of government (Lombroso, 1876). Over time Lombroso identified three new types of criminals, the insane criminal, the occasional criminal and the criminal of passion. (Lilly, 1995). Lombroso's definition of "the insane criminal" included: idiots, imbeciles, paranoiacs, epileptics and alcoholics. He divided the "occasional criminal" into three sub groups; "Pseudo-criminals" who commit crime involuntarily due to perverse laws or to protect their family, "Criminaloids" who when under particular mental or emotional

circumstances would indulge in vicious and criminal behaviour and finally “Habitual criminals” who commit crime as a result of poor education or training while young or are drawn into crime by their close association with criminals. (Williams, 1994). He also discussed how “criminals of passion” committed crimes because of anger, love or honour and in these situations they were propelled to crime by an irresistible force. (Lilly, 1995)

Although Lombroso did entertain the idea of other influences on the criminal man his emphasis throughout his work did remain on human physical traits. His belief remained that a criminal was born as such and that the criminal behaviour was caused by factors outside of the individual’s control. The mission of Positivism was the reduction or possibly the elimination of crime through treatment of “the Criminal Man” with methods such as sterilization to break the genetic chain or treatment in institutions for as long as required until the criminal was no longer a threat to society. (Newburn, 2007)

Other scholars who carried out studies and developed theories on Positivist Criminology include J. K. Lavater, Franz Joseph Gall, J. K. Spruzheim, Benjamin Rush, and Henry Maudsley. Lombroso’s theory is and was the most respected, earning him the name of “Father of Criminology”. Some of the modern offshoots of Positivist Criminology include Biosocial and Psychological Theory, Cognitive Theory, Behavioural Theory, Evolutionary Theory and Arousal Theory. (Siegel, 2011)

Lombroso's theory of the born criminal was later developed upon in the mid twentieth century by William Sheldon with his "Body Type Theory". Sheldon identified three types of body; endomorphs, mesomorphs and ectomorphs. Each body type had a distinct set of characteristics and from these characteristics it could be determined if a person would be a criminal or not. Sheldon believed that those who were mesomorphs with some characteristics of endomorphs were predisposed to becoming a criminal while those who were ectomorphs would not be. (Sheldon, 1942) In more recent studies, however it has been proven that there appears to be no link between biology/genetics and crime. Nonetheless, these findings did not deter theorists such as Gatti and Cortes (1972), Crowe (1974) and Hutchings and Sarnoff (1975) from continuing to try to prove the link between biology and crime. (Hale, et al, 2013)

So, how does this compare to the Classical view and how can this relate to desistance? While the Classical school of thought contains elements from both the nature and nurture perspective, the Positivists school of thought adapt their stance from a nature perspective. The research in this area discusses how the individual has no choice regarding whether or not they will be a criminal, rather they are predisposed and their fate is predetermined. Can criminality be inherited? If this is the case, then to believe that a person is a born criminal is to believe that this is in their nature, their genetics, and something that is there regardless of the effects of nurturing. Positivist theory, unlike Classical theory, places no responsibility on the criminal in terms of decision making regarding their offence. The positivist thought also places no responsibility on the individual in terms of possible desistance as a person cannot change their own genetics. This would support the untenable proposition that if a person is a born criminal then desistance is impossible. It would disregard the ability of a

person to modify or at least control any genetic factors which might predispose them to criminality.

Sociological criminology

In the nineteenth century while Lombroso and his counterparts continued to develop their school of belief Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and L. A. J. Quetelet (1796-1874) began blazing the trail for Sociological criminology. In pioneering this school of thought Quetelet used newly found social statistics to identify that social factors impacted on a person's propensity to commit crime, along with other factors such as age, sex, climate, poverty, alcohol consumption and population composition. (Siegel, 2011)

Durkheim was of the belief that crime was natural and society would never be crime-free. He emphasised the vast diversity within people and within society. Accordingly, social norms and values would always vary and by the very nature of humans and their interaction in society, taking into account the class divide, population and social changes, which resulted in anomie (alienation), people became confused and rebellious. Durkheim believed that crime was inevitable and in some cases useful as it helped to define social norms and pave the way for social change. (Durkheim, 1984)

During the mid-late twentieth century, developments in this area included Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory (1947) and Walter Reckless' Control Theory (1973). Sutherland and Reckless believed that through the failure of certain

important social processes people became more inclined to offend. Such social processes included family, education and peer relations. Reckless also believed that crime and pro criminal attitudes are often learned from older people who have been or are involved in offending. (Lilly, 1995)

In 1938 Robert Merton blurred the boundaries between “them” (criminals) and “us” (non-criminals) with his development of Strain Theory and his belief that crime was committed by people due to the gap between social class and a person’s desire to have something that may be out of their means. This view amended the previous belief that there was a clear difference between a criminal and a non- criminal. Now it was suggested that the criminal and the good citizen were no longer separate. (Hale, et al, 2013)

Some other variations or schools of Sociological Criminology include Cultural Deviance Theory, Social Reaction Theory, Social Control Theory, Social disorganisation, Social Learning Theory and Labelling. (Siegel, 2011)

So how does this school of thought fit in with the previously discussed theories regarding crime causation? While classical theory places the emphasis on an individual’s choice and positivists place the emphasis on genetics, the sociological theorists look largely at society and its impact on the individual in terms of their involvement in crime. The sociological perspective encompasses social factors and a lack of establishing social norms. This school of thought leans more heavily to the

nurture element as the influence and impact of society on one's development is a variable factor from person to person. Our environment nurtures the person we become and can change through our lives. That being said, factors such as age, sex and population are not influenced by society and in turn are not developed or changed from a nurturing perspective but are rather a part of human nature. Regarding the link between desistance and the sociological perspective; if the influence of societal factors on the individual causes offending, then is desistance made possible or promoted by changing or removing such factors? If so, then would practice be best placed to identify the factors which influence the individual, which in turn would guide the responses and interventions to encourage and promote desistance? This school of thought places the responsibility of the offence on the choice that the individual makes as a result of societal factors which have influenced them to that point. It also leaves room for change in this behaviour if the individual can learn to cope differently in a particular society or if some of the societal factors which influence their offending are changed. This school of thought appears to be the most empowering of the three as the person involved in the criminal behaviour has the potential to change their environment and in turn their behaviour and they are not as dependant on external factors for change.

Radical Criminology

While this school of thought agrees with many of the findings and beliefs of Durkheim and Quetelet and their Sociological Criminology, Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Fredrick Engels-(1820-1895) added an extra element which they found fundamental to crime. Marx and Engels, the founding fathers of Marxist theory, felt that the exploitation of the working class in industry led to class conflict which directly resulted

in crime. (Lilly, 1995). In a capitalist society the people in the lower classes would become enslaved by those who owned the means of production. This in turn caused unrest and social dysfunction (agreeing with Durkheim's theory of 'anomie' or alienation), including crime. (Churchich, 1990)

Radical Criminology is based on the theoretical views of a specific strain of Marxism: "Instrumental Marxism".

"The basic idea to understand in this respect is that "Instrumental Marxists" argue that the operation of all social institutions (for example work, family, education, legal systems and so forth) and specific agencies of social control (the police, mass media and the like) can be linked- either directly or indirectly-to the needs, purpose and basic interest of the Capitalist "ruling class". (Livesey, 2011)

Although Marxist theory (1848) would form the basis for Radical Criminology, it was the directed works of Dutch criminologist William Bonger (1916) and Richard Quinney (1970) which saw the development of contemporary radical criminology. Both Bonger and Quinney attributed the rise in levels of crime to the development of capitalism, which in turn created an increase in levels of greed and egocentrism as people desired more materialistic things and would turn to crime to acquire them (Levinson, 2002)

This theory would later be further developed in Taylor, Walton and Young's then ground-breaking research in 1973, "The New Criminology: For a Social Theory of Deviance." It was in this research that Taylor, Walton and Young discussed social control, class and capitalism and their link to crime. (Hagan, 2001)

Some of the modern derivatives of Radical Criminology include Control Theory, Critical Theory, Power-Postmodern Theory, Conflict Theory, Radical Theory, Radical Feminist Theory, Left Realism, Reintegrated Shaming Peace-making, and Restorative Justice. (Siegel, 2011)

So once again, how does this relate to earlier research in this area? Radical criminology shares some views of the Positivism school in terms of crime being linked with greed and man's desire to attain materialistic things that may be beyond their means. However, the crossover of the two schools is limited. When comparing this school of criminology with previously discussed schools it can be seen that Radical theory began to move away from the traditional beliefs in terms of crime causation, namely biological and psychological factors. Radical criminology rather looked at the impact that class divide and the inequality in wealth that resulted from the Industrial revolution had on man's propensity towards crime. The capitalist economic system maintained the class divide and prevented people from the working class from becoming upwardly mobile, thus turning to crime in order to survive or feed the materialistic urgings created by the capitalist society. It might be argued therefore that those who believed in this school of thought placed the responsibility of crime causation on society and capitalism rather than holding the individual responsible. This poses a challenge to any theory of desistance based on personal change, as it might argue that personal change is futile if the structure of the society and the economy does not change as well. On the other hand, desistance might be prompted by supporting and enabling an individual, who is involved in crime, to attain the materialistic things they desire

through lawful means. This might be done by breaking the cycle in terms of socio-economic factors associated with class and crime such as increasing levels of education and improved employment opportunities. By supporting these individuals in this context will this also lend a hand to the possibility of people becoming upwardly mobile as their level of education, income, employment and social status increase, and in turn how will this impact on the class divide?

Developmental Criminology (Multifactor/integrated theory)

Developmental Criminology shares elements of Sociological, Conflict, Classical and Positivist Criminology, and attempts to bring the primary elements of these schools into one cohesive theory. First developed by Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck in the mid twentieth century this theory looked at crime on a multi-dimensional level, by encompassing the social, biological and psychological factors that lead to a person becoming involved in crime. From their studies the Gluecks (1930-1972) found that people from low income homes, single parent families, low educational attainment and social marginalisation were more inclined to become career offenders. Other factors which would contribute to offending would include personality, low self-esteem, low levels of intelligence, poor relationships and low self-worth. The Gluecks identified a pattern in offending and noted that a maladjusted young person would be more likely to become a maladjusted adult. Similarly, a young person who is involved in anti-social behaviour and who has a pro-criminal attitude is more inclined to maintain the same attitude and behaviour in adulthood. (Glueck & Glueck, 1930)

Some of the modern outgrowths of Developmental Criminology include Developmental Theory, Life Course Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Latent Trait Theory. (Siegel, 2011)

The Gluecks' theories in terms of developmental criminology were recognised by many to be ground-breaking in their originality and their theories are still highly influential on modern thought in relation to the understanding of the causes of crime. It was as a result of their research that, for the first time, all the elements of each school were married together to offer a clearer understanding of the factors which lead to an individual offending. In turn the developmental school of criminology factors in both nature and nurture as it identifies social, biological and psychological factors which attribute to crime. Developmental theorists believe that personal choice, predisposition, class and social factors all have an impact on a person becoming involved in offending, all at varying levels depending on the individual. If all of these factors attribute to a person's offending then can some factors change while others can't? In terms of a person's possible desistance, is this probable? If you can identify the factors which caused each individual to offend then you can begin to work with these individual factors to break the cycle i.e. increase education, personal development etc. By providing interventions to work with factors is desistance is more likely to happen?

Considering risk factors

When trying to understand youth crime, in addition to the application of the theories of crime causation we must also consider the presence of risk factors which

often go hand in hand with such theories. Risk factors in relation to offending are any elements which increase the likeliness of an individual becoming involved in offending behaviour. Hoge and Andrews (1995) identified 8 key elements of risk in relation to a young person/ young adult becoming involved in offending. These 8 factors would make up the scales of measurement of risk in their Youth Level of Service/ Case Management Inventory 2.0 risk assessment document. The factors were as follows:

- Prior and current offences
- Education issues
- Substance use/ abuse
- Family (involvement in crime, poor relationships etc.)
- Personality/ behaviour issues
- Peers (involvement in offending)
- Leisure/ Recreation (not engaging in any positive activity)
- Attitudes/ Orientations (pro criminal/ anti-social)

Munice, Hughes and McLaughlin (2002) identified the following as the elements that increase level of risk in relation to offending:

- Prenatal and perinatal
- Personality
- Intelligence and attainment
- Parental supervision and discipline
- Parental conflict and separation
- Socio economic status
- Delinquent friends
- School influences
- Community influences

(Munice, Hughes & McLaughlin, 2002, P 426)

CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century theorists have been trying to understand crime, what causes it and who is likely to become involved in it. We try to understand what are the causes of crime, as that enables us to respond to crime or the individual involved in this behaviour, with a view to preventing or reducing crime. We try to explain crime so that we can control it. While some of the theories are dated and while more recent research has since shown no link between crime and its suspected cause i.e. biology and crime, the evolution of the study of crime has brought us to an interesting place. By exploring criminology through the ages we have been able to look at the behaviour and the individual in tandem and how factors have influenced both over time.

Over five centuries of the study of crime we have seen various themes emerge across the many schools of thought. The three dominant trends in terms of offending have been physical, psychological and sociological factors. The level of importance of each factor varies from school to school with Classical criminology relying heavily on the psychological factors, whilst Positivist criminology relies heavily on the physical factors and Radical criminology on the sociological factors. These perspectives certainly all contribute to the more modern perspective in terms of Developmental criminology that begins to consider the impact of all factors on the causes of crime. Other trends in the research to date would include the often balanced impact of both “nature” and “nurture” on the individual who is involved in crime.

This chapter has taken us from the first studies of crime to the present day beliefs in terms of what causes individuals to offend. It is the influence of this ongoing understanding that we develop our laws and justice systems; more specifically our Youth Justice Systems. Justice and Youth Justice Systems vary from country to country and there can often be vast differences in the responses to offending depending on cultural, political and societal influences. The type of response to crime and the nature of consequences of criminal and anti-social behaviour can greatly influence the likelihood of an individual Desisting.

**CHAPTER THREE- THE IRISH YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM
AND DESISTANCE**

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the dominant criminological theories of crime causation with a view to understanding youth crime. This chapter will provide an overview of the Irish Youth Justice System, from an historical and current perspective. The primary focus of this chapter is on juvenile involvement in justice systems, including a brief cross cultural comparison between the current Irish, Scottish and American systems. In this regard, the merits and weaknesses of each will be briefly discussed.

The purpose of this Chapter is to give a clear understanding of the system as it currently applies to young people in Ireland. This will allow a better understanding of the path on which these young people have travelled prior to their desistance. It is hoped that it will also foster an understanding of the impact of this system on the futures of the young people involved.

This Chapter concludes with an examination of definitions of desistance and desistance related theories: maturational theories, narrative theories and structural theories. These theories will be linked with earlier discussed criminological theories to establish possible commonalities between the theories of crime causation and crime cessation.

An historical overview of the Irish Youth Justice system

As discussed in the previous chapter, Bentham and Beccaria were among the first of the social philosophers to begin to explore ideas of criminology and to try to understand crime in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Their research would greatly impact the development of the Irish response to crime. Prior to and up to these changes, punishment for crime was draconian, with an emphasis on the punitive, rather than the rehabilitative. For example, it was not until 1997 that whipping was taken out of the Irish Statute book by Section 12 of the Criminal Law Act (1997).

Until the late nineteenth century there was no formal justice system for young people in Ireland. Such a system would not be developed in Ireland until the inception of the Children (Ireland) Act 1884, at the same time as changes in relation to adult offending. (O'Mahony, 2002)

During this time theories of deterrence were dominant, almost to the exclusion of any other theories of punishment, and it was believed that through severe repercussions for offending, such as corporal punishment, a level of fear would be created in society which would frighten away any aspiring criminal. These theories did not distinguish between juvenile and adult offenders, and responses to crime were often severe, irrespective of the age of the criminal.

“Individualized justice did not, however, necessarily translate into compassionate treatment of the convicted. Convicted juvenile offenders continued to be subjected to the same punishment as adults.” (Shoemaker, 1996, P93)

Some examples compiled from case records of the Old Bailey Crown Criminal Court illustrate the reality faced by youthful offenders:

“A 1686 case involved a 10 year old boy who had stolen 30 yards of satin ribbon and was ordered to be whipped. A 1690 case involved a 10 year old boy convicted of stealing two gold rings and some money. His punishment: to be “burnt in the hand.” These and other types of corporal punishment were the most frequent penalties for young offenders between the ages of 7 and 14 in England at that Time.” (Sanders, 1970, P23-26)

When a juvenile justice system did develop in Ireland, it was essentially a mirror-image of the English system, and it was some time before the justice system in this country responded to conditions ‘on the ground’, rather than a formally imposed model by our colonial rulers.

Surprisingly, Cipriani (2009) shows how throughout England, and many other countries in Europe, as early as the late thirteenth century judges were beginning to consider the age of young people in terms of their crime and their ability to know the difference between right and wrong versus the possible punishment for their offence. This development was mirrored in Ireland. By the early fourteenth century it was common practice that age was taken into consideration when considering sentence. In many European countries, including England, Ireland and France, 7 years old would now not only be viewed as the minimum age at which a child could be held responsible for their crime (*doli capax*) but also the age from which they could be punished for that same crime. Cipriani (2009) argues that the establishment of 7 years old becoming the

age was more likely than not related to the strong influence of the Catholic Church, as this was in line with the age of a child's criminal responsibility as noted in Canon Law – which was drawn from ancient Roman law.

Beccaria believed that the responses to crime were often more serious than the offence, with the punishment often far outweighing the impact of the original offence. He argued that changing how we responded to crime was the way forward. (Beccaria, 1764) This view was influential in the development of the justice systems in Ireland, and more particularly in the development of Mountjoy Prison in 1850. This would be the first time that Ireland deliberately moved away from the medieval punitive responses to crime and began to look to regulation and restraint. These changes would see a shift away from old models of corporal punishment to new, more humane models of education, reform and rehabilitation. (O'Mahony, 2002) This shift in policy not only impacted the adult system but would in turn impact the systems and responses in relation to the young people.

The first legislation in Ireland which would begin to address the issues of the management of, and response to, young people involved in crime was the Summary Jurisdiction over Children (Ireland) Act 1884 which was later replaced by the Children Act 1908. The 1908 Act was viewed as a very progressive piece of legislation for its time (Seymour, 2006)

The 1908 Act was critically important in regard to innovations concerning the age of criminal responsibility, the definition of a young person and child, and the introduction of and reliance on institutional schools and remand homes for convicted juvenile offenders. (Seymour, 2004). However, this legislation remained unchanged and enforced for nearly 100 years, resulting in it becoming very dated and indeed unrepresentative of Irish society in the twenty-first century.

The Children Act 1908 was replaced by the Children Act 2001 which was enacted as a result of Ireland being a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), in 1991. The current Youth Justice system in Ireland is predicated on this legislation. It must be argued that at the time of the introduction of the 2001 Act, the Irish State had provided an “inadequate and inappropriate response” to juvenile offenders. (Seymour,2004)

“The impetus for change to the legislation (Children Act, 2001) only began in the 1990’s with a report by the Government Select Committee entitled *Juvenile Crime- Its Causes and its Remedies (1992)*. Many of the recommendations emerging from this report formed the basis of the Children Bill, which subsequently became the Children Act (2001). Pressure from the international community about the government’s approach to young offenders was another factor in driving forward change to the juvenile justice system.” (Seymour, 2004)

The Irish Youth Justice System

The Irish Youth Justice System (IYJS) is currently developed in line with the Children's Act 2001 (and amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006). While the introduction of this new legislation had an immediate impact on the Irish system, it would take several years to fully implement the changes outlined. (Seymour, 2004) In the interim period the 1908 Act was still in effect until the full implementation of the 2001 Act in approximately 2009/2010.

Key developments in the Children Act 2001

The Children Act 2001 introduced many critical and necessary changes in how young people were treated, with the emphasis on their welfare. These key changes included a change in the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years, and amended the definitions of a young person/ child, and the development of community sanctions. Perhaps the most significant change was the move away from incarceration of young people, with this now being a last resort. In order to accommodate this change of emphasis the Act makes provisions for the development of available services in a community setting to young people who offend, as well as increased community sanctions as consequences for offending. (www.probation.ie, 2012)

In December 2005, the IYJS was placed under the auspices of the office of the Department of Justice and Equality:

“The Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) was established in December 2005 with a remit to improve the delivery of youth justice services and reduce youth offending.”

The main responsibilities of IYJS are to:

- Develop a unified youth justice policy
- Devise and develop a national strategy to deliver this policy and service
- Link this strategy where appropriate with other child related strategies
- Manage and develop children detention facilities
- Manage the implementation of provisions of the Children Act 2001 which relate to community sanctions, restorative justice conferencing and diversion
- Co-ordinate service delivery at both national and local level
- Establish and support consultation and liaison structures with key stakeholders including at local level to oversee the delivery of this service and response
- Develop and promote information sources for the youth justice sector to inform further strategies, policies and programmes.” (www.iyjs.ie)

The IYJS mission statement is as follows:

“To create a safer society by working in partnership to reduce youth offending through appropriate interventions and linkages into services.” (www.iyjs.ie)

Between its inception in 2005 and 2007 the IYJS developed the strategic plan for 2008-2010. This working document would concentrate primarily on a number of ‘High Level’ goals which they would aim to achieve during the 3 year period outlined. This plan was developed in line with the changes made by the Children’s Act of 2001 which highlighted the importance and necessity for the development and introduction of community sanctions as an initial response to youth offending. Incarceration was only

considered when positive measures and lesser sanctions were not successful in the diversion and prevention of criminal behaviour. The High Level goals as set out in the IYJS National Strategic Plan 2008-2010 were:

1. To provide leadership and build public confidence in the youth justice system.
2. To work to reduce offending by diverting young people from offending behaviour.
3. To promote the greater use of community sanctions and initiatives to deal with young people who offend.
4. To provide a safe and secure environment for detained children that will assist their early reintegration into the community.
5. To strengthen and develop information and data sources in the youth justice system to support more effective policies and services.

This strategic plan and department would be tasked with the responsibility of the development of areas of community sanctions as outlined and during this time period the full implementation of the plan would be made possible through community partners in line with the Children's First Guidelines and the Children's Act 2001. Meeting these High Level goals would be done in conjunction with agencies within the communities. High level Goals 2 & 3 concentrate specifically on community sanctions with High Level Goal 2 looking at early intervention, diversion, and restorative justice. High Level Goal 3 looks at court orders relating to young people who present to the courts and are convicted of a crime and the consideration of community based sanctions in their sentencing.

Currently in Ireland when a young person first comes to the attention of the Gardai for a crime they are referred to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme as outlined in Section 17-51 of the Children Act 2001, as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2006, Section 123-127. The role and function of the Diversion Programme is outlined in this Act. A young person can be entered into the Programme where they take responsibility for their offence or anti-social behaviour. The purpose of the Programme, as also outlined in the Act, is to work with young people under 18, who are involved in crime, to give them a chance to change their problematic behaviour, to divert them from committing further crime and ideally prevent them from entering the full criminal justice system.

A file is prepared and sent to the youth section of the Gardai in Dublin for consideration of the young person's offence. A decision is made whether the young person will receive an informal, formal or restorative caution or if they will be prosecuted for the offence for which they were arrested. A number of factors are taken into consideration when making this decision, for example, the number of prior offences, the rate of offending, whether a member of the public was harmed during the offence, and the severity of the offence.

The recommendation is that a young person will be allowed two informal cautions and one formal caution before they will be prosecuted for a crime. (Children Act, 2001) However, in practice most young people receive a large number of cautions before prosecution is even considered, if at all.

All young people who are entered into in the Diversion Programme are dealt with by the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO). The JLO is responsible for issuing cautions, supervising young people's progress (in the instance of a formal caution), facilitating Restorative Cautions/ Conferences and making referrals to the Garda Youth Diversion Project (GYDP). The GYDPs are community based projects that work with young people, aged 12-18, who are at risk or involved in offending or anti-social behaviour in their community, aiming to prevent and divert problematic behaviour. The GYDPs are an early intervention community sanction to deal with young offending as outlined in the IYJS Strategic Plan.

These developments in the Irish Youth Justice systems allow young offenders some time for reflection, behaviour change and desistance from crime. However, it could be argued that this system does not allow enough time for the young person's growth and personal development or adequate time for self-reflection, the development of empathy or the reduction of impulsive behaviour, in turn leading to change in their criminal behaviour.

A brief comparative analysis between the Irish, American and Scottish Systems

A Brief Overview of the Scottish Youth Justice System

In Scotland the age of criminal responsibility is 8. However a child below the age of 12 cannot be prosecuted. The age of majority is 18, as it is in Ireland. In Scotland they deal with young people who are involved in crime or anti-social behaviour through the Children's Hearing System.

This system was set up as a result of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. 30 years later it was given a new statutory framework in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Moving away from its earlier punitive and disciplinary systems of trying young people in adult courts, the Children's Hearings were predominantly concerned with the overall welfare of the child. This meant that the hearing was not only interested in the anti-social or criminal behaviour committed by the young person but also the overarching issues regarding their general welfare as well as the absence or presence of parental control and/or support. The child, along with the parents, a panel of lay community volunteers who had been trained for the role, police and other professional staff would all be present at these hearings. Outcomes of the Children's Hearing could include community sanctions, warnings, or the child being removed from their parents' care or supervision. It would be the role of the Social Worker to initiate and supervise the outcomes of the hearing. While these hearings, which were essentially welfare conferences for the young person, were largely successful, some challenges included the fact that over time it became harder to find lay volunteers who were willing to engage in the process. (Scottish Executive, 2001)

This system is similar to Ireland in terms of the restorative practices which are common in the Irish response to youth offending in both Restorative cautions and also in the restorative practices which are often used in projects such as Garda Youth Diversion projects. In addition, another similarity is that both Scotland and Ireland identified the need to distinguish between adults and young people in relation to responses of the justice system. Both countries place the emphasis on the welfare and needs of the young person, on giving them a chance to change their problematic behaviour and on trying to challenge this behaviour with a view to prevent and divert this behaviour in the future, hence avoiding the formal court system at all.

A Brief Overview of New York Youth Justice System

In New York the age of criminal responsibility is 13 and the age of majority is now 18 as adjusted in 2001 from 16. The age of majority in Ireland, Scotland and New York is the same, with the main difference being in the age of responsibility. New York is often said to have one of the toughest systems in America in terms of Juvenile Justice and in comparison to Ireland and Scotland their responses to youth crime are extreme, harsh and punishing. The New York juvenile justice system is governed by the NY Juvenile Offender Act 1978. Incarceration and sentencing of young offenders to prisons, detention centres and Juvenile Centres is very common. In New York a young person involved in crime would most often find themselves in front of a judge for their crimes. Rehabilitation or reform of the young person is supposed to occur during their incarceration.

Whilst it is clearly punitive in impact, the NYC system of Juvenile justice is also:

“Ineffective: Despite state annual placement costs that are among the highest in the nation, the vast majority of youth detained in the juvenile justice system eventually go on to become adult offenders.

Inefficient: Over 60% of youth were re-arrested within two years of being released from state custody.

Unsafe: State facilities were under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice for “brutal conditions of confinement.” (New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, 2014)

The differences between the NY system and the Justice system in Ireland and Scotland are dramatic. The Irish and Scottish systems are mainly concerned with the prevention and diversion of future anti-social and criminal behaviour while keeping the welfare of the young person as the paramount concern. The emphasis is on decreasing risk factors and increasing the long-term protective factors for the young person as regards their possibility of reoffending. It would appear that the NY system concentrates on controlling crime with the maintenance of social control and the reduction of immediate risk being the primary concerns. This system has been unsuccessful in terms of reducing the long term recidivism levels in young people. With this in mind, Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Cuomo have identified the urgency for the need to reform the Juvenile Justice system, a process which is ongoing.

At this point in the study we have taken some time to consider theories of crime and crime causation with the aim to develop our understanding of what the literature says in terms of factors leading individuals to offending. We have gone on to look at the Youth Justice System in Ireland and on a wider context in order to gain an

understanding of how it applies to those young people who become involved in crime. This study will next explore the concept of desistance and review the literature regarding the theory and process of desistance so we can begin to understand the factors which may lead to desistance from crime. This research looks at offending and desistance as a linear process of cause- consequence- desistance.

UNDERSTANDING DESISTANCE- Act or process?

Historical Background on Desistance Research

The study of why and how people ceased their offending behaviours and how they maintained this crime-free living is a relatively new concept, which was pioneered largely by Glueck and Glueck in 1937. However, it was not until the 1970's and 1980's that the term "desistance" and the interest in the concept began to feature in criminology. Research in this area is relatively new and is still, to some degree, in its infancy. (Farrall & Maruna, 2004)

"Early thinkers, such as Neal Shover (1983), aimed to understand desistance from the perspective of the individual ex-offender, and by the 1990s the issue of desistance had become central to a new life course perspective that was emerging in criminal career research (e.g. Sampson and Laub, 1993). However, as Farrall and Maruna (2004: 358) document, in recent years the investigation of desistance has matured sufficiently to move beyond just being part of research on criminal careers. Indeed, it now represents a legitimate topic for research in its own right." (Fitzpatrick, 2011)

Farrall, Godfrey and Cox (2009) discuss how the area of study has advanced at a phenomenal rate over the last decade. They note that prior to the 1990's you would find research of this nature "tucked away in little cited articles". However, it is now coming to the fore with a number of large studies entirely focused on understanding this concept and process through extensive investigation and longitudinal studies by scholars such as Sampson, Laub, Maruna, Farrall and Bottoms. (Farrall, Godfrey & Cox, 2009)

"In the last few years, the investigation of desistance has matured beyond a mere appendage to research on criminal careers, and clearly represents a legitimate topic for research in its own right. Most importantly, desistance research in the last five years has transcended mere description (for example, who desists and when, how long do criminal careers last, etc), and a range of theories have emerged that seek

to account for and explain desistance as a process (for example, Farrall and Bowling 1999; Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph 2002; Laub and Sampson 2003; Maruna 2001; Warr 1998). (Farrall & Maruna, 2004)

Defining Desistance

Desistance refers to the end of a criminal career or any involvement in criminal behaviour, which sounds fairly straightforward in theory. However, in practice, the definitional pathway is difficult, and attempts to define and measure desistance are many and varied (Soothill et al., 2009). (Fitzpatrick, 2011)

Laub and Sampson's review of existing research in relation to desistance has dominated this area for many years with other researchers in the area heavily referencing their work. They found that in the existing literature there was no clear or definite definition. They wrote:

“The study of desistance from crime is hampered by definitional, measurement, and theoretical incoherence. A unifying framework can distinguish termination of offending from the process of desistance. Termination is the point when criminal activity stops and desistance is the underlying causal process. A small number of factors are sturdy correlates of desistance (e.g., good marriages, stable work, transformation of identity, and aging). The processes of desistance from crime and other forms of problem behaviour appear to be similar. Several theoretical frameworks can be employed to explain the process of desistance, including maturation and aging, developmental, life-course, rational choice and social learning theories. A life-course perspective provides the most compelling framework, and it can be used to identify institutional sources of desistance and the dynamic social processes inherent in stopping crime. “(Laub & Sampson, 2001)

Some researchers such as Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes & Muir (2004) emphasise the importance of recognising desistance as a process while others such as Maruna and Piquero believe in the “cease and desist” order. First a person ceases the offending behaviour then they continue to desist. (Krohn, 2009) Maruna et al. (2004) identify primary and secondary desistance. They argue that primary desistance is the initial cessation of criminal behaviour and the crime free period that this involves, while secondary desistance is the ongoing long term sustained state of non-offending, a more permanent desistance represented in a shift in ones identity from “offender” to “ex-offender”.

So what is desistance? At what point can we consider someone a desister? Is there a process or a single action? Is it prolonged over a period of time? These are questions that both criminological theorists and desistance theorists have been debating over since this area of research began to come to the fore in the late 70's and early 80's. For Criminologists from the various schools of thought, the challenge was that if their crime causation theory could describe the elements which led to crime, then in order to validate their theories the same elements must be able to explain why people turned away from crime. In turn this meant that, theoretically, many different factors were identified as leading to desistance.

“... Farrington has observed that ‘even a five-year or ten-year crime-free period is no guarantee that offending has terminated’ (Farrington, 1986a: 201). In addition to this, Maruna (2001) makes the important point that deciding to desist and actually desisting are two very different things. As a result, he argues that rather than defining desistance as a termination event, it is far more productive to regard it as a ‘maintenance process’, with the emphasis on ‘the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending’ (Maruna, 2001: 26). So the

focus here is not on a key moment or definable event, but rather on the maintenance of crime-free behaviour in the face of life's obstacles and frustrations. In Maruna's view, it can be usefully regarded as an ongoing work-in-progress. The focus on understanding desistance as a process has increasingly been emphasized by researchers in recent years. Indeed, Weaver and McNeil (2008) define desistance as the processes by which people come to cease, and to sustain cessation of, offending behaviour. Broadly speaking then, desistance research is concerned with when, why and how criminal careers come to an end (Weaver and McNeil, 2008). (Fitzpatrick, 2011)

How do we define and therefore identify desistance? There are a range of views as to what constitutes and leads to desistance. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990, P 136) are of the thought that offending will always, "naturally" stop as a result of the maturation of the offender. This is known as-the age-crime correlation. The authors argue that the age-crime correlation is the only factor that determines desistance and they feel that the study and information in relation to desistance is unnecessary and uninteresting. They discuss the change as being "spontaneous" change that can only be attributed to age.

As previously discussed, Laub and Sampson (2001) identified that in addition to age influencing the increase and in turn decrease of offending behaviour they also recognised the importance of the impact of life experiences, biological changes, cognitive changes, and social transitions on the individual. Krohn (2009) outlines how biological change may present in the form of maturing. Cognitive impacts include developing increased empathy, behavioural change presents in the form of decreasing impulsivity and social changes present in the form of increased pro social attitudes. (Newburn, 2007) Other social changes such as marriage, having children and "settling down", getting a job or returning to education also impact on the individuals inclination

to desist from offending.(Barry, 2010) Farrall, Godfrey and Cox emphasised the importance particularly of marriage and family formation and employment as contributing factors which lead to desistance.

In their extensive review of the desistance literature, Laub and Sampson (2001) argue that few studies have offered an operational definition of desistance and that there is currently no consensus in the literature on this issue. (Krohn et al, 2009, p279) Laub and Sampson (2001) agree that most offenders do at some point stop offending but because of the absence of a definition, the ability to measure desistance remains problematic. Through a lack of understanding of various reasons for desistance as well as the underlying mechanisms there remains little theoretical conceptualisation about factors leading to the cessation of offending.

Krohn (2009) also discussed the concept of “desistance”. He identifies the many different meanings which are implied by researchers when they use this term i.e. that it may be the single action of stopping the crime or it may be the ongoing cessation of involvement in crime. He also explores if desistance is an ongoing process that can start and stop at intervals throughout one’s life.

“Most, but not all, define desistance as the absence of criminal behaviour, as in the “cease and desist” order: one first terminates offending, then desists or abstains from further offending. The question becomes, however, how many months or years of non-offending are required to make up desistance (Bushway et al., 2001; Laub & Sampson, 2001, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Piquero et al., 2003)? Farrington (1986) argues that “even a five-year or ten-year crime-free period is no guarantee that offending has terminated” (p. 201). Most researchers who use terms like “desistance,” “cessation,” or “termination” seem to imply that this is a permanent change. Several of these definitions involve some uncertainty as to

whether this state of desistance is temporary or permanent. In this research, “desistance” is more likely to refer to a state of “temporary non-offending” than a permanent change from one state to another (Bushway et al., 2001). Yet, because these conceptual and operational definitions of desistance vary across existing studies, “it is difficult to draw empirical generalizations from the growing literature on desistance from crime” (Uggen & Massoglia, 2003, pp. 316–317)

From the existing literature on desistance it is clear that there seems to be a consensus that the term is loosely used by many people to mean various things. It is also clear that there are many aspects of desistance that require further and thorough research, namely: how is desistance determined and defined, what time period constitutes desistance, can an individual engage in the process of desistance many times during their life, how can desistance be measured, does desistance only refer to the cessation of crime in persistent offenders? (Moffit, 1993)

In the absence of a common and concise definition of desistance researchers in the area are faced with a challenge. Without the foundation of a clear definition each piece of research is subjective to the researcher’s interpretation of the term. This affects the consistency of the finding as the yard stick for measuring desistance is constantly moving.

Models and Theories of Desistance

Farrall and Bowling discuss the concept of Social and Subjective factors in relation to three models they feel can be applied to desistance. They identify the strong subjective model, the strong social model and the combined subjective- social model. (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008)

Social/Structural, Subjective & Integrative Theories

Researchers offer many explanations as to what leads to desistance. The findings can be categorised into one of three key areas. Barry, 2013, identifies the three main theories regarding desistance as the Structural theories of desistance, Subjective theories of desistance and Integrative theories of desistance.

Farrall and Bowlings (2002) use the terms “social/structural”, “subjective” and “integrative”. Social changes refer to changes such as becoming a parent, gaining employment or becoming married. Social changes are generally easier to measure and findings are generally more reliable. These changes are related to developmental events in the individual’s life. Subjective changes however are more personal and internal to the individual. These changes are most often in the morals, values, beliefs, choices, goals, motivations and self-identity of the person. These changes are cognitive, internal and “agentic” and are more difficult to measure in a tangible and reliable way. Integrative changes combine both social and subjective factors. Change in social circumstances may in time lead to changes in subjective factors or vice versa, which inevitably results in desistance. (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008).

Subjective Theory

As highlighted above this model hinges on the agent and their cognitive ability and willpower. Le Bel et al (2008) using the strong subjective model, concentrate on the individual who simply has to decide to “go straight”. The belief is that the change, when instigated through this framework, is directly as a result of the individual’s mind-set and willingness to make the right choices to keep themselves out of trouble. Change in this frame work is not influenced by external factors and is empowering for the individual as they control the change. Change in this model is often more conscious and will involve one or more of the subjective factors listed above. (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008) Subjective theories also take in factors such as maturation, attitude change and age. It is under this theory that the age crime correlation would be most relevant. (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990)

In Subjective theories of desistance Farrall (2002) and Maurna (2001) look at development of the offenders’ identity as playing a role in their desistance and Maruna speaks of the idea of a “redemption script”.

Maturation Theory, the Age crime correlation

Farrington, (1986 & 1992) carried out extensive research on the area of the relationship between age and offending. His findings were that generally offending begins in the early teenage years, peaks in the late teens to early twenties and begins a rapid decrease between early to late twenties. He discussed that most people would have stopped their offending naturally by 30.

“Within the human life-span, the decade of the 20’s (age 20-29) is known to manifest the fastest deceleration of offending.” (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011, p256)

Goring (1919) discussed how this was a natural process and late twenties to thirty was a natural time for desistance from offending. Farrington also found that while nearly all offenders who are involved in crime in their adult years were involved in offending in their teens. However, not all teens who are involved in offending do not become involved in crime in their adult lives. Scholars such as Glueck & Glueck and Gottfredson & Hirschi shared this thinking with Farrington. (Krohn, 2009)

While recognising the importance of the impact that age has on desistance from offending, Sampson and Laub, 1992, identified a number of other variables which also impacted on desistance. They recognised the importance of the impact of life experiences, biological changes, cognitive changes, maturation, and social transitions on the individual. (Krohn, 2009)

As one of the most common explanations for desistance in youth offending the age crime correlation is one which has been extensively covered yet appears to have many gaps in terms of research. Some of the critiques regarding these studies are that firstly “young people” are classed to be from 18-40. However, this is a huge period of time when so many things change, happen and develop. To attribute desistance to maturation or aging could be a lazy explanation not considering what the choices or factors were which actually caused the change in behaviour. Is aging a secondary fact to desistance rather than the primary explanation? There may be a need to identify and

critically analyse the actual factors and reasons for this change. We need to understand what happens during this time that results in these changes instead of saying that these changes are the result of the time; as this like saying aging/maturation is the lead cause of a person's hair going grey. This is obvious, as it nearly goes without saying, when in fact you should look at what changes physically in the person to cause their hair to go grey.

Another observation regarding this area of research is that most of the studies are carried out on older adults or people who are in / were in prison and or are on probation. There are no studies carried out on people before they become incarcerated or indeed enter the probation system. As we can see from the previous chapter, incarceration is a last resort in Ireland. Young people are often involved in crime for a long period of time and engaged in the Youth Justice System for a long period of time before they ever enter a court, if they ever do. These young people also desist and there is a clear gap in the literature regarding this cohort of young men, specifically young Irish men. Is there scope for us to begin to understand desistance at an earlier stage in order to develop the preventative and diversionary work of professionals?

Social/ Structural Theory

The Social/ Structural theory of desistance concentrates on the impact of factors such as marriage, employment, religion and relationships, as forms of social control, on desistance. (Barry, 2013). Laub and Sampson (2003) go further to say that is not just the presence of these social controls that is important but rather the quality of them that is important in terms of desistance.

“In the strong social model it is social circumstances that matter most in whether or not a person is able to desist from crime (e.g. Farrall and Bowling’s ‘super-dupes’). In this model, turning points in the life course are exogenous events that occur at least partially at random. Although some events may be the product of conscious effort, what matters most in terms of desistance is whether good things (e.g. a quality job, a quality marriage) happen. It is the arrival of these events, which are largely outside of an individual’s control, that will best predict success after prison rather than the mind-set of the individual (see Lin 2000). From this viewpoint, the subjective mind-set of the released prisoner is not important for going straight. In empirical models, subjective variables should have no impact on the outcomes even in models that do not include social problem variables, but rather life events should predict behaviour.” (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008)

Integrative theory

Farrall and Bowling view this model as a combination of the previous two – meaning that both internal and external factors affect the change in the individual. This change can happen in a number of ways. For example, a person may begin to desist as a result of subjective factors in their lives. Through the effects of this change on the person over a period of time the social factors in their life may also begin to change which further feed into the process of desistance. Through a combination of both social and subjective change the individual has a heightened opportunity to maintain successful desistance (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna & Bushway, 2008) For example, a young man changes his attitude to crime and develops a pro- social attitude. As a result he sees new potential for himself and becomes more ambitious. Through his increased ambition he develops the confidence to pursue the opportunity to become employed, which broadens his social horizons and he meets a girl and gets involved in a serious relationship. In this scenario we can clearly see both subjective and social factors lending a hand to the young man’s desistance. In this instance the young man’s change

was as a result of a subjective- social approach although it is also as likely to be a social- subjective change. The two are fluid and can happen cyclically over a long term period of desistance.

By understanding the youth justice system and how the laws relate to young offenders a clearer picture is created as to how a young person are dealt with within the system, in response to their offending behaviour. The type of response to the crime, as determined by the laws and youth justice system of each country, may influence the possibility or propensity towards desistance. For example, if a system responds to a young person's offending in a very punitive and Draconian manner like quick incarceration; which is common in the New York system, then that young person may be less inclined to desist or it may take them longer to desist as they may have less opportunity or support to begin to change their behaviour. In other systems that have a more young person centred, less punitive responses to crime i.e. the Irish or the Scottish systems, they may be more conducive to desistance as they provide more community based responses which support self-reflection and personal growth and development to encourage positive behaviour change. Therefore understanding the system that the participants of the study experienced is relevant and important to the aim of the study as this allows us to set the context. Gaining a clear understanding of desistance as a concept is important to the aim of this research as it the study sets out to understand the factors which lead the participants to desisting from their offending in the first instance.

CONCLUSION

The development of the Irish Justice system over the years has brought us from the harsh Draconian punitive system of the 18th century, to the beginning of a reformed system beginning to concentrate on education, reform and rehabilitation with the introduction of the Children Act 1908, right up to our current diversionary and preventative approach resulting from the Children Act 2001 and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). The developments have been monumental and indeed there has been a positive response by the justice system to this humane approach. It was though these developments in the Irish Justice system that gave way to the development of a youth specific system in terms of offending. Some of the dominant trends in the new Youth Justice system in Ireland were the emphasis of the importance of diversion and prevention of young people offending through an increase in community sanctions and community based responses to dealing with the issue. This meant a deliberate shift away from incarceration as a first option and this is now viewed as a last resort for young people involved in crime in Irish society. This shift in the national approach focuses on the rehabilitation and development of pro-social attitudes and behaviours with those who are involved in crime.

In comparison to other countries such as Scotland or New York the Irish system is viewed as being far less punitive and often more effective than the largely criticised, relatively ineffective, system in New York but there is still a lot of work to be done before the Irish system is on par with the trail-blazing Scottish System.

So what does this mean in terms of Desistance? The links between the responses to offending and desistance cannot be ignored. In order for someone to firstly want to desist from crime and secondly for desistance to be a realistic option we must take the national response to offending into account. In a system that is very punitive with no emphasis on rehabilitation and recovery from pro criminal attitudes and indeed behaviours it can be argued that the individual will be less inclined to desist and that in the instance that they do desist that their desistance could be short lived in a society that does not encourage and support this change in behaviour, lifestyle, attitude and often value and moral standing. Desistance may be less possible and/or sustainable in an environment that neither acknowledges the capacity for desistance nor offers any benefits for desisting. If Desistance is indeed a process then this process must be supported by the system suitable to encourage and maintain it. In addition desistance is a process that is influenced by many factors which may vary from person to person. In order to understand desistance we must understand the factors which lead to its occurrence.

CHAPTER FOUR- METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The following chapter will discuss the Methodology of the research. After confirming the overall aim of the research, it is necessary to explore paradigms or “world views” of the research topic, thus allowing identification of the epistemological stance of the research. The link between the epistemological stance of the study and the chosen research approach is thereafter discussed.

The research design employed in this study is an Applied Explanatory Qualitative design and this will be discussed in detail in terms of why this is the most suitable design to answer the specific questions posed in this study. The strengths and weaknesses of this design will be considered through examples of experiences of the researcher while gathering the data.

The method employed for gathering the data for this study was semi- structured interviews and again there will be a discussion as to why this was chosen as the most suitable method, the strengths and weaknesses of this method of data collection and again, what was the researcher’s experience of using semi- structured interviews in this specific piece of research.

This chapter will also discuss population and sampling design, reliability and validity of the study, ethical issues or concerns and the limitations of the study, and the approach to analysing the data which was gathered. Finally the chapter will be drawn together with a summary and conclusion.

Research Aim

As discussed in Chapter 1 the aim of this research is to gain insight into the experience of young Irish “desisters” in order to better understand the complexities of the process of Desistance and how this can impact on future practice in responding to the needs of young people involved in offending. This understanding will be gained by listening to the stories of the experiences of the young people while also trying to establish the factors which led to both their offending and their subsequent desistance. These stories will be gathered using semi- structured interviews and the data gathered, analysed and presented will be Qualitative in nature. The study will be Applied and Explanatory in its approach. These approaches will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Research Question & Hypothesis

Research question: What were the factors which led to desistance for emerging adult men who were involved in offending between the ages of 12-18, in the South East of Ireland?

Hypothesis: Supporting young people who are involved in offending in Ireland in their efforts to not re-offend can only be effective if we first understand the elements which impact or determine their desistance from offending in the first place.”

Paradigm or Worldview

Every piece of research is individual, as it is the work-product of the efforts of the individual researcher. We all have our own set of experiences and learning which leads us to have a certain set of beliefs and assumptions about knowledge and what “is”. (Guba & Lincon, 1994) This is often referred to as our “worldview” or “paradigm”. Paradigm is a theory of knowledge and is defined by Guba & Lincoln, (1994, p. 105) as “the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator.”

When considering paradigms Guba and Lincon (1994) discuss three relevant areas within each paradigm: ontology (dealing with the nature of being or reality), epistemology (the theory of knowledge, the relationship between the researcher and what is believed to be known) and methodology (how the researcher will go about finding out that which they believe can be known). The table below, which was created by Milman (2010), using the work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Cresswell (2009), shows the different paradigms in terms of the ontology, epistemology and methodology.

The Major Paradigms (Milman, 2010) Fig 2 & 3

Descriptive	Positivism	Post-Positivism	Interpretivism	Critical Theory	Pragmatism
Synonym	Verify	Predict	Understand/ Interpret	Emancipate	Dialectic
Ontology What is Real?	Objectivist; findings= truth, realism	Modified objectivist; findings probably true, transcendental realism	Local, relative, co- constructed realities, subjective objectivity, relativism	Historical/ virtual realism shaped by outside forces, material subjectivity	Constructed, based on the world we liv in and explanations that produce the best desired outcomes
Epistemology What is True?	The only knowledge is scientific knowledge- which is truth, reality is apprehensible	Findings approximate truth, reality is never fully apprehended	Co- created multiple realities and truths	Findings are based on values, local examples of truth	Objective and subjective points of view
Methodology How do I examine what is real?	Quantitative- primarily experimental. Quasi- experimental	Usually Quantitative- experimental with threats to validity, Qualitative (e.g. case study)	Often Qualitative and/or Quantitative	Usually Qualitative, but also Quantitative	Qualitative and Quantitative

<p>Positivism (Very rare in qualitative research)</p>	<p>Ontology: Realism. There is a "real," objective reality that is knowable Epistemology: Objectivist. The researcher can, and should, avoid any bias or influence on the outcome. Results, if done well, are true. Methods: Tends toward quantification and controlled experiments.</p>
<p>Post-positivism</p>	<p>Ontology: Critical Realism. There is a "real," objective reality, but humans cannot know it for sure. Epistemology: Modified Objectivist. The goal is objectivity, but pure objectivity is impossible. Results are "probably" true. Methods: Includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Seeks reduction of bias through qualitative validity techniques (e.g. triangulation)</p>
<p>Critical Theory</p>	<p>Ontology: Historical Realism. Reality can be understood, but only as constructed historically and connected to power. Epistemology: Knowledge is mediated reflectively through the perspective of the researcher. Methods: Focused on investigator/participant dialogue, uncovering subjugated knowledge and linking it to social critique</p>
<p>Constructivism</p>	<p>Ontology: Relativist. All truth is "constructed" by humans and situated within a historical moment and social context. Multiple meanings exist of perhaps the same data. Epistemology: Researcher and participants are linked, constructing knowledge together. Methods: Generally qualitative, research through dialogue.</p>
<p>Advocacy/Participatory</p>	<p>Ontology: Varied Epistemology: The distinction between researcher and researched breaks down. Insider knowledge highly valued. Methods: Works with individuals on empowerment and issues that matter to them. Tends toward social, cultural or political change, using any appropriate method.</p>
<p>Pragmatism</p>	<p>Ontology: Varied. Pragmatists may be less interested in what "truth" is and more interested in "what works" Epistemology: Accepts many different viewpoints and works to reconcile those perspectives through pluralistic means Methods: Focuses on a real world problem, by whatever methods are most appropriate, and tends toward changes in practice.</p>

Constructivist Paradigm

This piece of research is based on the constructivist paradigm. Schwandt (2000) discusses the basic assumptions of the constructivist paradigm to be that understanding and knowledge are co-created by people, who are actively involved in the research process, through their “reality” which is formed on the basis of their life experiences, reflecting on the same and their ideas. One’s “reality” can change as you experience new things and one person’s “reality” can be different from another person’s “reality”- yet each person’s individual perspective is as “real” as the next (Dills & Romiszowski, 1997). Mertens (2015) identifies that the constructivist paradigm “emphasizes that research is a product of the values of the researcher and cannot be independent of them.”

Macleod (2009) states that:

“The goal of constructivist research is understanding and structuring, as opposed to prediction. Qualitative research leans towards constructivism.”

This paradigm is specifically relevant to this piece of research as the understanding of the issues presented will only be gained through the engagement of the researcher and the participant in the interview. The questions will be shaped and posed by the researcher but the direction which the interview takes will be a combination of the type of information the participant chooses to share in each answer, which will directly affect what will be the next question the researcher will ask. In this context, as identified in the table above, the knowledge will be co-created by the researcher and the participant together. In addition to this, this study fits well within the constructivism

paradigm as it will gather qualitative data. Other paradigms such as Positivism and Post- Positivism tend to be more suited to research gathering qualitative data. The final significant link between this study and views of a constructivist paradigm would be that although people may share the same experience, how they perceive and how it impacts us it may vary from person to person. While all of the participants in this study may have been involved in similar situations how they experienced them may differ greatly. Through engaging the young people in the interviews the researcher will hope to identify differences in the participant's accounts. This paradigm allows and to some extent expects variance in the experiences of individuals unlike other paradigms such as Critical Theory. Constructivism allows space for data to be interpreted in terms of "what works", while Positivism and Post- Positivism paradigms search for the "truth". (Milman, 2010)

Research Design & Method

Having a well-developed research design is of paramount importance in the gathering of data for any piece of research. Research design should be a logical structure of how you intend to approach your study. De Vaus (2001, P. 9) states that:

"The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. Obtaining relevant evidence entails specifying the type of evidence needed to answer the research question, to test a theory, to evaluate a programme or to accurately describe some phenomenon. In other words, when designing research we need to ask: given this research question (or theory), what type of evidence is needed to answer the question (or test the theory) in a convincing way?"

In order answer the research question in this study and to gain a clear understanding of the experience and views of the participants an Applied Explanatory Qualitative Design will be employed.

At the beginning of this study the researcher considered the possibility of using a quantitative research design. When this idea was originally explored the researcher encountered many barriers which made it obvious that a quantitative approach would not be possible. Such barriers included challenges in terms of gaining adequate numbers of willing participants to engage in the research, stringent gatekeeping which hampered access to possible participants and an inability to access the population of the study from which a sample would be drawn. In addition to this a quantitative approach would not have stayed true to the nature of the research as the study aims to understand the experiences of the young people who participated by giving them a voice and the very nature of quantitative would not allow this, but rather a statistical and measureable account of youth offending. Upon reflection, consultation and careful consideration of the many barriers the research would face in a quantitative study, it was decided that a Qualitative approach was the most suitable approach.

Applied Explanatory Qualitative Design

In remaining true to the constructivist paradigm this study will be carried out using a qualitative research design in order to answer the research question:

What are the factors which lead to desistance for young men in the South East of Ireland?

In order to meet the aim of this study the research will be carried out using a Qualitative Research Design, using semi-structured interviews as a method. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2001) describe semi-structured interviews to be a less rigid approach to interviewing than highly structured interviews. Hesse- Biber & Leavy (2001) discuss how semi structured interviews allow the researcher to guide the interview in the direction most favourable for the interviewee, while asking open ended, broader questions on the topic. This allows the interviewee the freedom to discuss the areas and issues which are particularly relevant and important to him and in turn allows the interview to be more fluid and conversational. Using this approach it will create the opportunity for the participants to re-account their own experiences of their involvement in offending in a more relaxed and informal way. A Qualitative research design is most suitable for this study as it allows the research to give a clear picture of the individuals' narrative in relation to their experiences, perceptions and understanding of the world as it relates to them, as opposed to Quantitative research design which is more concerned with giving a statistical, measureable account of the data.

The study will also be applied and explanatory in nature. Applied research is research which can be directly applied to the world and one which is concerned with exploring immediate societal problems (Hendrick, et al, 1993). Applied research is suited to this study as youth offending is an ongoing challenge in today's society. This is also suited as this research will aim to gain a better understanding of the experiences of the young people who participate in the study and findings based on their experiences may be applied to practice. Explanatory research is "research that answers 'why'

questions... In this case, the researcher is trying to identify the causes and effects of whatever phenomenon he or she is studying.” (Blackstone, 2012) This approach is also suited to this study as this research is trying to understand cause and effect of offending in the young people’s lives and more importantly why did they stop this offending behaviour.

By carrying out semi-structured interviews to gather and analyse data using an Applied Explanatory Qualitative approach it is hoped that the information will be gathered in a relaxed, informal environment, allowing the participant the space and comfort to be as descriptive and in depth as they need to be when sharing their stories. It is hoped that by employing this approach that the findings can be analysed and presented in a clear and understandable manner; one which gives the participants a clear voice.

Strengths and weaknesses in the Research Design

There are a number of strengths and weaknesses to an Applied Explanatory Qualitative approach to research, as there is with any type of research design. Some of the strengths of a qualitative approach include the depth of understanding that can be gained from asking open ended questions. Qualitative allows room for subtle nuances in attitudes, feelings and behaviours and human experiences that quantitative does not allow for. Another strength of qualitative research is that it allows room for flexibility when gathering data unlike the more rigid structured form of quantitative research (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Qualitative research also has a particular strength when gathering in depth data on a limited number of cases as well as allowing the researcher the opportunity to present information specifically on individuals as

opposed to a larger group or cohort which is particularly suited to this study (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). The main strength of using an applied design for this study is the possibility of using the information and findings from this research in a practice environment to help and support other young people who find themselves in situations similar to the participants.

In contrast there are also weaknesses to this research design that need to be considered. Such weaknesses include subjectivity, generalizability and bias. Due to the nature of the information that is gathered via this design in this study the information is of a very personal nature. In turn this makes it very difficult for the data to be subjective. This also means that it is very difficult to generalise the findings to the whole population of the study as each individual's experience and perception is different. As previously discussed, the influence of the researcher's bias is also an evident weakness of this research design.

Data Collection Methods

As previously discussed the data collected for this study will be qualitative in nature and will be gathered using semi structured interviews. These interviews will be carried out face to face with 6 participants. Initially the intention was to interview 10 young people for the study but as this became increasingly challenging it was decided that 6 participants would provide a representative sample. This number of participants came about as they researcher struggled to access suitable candidates to engage in the interview process. In light of this challenge it was identified that a non-probability convenience sampling method would be most suitable for this study. The non-probability aspect would mean that the findings from the data gathered could not be

used to make generalizations of the whole population but rather just the individuals who engaged in the study. The convenience element of the sampling method allows the researcher to construct a sample of those in the population who are most accessible to the researcher at the time of the research. (Babbie, 2014) The sampling approach will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter however by using a combination of non-probability and convenience sampling it meant that the research findings will only be representative of the individuals involved, and in turn 6 participants would be adequate.

By using interviews as a data collection method the researcher has made an assumption that what the participants have to say is meaningful and relevant. Interviews are popular methods of gathering data and Kothari (2004) explains that this method requires one person- the interviewer, to ask a certain set of questions to another person- the interviewee/ participant in order to get answers which will inform the study with regard to the research question and/ or hypothesis. He discussed that this method is particularly good for in-depth research as the interviewer and the participant can elaborate on certain aspects of the conversation when it is necessary. The semi-structured element will allow the interview to be fluid and flexible. Semi-structured interviews do not have preset closed questions but rather a topic guide and open ended broad questions, which would direct the interview in a particular way in order to ascertain the information required. This style allows the interviewer the space to probe further into specific areas, prompt or encourage the participant, ask additional relevant questions and also seek clarity from the participant regarding certain statements or issues. (Pawar, 2004)

The interviews will be recorded on a tape recorder at time of interview and transcribed after the fact. Hand-written notes will also be made by the interviewer during the time of the interview.

Benefits and challenges in using Semi-Structured Interviews

Like any data collection method, the face to face semi- structured interview has many advantages and disadvantages. A distinct advantage is clarity can be sought throughout the interview and therefore the response rate to the questions can be relatively higher (Andrew & Halcomb (2009)). Kothari (2004) identifies further advantages such as the opportunities for the interviewer to collect more information i.e. personal information and personal characteristics, to overcome resistance, restructure questions, change and adapt the language and phrasing used to suit the participant and also to observe other factors such as tone of voice, body language and facial expressions. Opdenakker (2006) recognises further advantages like the opportunity to gather direct quotes which can be used in the study, the low cost of carrying out an interview. He also identifies a very important advantage of face to face interviews – that of control. For example, an interviewer can end an interview by using cues such as turning off the tape recorder, putting away paper work or thanking the participant for taking part. He also identifies a big advantage in the fact that as the interview is carried out face to face the participant's answers tend to be more spontaneous and not overly thought or considered. Some of the benefits encountered in this study while carrying out the interviews were the ability to restructure the questions where necessary. On a number of occasions through the interviews the participants asked for clarity of certain points, so it was very beneficial for the researcher to have the opportunity to paraphrase

the original questions or to elaborate on and explain certain terms that were used. Another huge benefit in using interviews for this study was the opportunity that was created to build rapport between the researcher and the participant. Using interviews to gather data also meant that while there was a time cost there was no financial cost to carrying these out. The final notable benefit from using face to face interviews was that it created the opportunity to observe and record body language and non-verbal responses to the questions.

In contrast to this there are disadvantages which need to be kept in mind. Opdenakker (2006) also sees a disadvantage in terms of cost. While the actual interview itself is low to no cost there can often be other costs which have to be factored in i.e. travel expenses. Additionally the interview can be costly in terms of time (the time allocated to the interview, then to transcribing the interview and finally the coding and analysis of the information). Another notable disadvantage of interviews discussed by Opdenakker (2006), Andrew & Halcomb (2009) and Kothari (2004) is the increased potential for interviewer bias. Kothari (2004) adds to these the possibility that the interviewer may not have adequate skills or training to carry out the interview in the most effective manner as well as the presence of the interviewer possibly overstimulating the participant. Some of the disadvantages encountered while carrying out the interviews for this study, was that on some occasions it was a challenge to actually get the participants in the door for the interview. The researcher found it difficult to support to 2 participants to engage in the interview at the time agreed. Both cancelled their first appointment at short notice but arrived for the second scheduled time. Another time related challenge which the researcher encountered while doing this study was in relation to the amount of time needed to carry out the scheduled and rescheduled

interviews, then to transcribe the interviews and finally to input the data into NVivo 10 and analyse the data. This portion of the study took an exceptional amount of time in comparison to the preparation and drafting of other areas of the study. A final notable disadvantage to using interviews for this study was that in some instances, usually at the beginning of the interview, participants answers tended to be shorter, one worded answers and the researcher would have to probe to try drawing more informative answers out. This was mostly attributed to the participant not being totally relaxed or comfortable at the beginning of the interview but as they progressed the participants appeared to become more at ease as the interviews became more conversational and their body language became more relaxed.

Interviews- The Importance of Process

Interviews allow the researcher to really get a sense of the experiences of the participant in relation to the issues, topics or subject matter which the study is based on. However, it must be kept in mind that there will be many factors which will influence the interview and in turn the quality of the data gathered. Pawar (2004) discusses some of these factors and identifies that preparation is key. It is essential that the interviewer prepares themselves and their materials. Such preparation would include the researcher being clear about the type of information they are hoping to gain from the interview, what type of questions they will ask and in what order they will ask them. Preparation would also include the drafting of a schedule of open ended questions which they will use as a guide or list the topics around which they will ask the questions. (Wengraf, 2001) The researcher should also prepare themselves by trialling the interview on someone before carrying out the live interviews as a way to test the content and also to

familiarise themselves with the interviewing process. A location should also be identified and checked prior to carrying out interviews. (Wellington, 2000) Preparation for the researcher may also include doing relevant training to develop or enhance the skills needed to be an effective interviewer. Being present and attentive during the interview and also the skills of the researcher in terms of interviewing ability are also factors in the success of the interview (Seidman, 2013). Chrzanowska (2002) identifies essential interviewing skills would include:

- The ability to be clear and specific
- Good listening skills
- Ability to reflect
- Ability to probe
- Good summarising and paraphrasing
- Ability to challenging views, attitudes and opinions in a non-confrontational way
- Patience
- To be warm, kind, welcoming and friendly
- A non-judgemental response and attitude

The participant must also be prepared. The most favoured methods of preparing a subject include meeting them or speaking to them in advance of the interview. This allows the opportunity for the researcher and the participant to be acquainted prior to the interview. This helps in making the participant feel more comfortable on the day of the interview as well as providing the opportunity to build rapport with the researcher. (Lal Das, 2008) It may also be beneficial to brief the participant on the research and where

possible provide them with a schedule or outline of the type of questions that they may be asked to allow them adequate time to prepare themselves. (Wengraf, 2001)

Finally, the venue of the interview must also be prepared. Included in this preparation will be identifying a suitable venue, booking a room at the suitable time, making sure that the venue is suitable and a safe place to carry out the interview. The venue should also be somewhere that is easily accessible for the participant.

Population and Sample Design

The population of the study refers to the entire possible audience in terms of participants suitable to take part in the study. A sample is a sub group thought to be representative of that identified population. (Gay, 1987) There are two types of population: target population and accessible population. (Sim & Wright, 2000) The target population is the entire group of people or things that the study refers to and the accessible population is the group of participants who are available for participating in the study. It is from the accessible participants that your sample is drawn. (Johnson & Christensen, 2010) The sample design and the process through which these participants were identified was non- probability convenience sampling. In a non- probability sample design not all participants have the same probability/ an equal chance of being involved in the research and the findings from this kind of sampling cannot be generalized for the total population of the study. (Polit & Beck, 2014) Convenience sampling includes people who meet the eligibility criteria of the study and are easily accessible. (Schuster & Powers, 2005)

Non-Probability Convenience Sampling Design and Size

Non-probability sampling was chosen for this research. This design was chosen over probability sampling as there is no exhaustive list of all emerging adults who have been involved in offending in their youth in Ireland, and even if such a list was created it would be sensitive and confidential information to which the researcher would not have access. This is a common issue in Social Science research and explains why non-probability is a commonly used approach to sampling. Non-probability sampling is a non-random sampling method and as a result the findings from data gathered in such a manner cannot be used for generalizations of the full population. Kumar (2008) points out that the sample may also be biased. Jugenheimer et al (2015, P. 141) list some of the biases which may be present in this sampling method as:

Sampling Biases

1. Some respondents are more accessible than others. Respondents who are more accessible might have characteristics that differ from the characteristics of the population. They are more accessible because of the time of day the survey is conducted or they are geographically more convenient.
2. Interviewers might have a tendency to select respondents who are more like themselves, such as social status, race, age or dress.
3. In personal interviews, respondents might select a cluster of homes in a neighbourhood that differ from the population. Respondents who live in the same neighbourhood might be very similar in their opinions and behavioural characteristics.
4. Respondents selected from a list might not be representative of the population. Names listed in alphabetical order may have several names that begin with the same letter resulting in under selection of respondents representing the population.

5. Respondents who volunteer to participate in a survey might differ from the population.
 6. Respondents who refuse to participate or who terminate the survey might cause under representation of sampling units with similar characteristics.
-

Fig: 3

Convenience sampling is the most commonly used form of non-probability sampling and it is as the name suggests- a method of sampling by identifying the participants whom are convenient to become the sample. This approach constructs a sample made up of those who are most accessible to the researcher. (Babbie, 2014)

The sample size for this study is 6. Six young males from the South East of Ireland were identified and agreeable to partake in this study and in turn each will participate in interviews. Young men who were eligible to take part in this study were identified by making contacts with the staff in Garda Youth Diversion Projects in the South East. A brief was given to the staff members in the projects and if they were aware of a young man, who was a past participant and who fitted the brief and who they had existing relationships with, they would approach them and ask them if they would be interested. If they expressed interest then the researcher's details were passed on to the possible participant and they made contact with the researcher. A meeting was arranged to explain the details of the research and what would be required of them if they got involved. The possible participants were then given time to consider this and if they were interested then another meeting was arranged during which time the participant would given an information sheet, sign a consent form and the interview was carried out.

The profile of the participant i.e. the population for this study is as follows: young Irish men, from the South East of Ireland, aged 18-25, who were involved in and arrested for offending between 12 and 18 years old but who have since stopped offending and have at least 12 months lapse since last arrested. It is important to acknowledge the presence of and be aware of the impact of gatekeepers in this instance as participants are only identified and accessible through the staff in the GYDP Projects. (Seidman, 2013) The impact of gate keepers on selecting a sample are that some gatekeepers may make a decision of non- participation on behalf of their clients as they may deem them unsuitable, not ready or too vulnerable for the study. On occasions the gatekeeper can block their client from a potentially positive opportunity, without consultation, due to their overprotectiveness of their client, which is not always in the client's best interest. (Lumsden & Winter, 2014)

Issues for Consideration in the study

As with any piece of research there are limitations to the study of which the researcher needs to be aware throughout the process. The most common issues for consideration are in terms of the validity and reliability of the study. Ethical issues are also a vital consideration. Finally, it is also important to know the limitations of the research project.

Reliability and Validity

Hammersley (1992, p 67) defines reliability as "... the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the

same observer on different occasions”, while Kirk and Miller (1986, p 20) define reliability as “the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research.” Reliability has to be taken into consideration in qualitative studies such as this. Should the researcher use a different method for gathering the data would they get the same data or achieve the same outcomes?

Silverman (2010, p 275) defines validity as another word for “truth”. Hammersley (1990, p 57) states “by validity, I mean truth: interpreted as to the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers.” Validity must be considered in studies such as this as one person’s truth can vary from the next person’s truth.

There is less emphasis placed on proving the reliability and validity of a qualitative piece of research compared to a quantitative piece of research. Due to the in-depth nature of the information usually gathered, and where for the most part (certainly in this study), that information is about an individual’s experiences and interpretations; the empirical need to ensure validity and reliability is less important as each person’s experiences will differ. It is therefore accepted that the information gathered will not form a generalized impression of the total population. (Rubin & Babbie, 2010) The study will be a representation of an individual’s views on the topic of the research and in turn has a higher likeliness to vary from person to person. Implications of this for this study would include the inability to draw general conclusions from the research but rather an account of the experiences of the young people who participated in the interviews.

Ethical issues

Considering ethical issues and having ethical approval are of paramount importance when gathering qualitative data through in- depth interviews for a piece of research. There are a number of areas regarding ethics that the researcher should be aware of including issues in terms of informed consent, access to participants, gatekeeping issues, encouraging participation, building rapport and recording, sharing and storing digital data. (Miller et al, 2012) Flick (,p 44) identifies the key ethical considerations to be:

- Finding solutions to ethical dilemmas is essential to legitimate research.
- In qualitative research, ethical dilemmas are sometimes more difficult to solve than in quantitative research.
- Codes of ethics regulate the treatment of ethical issues generally. Ethics committees can be important in assessing research proposals and the rights and interests of the participants.
- The dynamics of ethical dilemmas reveal themselves in the field and in the contact with persons or institutions.
- Many ethical dilemmas arise from the need to weigh the research interest (better knowledge, new solutions for existing problems, and the like) against the interest of participants (confidentiality, avoidance of harm, and the like.)

Regarding this study, ethical approval was sought and granted prior to gathering primary data. Information was provided to the participants regarding the purpose of the study, the process of participating in the interview and the methods through which the data gathered would be recorded and stored, initially over the phone and again at the first face to face meeting. The researcher ensured adequate time and attention was given to the participant and the opportunity was provided for them to seek clarity on any aspect of the research and to ask as many questions as necessary about the purpose and process. The participant was allowed a number of weeks to consider the information

that they had been given relating to the study before making a decision as to whether to take part. On the day of the interview, before it began, the participant was given the opportunity to ask any more questions after the research purpose and process was once again explained to them and before they were asked to sign the consent form. They were reminded that they could stop the interview or change their minds at any time.

Knowing the Limitations of the Research

The researcher recognises the limitations of this study. The first identified limitation is in relation to sampling. As the researcher does not have access to an exhaustive list of the population it is impossible to take a random sample and to provide a generalized finding in terms of factors leading to desistance for the whole population of the study. (Kumar, 2008) Another limitation of the study is in relation to the geographical spread of the sample participants. Due to time restraints and the absence of relationships between the researcher and professionals in GYDP's nationwide it was not possible for the sample to be chosen from all of Ireland. In turn the findings are only representative of the participants from the south east of Ireland. A third limitation to the study is that the findings will only give a descriptive snapshot of the experiences of the participants; as it will not provide the reader with any comprehensive statistical or numerical data. This necessarily limits the validity and rigor of the research, particularly as it is more challenging to ensure, maintain and demonstrate rigor and validity in qualitative research than in quantitative research. (Anderson, 2010)

Data Analysis

Once information is gathered, it must be analysed. Having a clear and suitable plan for data analysis is essential. This study will engage in Narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is a form of analysing qualitative data that focuses on the specific experiences of individual participants of the study. In other words; it is concerned with telling the participant's story. (Reissman, 2008)

The interviews will be recorded using an audio recorder Dictaphone. Additional hand written notes will also be taken during the interview noting non-verbal communication such as change in demeanour of the participant, body language, tone of voice, facial expressions and also significant statements. After the interview is complete the interviews will be typed verbatim. The data will then be cleaned. Chapman (2005, p 1) defines data cleaning as "The process used to determine inaccurate, incomplete, or unreasonable data and then improving the quality through detection of corrected errors and omissions."

For the purpose of this study the researcher will employ the use of QSR NVivo 10 computer software to analyse the information gathered in the interviews. The information gathered in the transcripts from the interview will then be input into QSR NVivo 10 where the researcher will begin to identify themes and sub themes. Patterns in the data will also be identified during this process. These themes will be coded and divided into "nodes" and "sub-nodes".

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research as highlighted in this chapter is to gain an understanding or insight into the experiences of young Irish men who were involved in offending and thus desisted from crime. This research aims to give them a voice by gathering qualitative data using semi structured interviews. Employing this method of data collection allows the researcher to create a narrative picture of how the young people viewed their experiences and the changes which happened for them through their lives in terms of the factors which led them both to offending in the first instance and also the factors which led to their desistance.

This research falls within the constructivist paradigm as it sets out for the researcher and the participants to co- create knowledge based on the reality or their interpretations of their life experiences. It will be an Applied Explanatory design and the data will be analysed using nVivo 10. Semi-structured interviews will be carried out with 6 participants chosen using a non- probability convenience sampling design. Once the data is gathered and analysed it will be presented and discussed in the remaining chapters of this research. The discussion will be in terms of findings, validity, challenges and observations of the data gathered.

The research methodologies outlined in this chapter were chosen as these are the most suitable approaches to achieve what is set out in the aims and objectives. The qualitative approach along with the sample size allows us to get an in depth understanding of the experiences of the participant, to clearly and descriptively outline

the factors and influences in terms of their desistance and also to allow them to offer suggestions and recommendations for future interventions with young people who become involved in offending.

CHAPTER FIVE- ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

To this point the research has covered a number of significant areas including the history of the study of crime, theories of crime causation, national and international youth justice systems, desistance definitions and studies and the most suitable research methodologies that have been identified to address the aims and objectives outlined in this study. To this point extensive time and efforts have been made to gather information to meet these aims and this chapter will be concerned in analysing this data which has been gathered. The analysis of this data will see the emergence of themes and commonalities in the experiences of the participants and it will also identify differences in these experiences. The influence and significance of these experiences on the desisting of participants offending will be noted and presented for further more detailed discussion in later chapters.

This chapter will examine the key findings from the semi structured interviews which were carried out with the selected participants. The aim of the interviews was to gain an insight into the experiences of the participants in relation to the factors that led them to becoming involved in offending, an over view of their experiences, and finally a clear understanding of the factors which led to their desistance.

The data and findings are qualitative in nature and they will be presented using narrative, tables, figures and graphs. Key themes and sub themes have been identified in the data gathered and these themes will be outlined and discussed.

Demographic profile of Participants

All of the interviewees were male and from the South East of Ireland. They all grew up in social affordable housing in “disadvantaged” communities. All had siblings. The average age of the participants was 20 years. Concerning their parents, 67% were unmarried, whilst 33% were married. All of the participants in this study had completed their leaving certificate, 4 of whom completed it in mainstream education and 2 in alternative education.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Current age	21	19	19	21	21	21
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Siblings	1 sister (o) (f) 1 brother (y) (f)	1 sister (y) (h)	1 sister (o) (f) 2 brothers (y,o) (f,f)	2 sisters (y,o) (h,h) 3 brothers (o,o,o) (h,h,h)	1 sister (o) (f)	3 sisters (o,o,o) (f,f,f) 2 brothers (o,o) (f,f)
Parents	Married	Separate- dad deceased	Separated	Separated	Married	Separated
Living in home between 12-18 years old	Mother, Father, participant, 1 sister, 1 brother	Mother, participant & 1 sister	Father, participant & 1 brother	Mother, participant	Mother, Father, participant & 1 sister	Father, participant, 2 sisters & 2 brothers
Educational attainment	Leaving Cert	Leaving Cert	Leaving Cert	Leaving Cert	Leaving Cert	Leaving Cert ***

Fig: 4 O= older Y= younger H= half sibling F= full sibling

***This high level of educational completion is not what would necessarily be expected from young people involved in repeat offending. This may highlight the importance of education as a significant factor on desistance. This will be highlighted briefly in this chapter under factors leading to desistance and it will be further discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Offending history

The average age of the first offence of participants in this sample is 11 years old and the average age of the first arrest is 14. These figures show that this sample is involved in crime on average for 3 years prior to coming to the attention of the Gardai for their offending. This often means that the Gardai are not aware of these young people's involvement in offending for this period of time and in other instances it means that while the Gardai are aware of and familiar with the young people, they have not been arrested for their crime for this period. This study also identified that the average age of the last arrest for these participants is 17 years old which would represent on average an offending period of 6 years for each participant. The participants in this sample have a combined total of 34 years involvement in offending. Frequency of involvement in offending varied from once a week to up to 30 offences a day. In this instance the young person said they may be involved in crimes such as offences including smoking cannabis or drinking, trespassing, shoplifting, loitering, fighting, vandalism and public order related offences during that period. The number of times the young people were arrested during the years they were involved in offending varied from once to up to ten times. The differences in these figures indicate a significant period of involvement in offending that was not reported to the authorities by members of the community, and similarly was undetected and therefore unrecorded by the

authorities as instances of. The study also identified that only one of the participants was ever in court. None of the participants are currently involved in any offending, which qualified them to be part of this interview cohort.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Age of first offence	15	7	11	12	13	12
Age of first arrest	16	14	14	13	16	15
Age of last arrest	18	19	17	17	17	16
Length of time offending	3 years	13 years	7 years	6 years	5 years	5 years
Length of time involved in undetected crime	1 year	7 years	3 years	1 year	3 years	3 years
Frequency of offending	Once a week	Every day	30 offences a day	Every day, if not then on a weekly basis at least	4-5 times a week	Every day, if not then on a weekly basis at least
Number of times arrested/cautioned	1	2 (1 caution, 1 court appearance)	5-10 times	5-10 times	2	5-10 times
Number of times in court	0	1	0	0	0	0
Currently involved in crime	No	No	No	No	No	No

Fig:

Types of Crime

The participants in this sample were involved in a number of different types of offences during their offending period. Types of offences included underage drinking, fighting/ assault, criminal damage/ vandalism, anti- social behaviour, public disorder, drug related offences, theft from person, theft from shop, arson, burglary, drunk and disorderly in a public place, selling stolen goods, and bullying.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Underage drinking	x	x	X	x	X	x
Fighting/ assault	x	x	X	x	X	x
Criminal damage/ vandalism	x	x	X	x	X	x
Anti-social behaviour	x	x	X	x	X	x
Public order	x	-	X	-	X	x
Drug related offences	-	x	X	x	-	-
Theft from person	x	-	X	x	-	-
Theft from shop	-	-	X	x	-	-
Arson	-	x	-	-	X	-
Burglary	x	-	-	x	-	-
Drunk and disorderly	-	-	X	-	X	-
Selling stolen goods	x	-	-	-	-	-
Bullying	-	-	-	-	-	x

Fig: 6

Most common types of offence

Underage drinking, criminal damage/ vandalism, fighting/ assaults and anti-social behaviour were the most frequent types of offence, each accounting for 14% with a combined total of 56% of all the offences. Public (dis)order was the second most frequent offence accounting for 9% of all offences, followed by drug related offences and theft from a person, each at 7% - combined 14%. The less frequent types of offence were arson (5%), burglary, theft from shop and drunk and disorderly (4%), and the least frequent type of offence being selling stolen goods and bullying (2%).

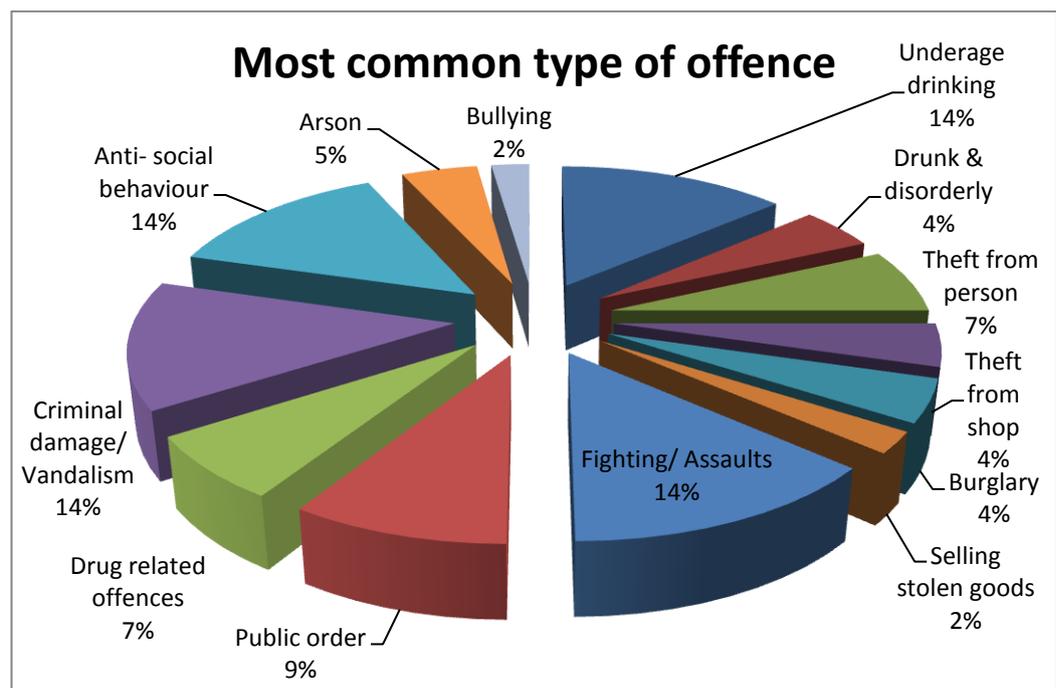


Fig: 7

A number of themes and sub themes can be identified from this. This chapter will list and describe these emergent themes while the next chapter will provide an in depth-discussion on these themes and make recommendations in light of same.

Attitudes

The theme of attitude was one which featured regularly in the interviews. These responses can be sorted into sub themes including the attitudes of the community to crime, of young people to crime, of young people towards school, of young people towards the community, of the community towards young people, of young people about drugs and the attitude of the community about drugs.



Fig: 8

Community Culture

The theme of community culture was discussed by the participants in relation to crime, substance misuse and Desistance. The participants discussed the culture of acceptance of crime in the communities within which they were raised as teenagers.

They identified that there was a culture of crime within their peers, other young people and also the adults. Substance abuse in their communities is rife. There was also a culture of minimising and normalising criminal behaviour.

Drugs & Alcohol

Drugs also emerged as a theme in the interviews. All of the participants in the interviews highlighted that they had used alcohol or drugs in their teenage years, from smoking cannabis to taking ecstasy and/ or Valium. A number of the participants identified a strong link between their use of alcohol and drugs and their offending, and a number of the participants identified that by stopping or reducing their alcohol and drug intake their offending was also reduced. However, the majority of participants did not feel that their drug and alcohol use influenced their offending.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Alcohol	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cannabis	-	x	x	x	-	x
Ecstasy	-	-	x	x	-	x
Valium	-	-	x	x	-	-

Fig: 9

Factors leading to Desistance

When asked about the factors which led to them stopping their offending behaviour the participants identified a range of different reasons. These included a change of peer group and joining a club, group or taking up a new hobby (the two most common factors), as identified by 85% of participants; while education, family and

increased empathy and self-reflection were the second most common factors, highlighted by 68% of participants. Reduced community influence, maturing and the influence of a significant person were the third most common factors, named in 51% of the interviews, followed by getting a financial income through work or paid education/training or the dole, accounting for 33% and the least significant factor was giving up alcohol and/or drugs, 17%. While completing education was not specifically named as a factor leading to desistance, it must be argued that it should be recognised as a significant contributing factor, as all of the participants in this study had successfully completed their leaving cert. All the participants completing second level school yet being involved in offending would contradict the research to date which identifies most young people who are involved in crime are early school leavers; yet 100% of the participants in this study were not early school leavers which may indicate that there may not be as strong link between crime and early school leaving as previously thought. This point will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

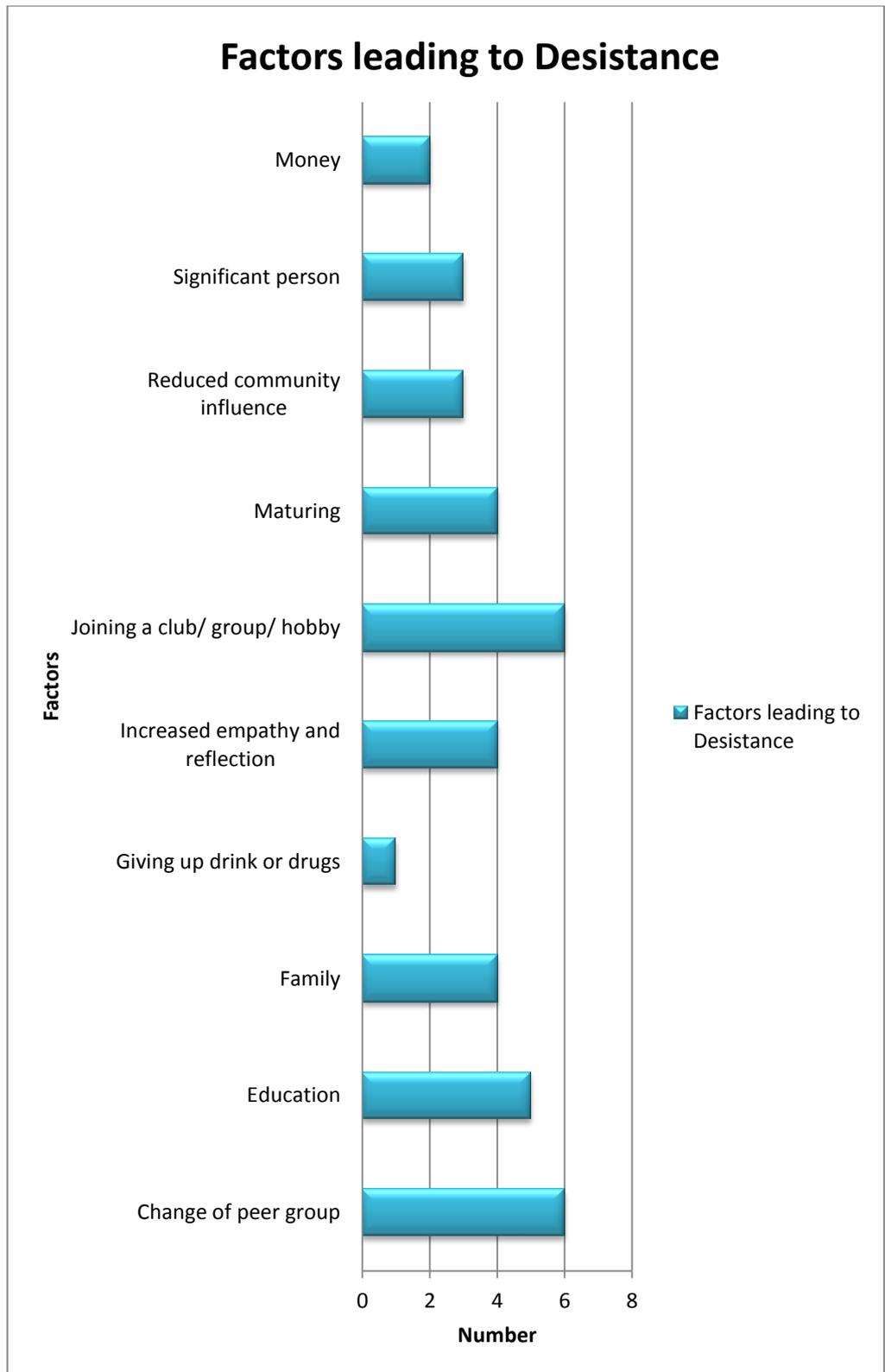


Fig: 10

Factors leading to offending

When the interviewees were asked what they felt were the factors which led them to becoming involved in crime and offending in the first instance they identified many factors. 85% of participants identified peer influence and culture as being a factor making these the most significant of those identified. Drugs and alcohol were the second most common factor, identified by 68% of participants and community acceptance were the third most commonly identified factor, identified by 34%. Lack of empathy, feeling entitled, family influence and boredom were identified by 17% of the participants as factors leading to offending.

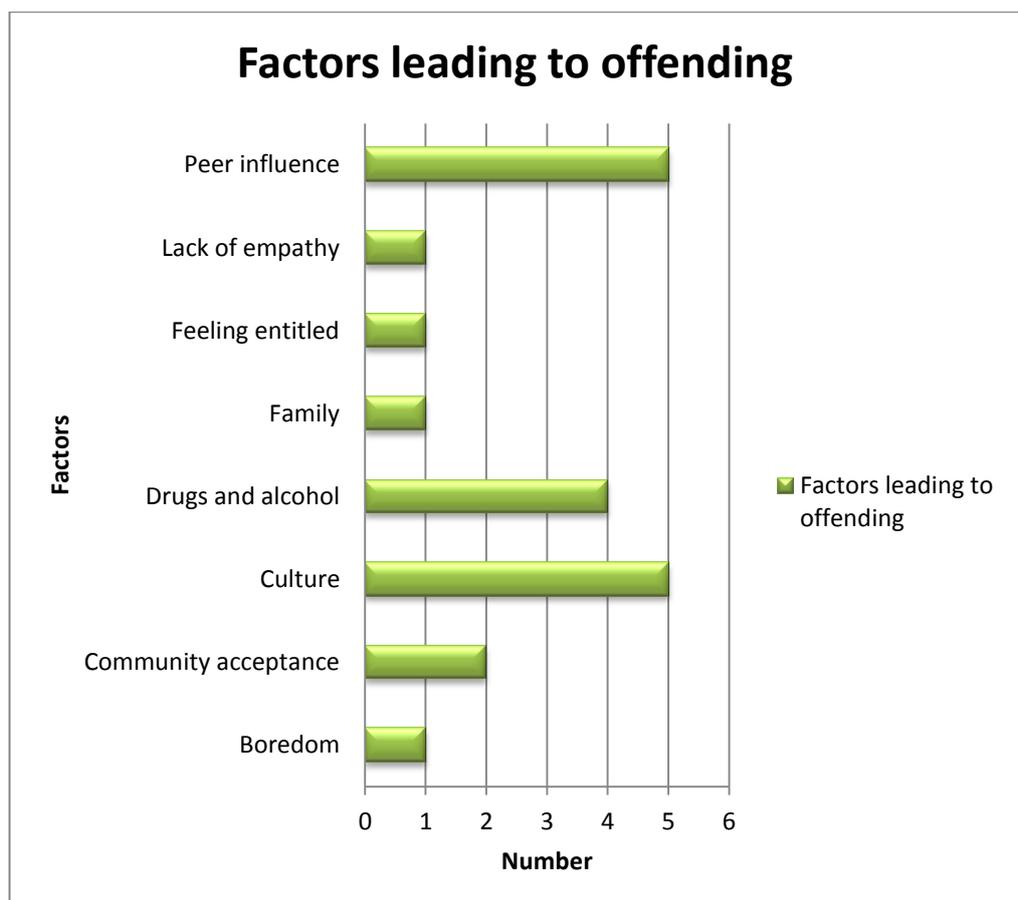


Fig: 11

Peers

Throughout the interviews a common theme which emerged was the link between the participants and their peers, both in the context of their offending and also in the context of their desistance. Peer relationships were very important and significant in the participants' lives during their teenage years. This theme was discussed in two ways- in relation to the influence of peers in the participants' life and also the level of involvement of the peers in crime and anti-social behaviour.

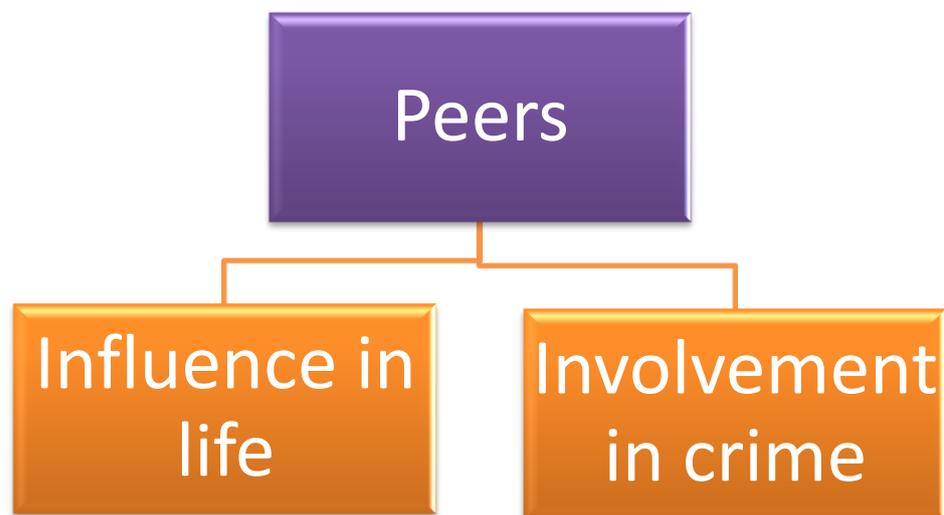


Fig: 12

Relationships

Throughout the interviews the participants spoke about the many relationships they had in their lives, the importance of them, and the impact that the relationships had on their lives and their choices. Sub themes in this area were relationships with community, family, peers and schools.

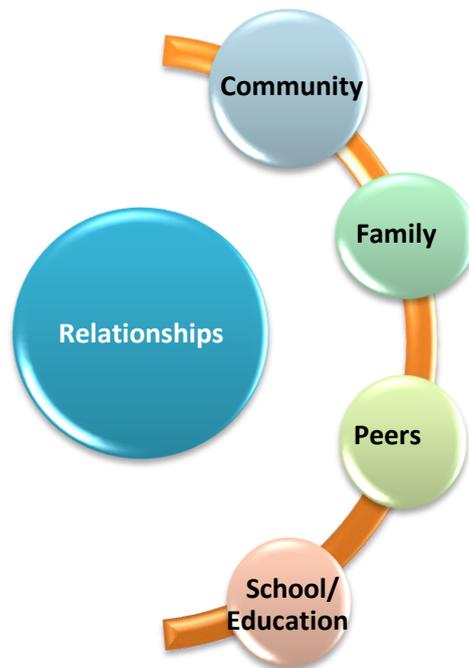


Fig: 13

CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to analyse the data which was gathered through the semi structured interviews. In doing this a clear demographic profile of the participants was developed. This profile revealed some interesting commonalities. For example, all of the participants had siblings, all came from “disadvantaged” areas and all the young people had completed their Leaving Certificate either through mainstream or alternative schooling.

The analysis went on to build a picture of the offending history of the participants from their first offence, their first arrest up to the age of their last arrest and the length of time since it occurred. This allowed us to get a sense of the participant’s level of involvement in offending throughout this period. The analysis went on to identify the types of crime that the participants were involved in, mapping the most to least common- from underage drinking to bullying. This chapter proceeded to engage in a brief discussion of the most common type of offences which were identified before it progressed to present and analyse key themes in terms of factors which led to both offending and also to desistance.

While this chapter allowed us to identify and begin to consider the themes presented, the next chapter will engage in a more comprehensive and descriptive discussion of the details that the participants offered in terms of their experiences. By elaborating the themes identified we begin to get a clear idea of the “voice” of the participants and a better understanding of their experiences.

**CHAPTER SIX- DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF
FINDINGS**

Introduction

In the previous chapter a number of key themes were identified from the qualitative data gathered. In this chapter these issues will be explored and discussed in greater detail, and thereafter assessed within the context of the original research objectives.

One of the key objectives of this study was to gain an insight into the experience of young Irish “desisters”. This would be done through interviewing the young people to gain an understanding of both the factors which led to their initial offending as well as the factors which led to their desistance. For the purpose of this chapter the findings and themes will be discussed under these sub headings. In doing this the commonalities between both areas will be discussed. The findings of this study will be compared to the literature and previous studies in the area. Finally, after a detailed discussion of the key findings of this research, conclusions will be drawn.

Factors which led to Offending

This section will discuss the factors which the participants identified as leading to their initial and ongoing offending and will strive to compare these with current and established theories concerning the cause of youth offending. Hodge and Andrews (1995) identified eight risk factors in terms of youth offending, namely prior or current offending, education issues, substance use/ misuse, family influences such as involvement in crime or poor relationships, personality or behaviour issues, peer influence and their involvement in crime, issues in terms of not engaging in positive activities or groups in their spare time (misuse of free time), and the young person's overall attitude/ orientation i.e. having a pro-criminal or anti-social attitude.

This section will look at the themes as identified by the participants themselves and establish whether there is any link between their experiences and those identified by prior research. Themes identified from the interviews were peer influence, culture, drugs and alcohol, community acceptance, boredom, family, feeling entitled and a lack of empathy, as highlighted in Fig 11.

Peers

The theme of peers featured within the study both in the context of the influence of peers on the participant's decision making as well as on the exposure to opportunities for offending. The influence of peers was the most common identified factor in terms of the young person being involved in crime and it featured in 5 of the 6 interviews (85%). When P1 was asked why he felt he was involved in offending, he stated, "*I thought it*

was cool to do it back then, that's what all the lads were doing like. You know that kind of way, it's what everybody was doing, to be part of the lads 'cos they were doing. You were never told or never asked to do it, you just did it."

P1 however made a clear distinction between his peers' influence and peer pressure and while he identified his peers as being a contributing factor to his offending he also stated that peer pressure was not a factor: *"I don't think I ever got peer pressured really, if the lads were doing it I just went along and was happy to do it."*

P3 discussed his offending as something he did with his peers as opposed to because of them: *"when I was younger I suppose, me and friends of mine thought that it was the best place to grow up I suppose because we thought, we liked to think that we could be in a gang or whatever and this was one of the best places to carry out that dream. I suppose 'cos it was easy to get drugs, it was easy to find people who wanted to do stuff like robbing and fighting and stuff like that. But now the older that we are, I suppose we realised that that's probably the issue of where we grew up."*

P2 on the other hand felt that peer pressure was a big factor for him and when asked he replied that it was *"a huge thing... massive"* for him in terms of beginning offending as did P5 who stated that he originally got involved in crime because *"it's a lot of just being the big man around your friends, peer pressure and all that crack, that was mainly it"*.

When P4 asked the factors which he felt led to his offending he stated *“friends, circumstances I was in and surrounded by, yeah most of my friends were.”*

The influence of peers on a young person’s offending is not only named as a factor in existing literature but has also heavily featured in this study as a key theme. In turn the findings of this study in this area confirm what the literature states. An interesting finding in terms of this theme is the identification of peers and peer influence on offending as the most common and significant factor which led to the participants offending in this study. Noller et al (2007) discuss the importance of peer relationships and the peer group during adolescence in terms of the healthy development and progression of the young person.

Some of the participants recounted memories of offending with their peers, P1: *“me and the lads kind of were talking and one of say our very close friends, one of his brothers owed money for drugs, we were only young like, we didn’t really understand, I was 15, 16 maybe. So we thought this would be a great idea to break into a shop, rob all the stuff out of it, sell it on to pay off his debts, so he wouldn’t get bate up anymore, so it’s just we like went from nothing to that like.”* He went on to explain *“when you are with a load of lads, like we have our circle of friends, the ten of us would be drinking and there would be another ten lads over there and there is always someone not going to like someone, and then if one of the lads start fighting you kind of have to hop in for them if, it’s kind of you are all looking out for each other.”*

The participants who identified peers as an influencing factor towards their involvement in offending also discussed that once they changed their peer group, or when their peers began to “grow up” that they were less inclined to engage in offending.

Culture & Community Acceptance

Culture and community acceptance of offending featured in this study in terms of the culture of offending in the communities in which the participants were raised. Throughout the interviews five of the six participants referred to the culture of their community when explaining the reasons they became involved in offending. This was equal (85%) to the percentage of people who identified peers as a factor. The culture and acceptance of offending among the peer group/ young person’s community was identified and discussed in some detail above in “peers”. In addition to this the general culture of the community and the attitude of adults in the community to crime were discussed.

When asked about his offending and the area he grew up in P3 described his community as *“an issue for your mentality. So the older you get the more it is rubbing off on ya and the more your surroundings and stuff for when you are watching it growing up and when you are vulnerable suppose when you are young and you’re watching everyone else I suppose smoking joints, drinking, fighting, doing all sorts in front of you when you are 4 or 5 years of age, even younger sometimes... the area, the company – in the area, ahm yeah that’s basically it, some probably mentality as well from, from problems in my own life that just triggered me to think that why not like,*

enough happened to me in that, I thought to myself that enough happened me so I could just take it out on everyone else or whatever.” When P5 was asked if there was a culture of young people offending in his community he replied *“absolutely, nearly normalised now I’d say anyway.”* P6 described his community as being *“full of crime, sure everyone is at it and no one bats an eyelid or cares. It has always been the same.”*

The culture of offending, poor responses to crime and the normalisation of such behaviours have been significant factors in terms of the participants becoming involved in crime. This culture of acceptance from the community at large, the adults and the young person’s peers combined, can only increase the likeliness of the young person becoming involved in offending in the first instance.

Again, this finding concurs with Hodge and Andrews (1995) as they refer to family influences, peer influences and the attitudes or orientation of the young people in terms of pro- social vs pro criminal attitude. If the attitude of the community is pro-criminal then this is what the young person learns as a social norm. Equally the participants identified that when they spent less time in their communities or became increasingly immune to the influence / attitudes of the community, that they were better able to move away from crime.

Drugs and alcohol

Drugs and alcohol were the next most common theme identified by the participants in terms of factors leading to their offending. The types of drugs most

commonly used are outlined in Fig 9. The identification of alcohol and drugs as a link to their offending was particularly interesting as the participants felt that whilst being under the influence of alcohol and drugs had some bearing on their offending, most of the participants felt that it did not directly impact on their willingness to be involved in offending but rather contributed to their getting caught.

For one participant drugs and alcohol were linked to his offending as he committed a crime to pay for drug debts for a friend. However, he himself was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time.

A number of the participants identified that fighting while drinking and smoking 'weed' (cannabis) was common and P6 stated *"90% of the time I got arrested for fighting or I was fighting at all I was drunk - it was just what we did."*

P1 stated that *"being drunk and being out late"* were often reasons he became involved in crime. Substance misuse was very common for P3 when asked how regularly he took drugs he said *"at one point, in about a two-year period I'd say I took them every day."* He went on to explain that his drug use was not necessarily connected to his offending, *"mostly, yeah mostly, but that, that doesn't mean that I wasn't committing crime when I was sober like, I just- you're a little bit more stupid when you are under the influence of something."*

On the other hand, when P2 was asked about the link between alcohol and drugs and his offending he said “*no nothing to do with it at all.*” P4 also stated that although he smoked weed, drank and took ecstasy, that his offending had nothing to do with his drug use. When asked if they were linked he said “*no definitely not no... no, no way.*” P5 identified no link between substances and his offending.

The normalisation of substance use and misuse in the communities where the participants were raised may have contributed to the individuals not identifying a link between their substance misuse and their crime, as the negative effects of substance misuse is seldom acknowledged or discussed. This does not mean that there is no actual link between the participants’ alcohol and drug use and their crime, but rather that they have failed to perceive or acknowledge the link.

Substance use and or misuse is substantively linked with offending and this strong link is recognised as a leading factor in the literature and the research to date. While this factor did feature in this study, it is noticeable that an equal proportion of participants denied the linkage between their offending and substance use, compared to the number that did confirm the existence of this link between the two. Those participants who identified substance abuse as a link to their offending also identified that when they reduced, changed or stopped their usage of these substances, they were less inclined to be involved in offending.

Boredom, Family, Feeling Entitled & Lack of Empathy/ Increased empathy and reflection

Boredom, family, a feeling of entitlement and a lack of empathy were all factors which were only identified by one participant. While these are less significant factors in this study it is still important to include them as areas identified by the participants as they were significant for them in their experiences. Each of these themes also correlates what the research and literature has identified as critical factors in terms of offending.

Boredom featured for one of the participants as a factor which led to his offending. During the interview when asked what factors he felt led to his offending P4 said *“suppose not having much money. Being around the same people all the time and not seeing anything else, no, not working or anything like that. Finished school when I was 16, I was doing nothing.”* Boredom as a factor would link with the risk factor of how young people spend their spare/ leisure time. Hodge and Andrews (1995) identified that if young people do not have something positive and/ or productive to do during their free time they are at higher risk of becoming involved in offending.

P1 identified family as a factor which not only led to his offending (as his biggest crime was committed on behalf of family members), but he also identified it as a factor which he felt led other young people to offending. He felt that a lot of young people from his area got involved in offending *“cause their fathers are in jail like, it’s easier for them to be that way, it’s easier for them to just do crime, it’s harder for them to actually stop doing it, I feel.”* P3 talked about a feeling of entitlement in terms of his offending stating *“from problems in my own life that just triggered me to think that why*

not like, enough happened to me in that, I thought to myself that enough happened to me so I could just take it out on everyone else or whatever.” In terms of a lack of empathy P6 talked about “*not really caring who I hurt, I felt like they deserved it at the time.*”

Factors which led to Desistance

This final section will discuss the factors which the participants identified as those which led to their desistance. The overarching aim of this research was to understand the experiences of the individuals in terms of their offending and thereafter in terms of their desistance.

Desistance research identifies a number of key factors which lead to this. Farrall & Bowlings (2002) and LeBel (2008) attribute desistance to the social, internal and cognitive changes in a person, while Farrington (1986 & 1992) attributes desistance to the age-crime correlation and maturing, while Integrative theorist’s believe in a combination of a number of these factors. For the purpose of this section we will look at the responses of the participants of this study and establish if the findings fall within the paradigms of current literature. The themes identified in this study are presented in Fig 10.

Joining a club, group or hobby

Many studies have identified the importance of having a productive activity to turn to in one’s leisure time. The same would be true of desistance studies: Having something meaningful, social and regular to do in your free time is considered a protective factor in terms of desisting. As was identified in the previous section,

boredom was identified as a contributing factor to offending. When asked about factors they felt led to their desistance all 6 participants identified this as a theme. P1 spoke about how joining the Marine Search and Rescue and Mixed Martial Arts helped him to stay out of offending: *“Yeah, they do night patrols, suicide prevention, so I was doing that on Saturday nights to stop me going out on Saturday nights, and then I got into mixed martial arts after that and I did that and that stops you drinking cause you are looking after your body and stuff, so I stopped drinking and all that. You see mostly when you are busy and stuff and the MMA they tell you not to fight out on the street or you can’t competition fight anymore which is a big thing as well and you stop drinking because you’re trying to keep healthy and strong and all that like , and then when you are not drinking you don’t want to get in fights and ya kind of stop people from fighting or you don’t be out with them as much, like you don’t be out late enough, cause when you are not drinking like it’s boring in there kinda, so you stop, and then I didn’t want to drink anymore and then when you get to 18 you don’t have to drink out on the streets anymore.”*

Other participants spoke of joining the local Garda Youth Diversion Project as a factor which helped them *“change of scenery but seeing other things and getting out like, even coming to the group (GYDP) for me used to be brilliant cos we would be going somewhere, we could be going anywhere, we could be going into town for ice cream, it’s just a change.”*

(P2) *“Joining the group down the road was good too, all my friends were there and the leaders were really nice, they understood us, gave us something different to do.*

P5 also spoke about local community centres and groups when asked what he felt other young people needed to desist from offending. He said *“more resources, more places to go like this... yeah, more stuff to do so they are not sitting around on the street bored and they end up resorting to offending to keep themselves occupied.”*

The most common activity to feature in this theme was joining a gym or getting involved in exercise. Four of the six participants spoke of this and spoke about the significance of it both in terms of giving them something “better to do” in their free time and something to “focus” on. P4 explained *“I think that in my experience and others but me speaking for them other people that exercise is a major factor in changing your life for the better.”* When asked why he felt exercise was important P3 said *“because exercise is a very ..., it’s a small, eh, what would you say, it’s a small psychological thing like it’s a, it’s a, it’s hard to explain now. It’s a start to thinking for yourself and it gives ya, makes you think for others kind of, and about others, because you have so much time to think and you have so much time to, the more interested you get in exercise and the more you research exercise, the more attached to your mind it actually is, you wouldn’t actually know before you do it that it’s so to do with your mind.”* Another common trend that came up in this theme was how the gym and exercise helped them build up their confidence and P3 explained *“a group full of lads there , this person and that person, but none of them are confident, there is no confidence there at all, and that’s what people see in ya “oh you are a cocky fucker” or “you’re this” or “you’re that”, but realistically it’s the people that are around here are the least confident people and the reason they are who they are a lot of them is because they don’t, they can’t get up, they don’t have the balls or confidence to do it, and I see people in my experience anyway that just, that know that they have to change*

and know what they should do and do want to do it but they are just way to scared of what's life, what life throws at them, and I think though exercise it builds your confidence, and that's their first step then to changing your life for the better I suppose."

Change of peer group

When discussing the factors which he felt aided to his distance from offending P2 said *"I don't know I suppose, I remember actually , I was only living in the new house I am living in now about 2 days when I got arrested, I suppose I didn't see it at the time but I suppose moving area was a huge factor, cause I was closer to school and fellas do be sticking around and that after school and things so I wasn't in the same clique like, out around here I was kind of seeing all fellas from different areas and what they were doing, and just acting different to what I was used to".* P4 spoke about how *"cutting off"* one of his brothers helped him to stop offending as well as *"Ahm cut off a few friendships, didn't do it in a, well maybe some in a bad way, but most of them just got out of there and I think some of the people I was with who were causing crime just understood why I wasn't friends with them as much anymore, and some of the people I was with who also got out of crime or offending, I'm still friends with to this day"*. When asked why he thought this was an influencing factor and why he decided to do this he replied *"because I thought it was the right decision for me. Thought I will feel a lot better when I don't speak to them, I don't think they ever done me any good, a lot of harm but a lot of bad, was a horrible influence on me my whole life, ahm constantly put me down, and just much better off without 'em."* P5 and P6 also discussed how they felt that finding new groups of friends who weren't involved in crime was a factor which led to their desistance.

Education

In terms of education only three participants identified education explicitly as being a factor which led to their desistance. P2 discussed his experience of school and education and he stated *“yeah and probably staying in school was, a lot of people I would have hung around with- out this way would have all got kicked out of school say before their junior cert”*. P4 and P5 focused more on the influence of third level education and moving on to engaging in courses as a factor to their desistance, *“even when I started doing courses and that, I could do other things.”* (P4) *“life came along, bigger things, started getting jobs, going to college, actually living your life then and not just hanging around the street like when you were a young fella in school.”*

Although only three of the participants spoke about education as being an influencing factor in terms of their desistance an interesting finding was that all the participants had completed second level education which is contradictory to the studies to date which identify a strong link between early school leaving and youth offending. Not only did all participants in this study complete secondary level education but all six participants were engaging in PLC or third level courses at the time of the interview. In light of this finding the inference must be drawn that there is a link between completion of formal education and desistance.

Maturing

Three of the participants cited maturing as influencing the change from their anti-social behaviour to attempting to “fit in”. P2 explained *“no its probably just the*

fact that I got more mature like and I suppose so if someone was to throw a stone at a window and my mam and sister were sat in the house they would get a fright like and I'd be fuming if someone done it to me... yeah it kind of came with age for me. It mightn't for other people but I presume for young boys it does" P6 said that he felt it was "maturity and common sense I suppose," and P5 said he felt that "I probably matured a bit, so I seen a bit more sense, I kinda could see people from others' point of view... you mature, well I was easily influenced by people around me, didn't really see any other way other than when I got older, when I matured, I got a lot more sense, I started seeing outside the box a bit more."

Increased empathy and reflection

Four of the participants discussed their increased level of empathy as being instrumental to their behaviour changes. P1 spoke about increased empathy and understanding of things from his family's perspective. He stated "*yeah, when you get caught for something like that you see how it hurts people around you, like your mother and father and you kind of see the reality of it. Like we got caught, I couldn't believe we got caught. You know something like we just never really got caught for something like that and it was just nothing, but that just changes you, you just kind of cop on like.*" P2 spoke about how it was realising that the small things were important to him: "*The smallest things you could be saying or doing to people, like you don't realise how annoying it is when someone does it to you.*" When asked what advice he would give young people now on the back of what he learned from his experience he said "*I don't know, just to cop on really like, put yourself in, it's not even really, put your family in like someone walking down the road is someone's son someone's brother someone's*

something like, put yourself in the family's position of people that you are doing stuff to, having an impact on. Yeah, everyone has their own thing going on like, probably cos I had stuff going on at home I used to be coming out taking it out on people and stuff like that, everyone has their own stuff going on like." P3 spoke about how for him it was about seeing the bigger picture "you just see the bigger picture and you see the stress and harm that you have caused people and society... the bigger picture is that you are not, you're not on your own like, your problems that you have and excuses and reasons for being the person you aren't a reason to do what you do like."

Family

Family was a significant factor for three of the participants of the study. When asked why he felt family was significant P1 said that you "have to have something to stop for. I stopped cos I didn't want to cause my parents. I had respect for them to stop like. So I wanted to be nice to them and they had more respect for me. They grew me up ya know me and looked after me when I was growing up. I had everything like. So I had no reason to do it like. I can see why some lads keep doing it... I stopped for my parents. There is no point, there is no point in getting in trouble, no point in getting caught, and disappointing your parents, even if you are 21 you are still going to disappoint your parents like."

P3 explained how the attitude of his family and friends towards his offending influenced how he felt and in turn led to his changing his problematic behaviour: "probably the fact that I took other peoples ahm, I always took other peoples eh well other people close to me, their emotions into consideration and their , what they felt,

how they felt. People that were close to me that I could see , I could see were sad and depressed almost, well not almost, definitely, because of my offending and my lifestyle.”

P4 identified how *“better relationships with family. Maybe some bad influences I had, like my brother who lived with me was gone”* was important for him.

Significant person/ relationships

Three of the six participants spoke about the influence of a significant person in their lives as a factor that led towards their desistance. The most common impact of this relationship was the participant not wanting to let the influential or significant person down, not wanting to disappoint them or wanting to make the person proud. For P1 it was his Mother and Father who were most significant to him. P3 and P6 both identified family members as significant but also other people that were close to them during the time.

P4 discussed how young people today need a positive influence: *“They definitely need a positive role model, that’s the main thing they need, a good influence of someone.”*

Reduced community influence

Three participants also identified that a reduced influence from the community they grew up in was important for them to move away from crime. This happened for P2 when he moved out of the area while it happened for P5 and P6 when they started

college, made new friends from outside of their area, spent more time out of the community and in turn were less exposed to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Money

Money was a factor which two participants identified as influential on their desistance. P4 reminisced about how there was little else to do outside of committing crime when he was small as he was very poor so when he was older and started a course for which he was getting paid, it gave him options: *“suppose even when I was starting to get a bit more money, even when I started doing courses and that, I could do other things. When I was young I had no money, I was very poor, and so there was not much else to do. They are probably the main reasons”*

Giving up drink or drugs

P5 identified that giving up drugs and drink had an influence on his desistance. He spoke about when he got involved in other activities on the weekend and stayed away from drinking and drugs that he was less inclined to be involved in offending as the opportunities did not present. Again this is an interesting finding which is contradictory to other research which identifies a strong link between substance misuse and offending.

P3 summed up his interview quite eloquently when he gave his views on what he felt young people who would find themselves in a situation similar to him would need in order to stay out of trouble: *“I don't know I think the main thing is*

building, I don't think it's the kids, or child's option really, I think it's the parents or the guardian or whoever, whoever is owns that child or whatever. I think that they have to, from a young age, give the child the opportunity or, or what would you call it em, chance to talk to them on the same level, at a friendship level and even when they are in trouble I think that they should, a child should feel upset when they do wrong at the disappointment that they have put on their parent or guardian or whatever, because mostly when you are younger, when I was younger anyway and when I got in trouble or whatever, when you're getting punishment or whatever it felt that it was it was just another excuse to hate society and people and cause you though , right this is more trouble I'm getting in now or someone talking to you with a loud voice or I think it's a lot easier to change children when they feel that someone is disappointed in them rather than angry with them. Because when you see someone, and there is disappointment in someone's face, no matter who you are or what age you are you can see it and you can feel it, whereas when you see anger in someone's face you don't tend to care as much."

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the qualitative data which was gathered during the interviews with the purpose of giving a clear insight into the experiences of young Irish men who were involved in offending. Factors which were identified as contributors offending were peers, community and culture acceptance, drugs and alcohol, boredom, family, a sense of entitlement, a lack of empathy and reflection. The participants discussed each of these themes in terms of how these impacted their experience.

The participants also identified and discussed the factors which they felt led to their desistance. These factors included joining a club, group or starting a hobby, a change of peer group, education, maturing, increased empathy and reflection, family, significant person or relationships, reduced community influence, money and giving up drink and drugs. This chapter presented each participant's experience of these areas in terms of their moving away from crime and anti-social behaviour.

CHAPTER SEVEN- CONCLUSION

This final chapter of the thesis will set out to summarise the study by outlining key findings of each chapter. It will also set out to discuss recommendations and observations in terms of the findings of the research. The main purpose of this research was to give young Irish men, who had been previously involved in offending, a voice. This research set out to understand the experiences of these young men in terms of the factors which led them to offend, and more importantly the factors which led them to desist from this offending behaviour. In doing this it was hoped to achieve a clearer understanding of what desistance was and how young people come to desist.

Chapter One looked to set out and to establish the need and rationale for this piece of research. It developed a clear starting point in terms of identifying what the existing research and literature had told us to date and in turn identified the gaps in the knowledge, thereby identifying the need for this study and a statement of the problem. From this, clear aims and objectives were established and the purpose of the study made clear. Finally, the structure of the thesis was developed in Chapter One.

Chapter Two went about developing an understanding of the theories underpinning youth crime. In doing this we looked at the development of the theories of crime beginning with the 'classical' views of Bentham and Beccaria in the eighteenth century, whose musings entertained the idea of man engaging in crime as a result of a choice he made. They discussed the pain/ pleasure paradigm and proposed that if the potential pleasure outweighed the potential pain then a man would choose to commit a crime. Other theories of crime were explored, from the Positivist views of Lombroso who put forward the idea of the born criminal, to the Sociological views of Durkheim

and Merton who explored the impact societal norms and values had on the individual and his involvement in crime, and concluding this part with Glueck's research and his work in Developmental Criminology. This chapter also took a brief look at risk factors which are associated with offending and highlighted the eight key factors as identified by Hoge and Andrews in 1995 and the nine important factors identified by Munice, Hughes and McLaughlin in 2002.

Chapter Three begins to offer an insight into the understanding of the Irish Youth Justice system. It achieved this by first spending some time looking at the development of the Justice System in Ireland and then more specifically at the Youth Justice System and its supporting legislation. In order to achieve a more objective appreciation of the Irish Youth Justice system, it was compared and contrasted with the Scottish system and the New York system. This allowed us to place the Irish system in the international perspective, particularly considering its punitive nature and its priorities, relative to these other systems.

This section of the research went on to explore the concept of desistance, with its many varying definitions and theories and models of desistance such as social/structural, subjective and integrative theories and the age-crime correlation.

Chapter Four's primary purpose was to present the research methodology that was utilised in this work. The research aim and objectives were revisited, as were the research question and hypothesis. The relevance and impact of identifying a paradigm or world view was discussed and it was established that this piece of research was based

on a constructivist paradigm, namely one which states that understanding and knowledge are co-created by those who are involved in the process and the reality is in line with their life experiences (Schwandt 2000). The methodology chapter set out the research design and method. An Applied Explanatory Qualitative Design was employed. This type of design was chosen as it allowed scope within the research for the voice of the participants to be heard and to get a real understanding of the experiences of the participants. The data was gathered using semi-structured interviews which allowed movement and fluidity of conversation and a non-probability convenience sampling design was employed. This chapter also considered the reliability and validity of the primary research, as well as teasing out some of the ethical issues raised. Finally, it explored the relative strengths and weaknesses of the chosen approaches to data collection and sampling.

Chapter Five presented an analysis of the research findings. This was where we first saw the emergence of themes and patterns. The demographic profile of the participants was drawn up showing interesting facts such as all the individuals who participated in this study had obtained a Leaving Certificate, either through main stream or alternative schooling. An offending history profile of the participants was developed, which showed that the individuals average of first offence was eleven years old, whilst the average age of first arrest was fourteen years old and the average age of last arrest was eighteen years old. This chapter identified the types of crime the participants were involved in, namely underage drinking, fighting/ assault, criminal damage/ vandalism and anti- social behaviour were the most common type of offences with all participants claiming to be involved in each. Bullying and selling stolen goods were the least common type of offences with only one participant claiming they were involved in each

of them. Some themes began to occur at this stage including attitudes, community culture and drugs and alcohol. Many other themes began to emerge, specifically in relation to factors which lead to offending and also factors which led to desistance.

These themes were identified and presented in Chapter Five and thereafter they were discussed in detail in Chapter Six. Chapter Six was the section of the research where the voice of the participants could be heard; the section of the research which painted a clear picture of the experiences of the participants in terms of their experience growing up, their communities, their experience of offending and most importantly their views on what changed for them in their lives that led to their desistance and allowed them to continue to desist. It is through the information presented in Chapter Six that we really get a sense of what life was like for these young men.

So, what next? What does the learning from this research tell us in terms of practice development and our response to youth offending? What needs to happen next in terms of providing more suitable and sustainable supports and services to young people who find themselves in situations similar to our participants, in order for them to avoid or desist from their offending behaviour? Let us begin by looking at some of the themes which emerged in terms of factors which led the young people to offending. The themes in this area were very much in line with the risk factors identified by Hodge and Andrews (1995) and Munice, Hughes and McLaughlin (2002), as outlined in chapter two. Peer influence was the most common theme discussed by the participants. They spoke of this from two different contexts- one was the direct influence their peers had on them through their own involvement in offending and the other was the way they

acted when around their peers in an attempt to impress them. Wanting to be accepted and to be seen in a certain manner was really important for the participants. Culture was the second most common theme identified from the interview. The participants spoke about the pre-existing culture to be involved in offending in their community as well as a community culture of minimising and normalising such behaviours- which has become engrained in the culture of the areas the participants grew up in. Drugs and alcohol, boredom, family, feeling entitled and a lack of empathy were the other common themes which were discussed throughout the interviews.

The challenge in terms of these themes is that services cannot directly influence areas such as peer pressure/influence or culture as attributing or risk factors, per se. However these can be indirectly impacted in a number of ways. The impact or presence of risk factors can be counteracted through the development of efficient and suitable protective factors. For instance, through a young person's personal development the young person has increased levels of self-awareness in terms of their boundaries, what they feel is right and wrong, confidence, increase self-worth or self-belief. Pro social modelling can also influence a young person in terms of the type of behaviours they may choose to replicate or regarding the approach to dealing with different situations as well as offering an alternative way in terms of culture and decision making.

The opportunity for a young person to engage in formal or informal personal development, as well as the opportunity to develop relationships that are pro-social in nature, are mostly created through schools, groups and clubs. In order to work with young people with an aim of reducing the risk factors associated with first becoming

involved in anti-social behaviour and crime it is recommended that early intervention would be hugely beneficial. This early intervention, prevention and diversion of offending as well as creating the opportunity for personal development and pro-social modelling could be developed in schools around Ireland. These types of opportunities are also available to young people in youth clubs, youth programmes and possibly, where early indications of antisocial or unlawful behaviour have already been identified, through the Garda Youth Diversion Projects. The new-found interest amongst young males in sport and fitness (but on an individual basis, rather than team sports), needs to be recognised and nurtured. Whilst the GAA and organised sport clearly have a large role to play, they are not reaching out to the ‘loner’ personality, or to those many young males who feel alienated from any systemic activities. Having access to gym and training facilities was a theme that featured heavily in this research. A significant learning in terms of understanding the impact that training in the gym and doing weightlifting had for the participants was that they not only held it in high importance because of the physical changes they saw in their bodies but also in how it impacted their overall confidence. Working out and training gave the young men the opportunity to learn more about their health and general health and wellbeing- in turn leading to the young people developing their levels of self-care in terms of eating well, training hard and staying away from drink and drugs as they wanted to maximise the benefits from their training. It allowed the young men, often for the first time, the opportunity to really invest in them- increasing their level of self-worth. Training in the gym also created a culture for the participants of hard work, goal setting and achieving what they set out to do. They began to experience the feeling of accomplishing the things they wanted and this motivated them to continue to work hard and to try. The final significant impact that training had for the participants is that it created an interest in a

new area for them which they wanted to pursue- and in turn 3 of the participants went on to study it at third level- hence creating opportunities for further education and employment. From the first benefits of increased confidence, to a developing sense of self- worth to forging a career for themselves as personal trainers, sports and recreation coaches and gym instructors- training has had a hugely significant and ongoing impact on the participants of the research.

From this learning a recommendation would be that resources need to be channelled into these activities, rather than into the criminal justice system per se, and for increased opportunity for young people to be able to access facilities such as these- which currently can be very expensive and inaccessible to most people- let alone to young people who experience poverty and unemployment. It really is a case of prevention is better than cure.

Encouraging and supporting young people to access such services would be very beneficial in terms of increasing protective factors. Empathy can be developed by creating a culture of reflection on their decisions with the young people by using models such as restorative practice and self-reflection. Again this approach would have to be consistent across all the services that a young person would come into contact with i.e. schools, clubs, and groups. Again, activities like the martial arts encourage self-discipline, introspection, and healthy living, and facilities like dojos and gyms are, to put it simplistically, a lot easier and cheaper to build than prisons.

In relation to the themes which emerged regarding desistance; Joining a club or group, changing peer group and education were the three themes which featured most heavily in terms of factors which aided the participants' desistance. The decrease in accessibility to education by the continuing and spiralling costs associated with even primary schooling, let alone secondary and tertiary education, is a cause for grave concern. We are seeing the re-emergence of a structured class-system in Ireland, where, to use Marxist terminology, access to the means of production is under the control of a smaller and wealthier class. Education was one of the means to access that control, and the availability of education to people of all classes and financial backgrounds was one of the primary reasons for Ireland's emergence as a prosperous and, dare one say it, socially content, society. Those massive achievements have all but been reversed in the last decade, and the most devastating impact has been the marginalisation of youth, who once more find themselves on the outside looking in. The logical conclusion of this process is profound alienation, and a striking back at the very system that they loathe, the property class.

It was quite interesting to see these themes emerge here as they would appear to be directly linked to the predominant themes for factors leading to offending in the first instance. The emergence of these themes indicates a definite link between missing elements of the young person's life. The absence of particular elements increased the level of risk initially posed to the young person and the introduction of protective factors to counteract those were some of the key changes in terms of the young person desisting. This further emphasises the importance of early intervention as the key to prevention of youth offending. If the absence of such supports were addressed at an

earlier stage then the conclusion must be that these young people might have been entirely diverted from crime or at the very least, at an earlier stage.

In summary, the most significant findings from this research are link between the involvements in a group or club, which not only increases protective factors in terms of offending but also is a huge factor identified in terms of desisting from crime. A second significant finding is that being involved in some form of education be it mainstream or alternative, as long as it is one which is suited to the young person's needs and interests, is a significant factor in terms of desistance. This finding is reinforced by the observation of this research as all the participants of this study had all completed leaving certificate but equally they were all pursuing third level education in some form. School has also been identified as a place that early intervention, prevention and diversion of initial offending can be addressed through the introduction of more personal development related subjects and well as the opportunity for pro- social modelling by a significant person in the young person's life. The third significant finding is that the influence of peers is greatly linked to youth offending and changing those peers is a factor that is significantly beneficial to desistance. Again, thought needs to be given to the creation of activities in communities that would encourage more family-orientated activities. An obvious example here would be the younger generation teaching the older generation about the mysteries of the internet and social media.

Key recommendations on the back of these findings would include the introduction of personal development focused subjects added to the curriculum or time allocated on the time table in schools. Increase in opportunities and support for young

people to access groups and clubs in their area- such as youth projects, Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Sports clubs, gymnasiums and dojos, etc. In areas where access to such services is limited funding should be allocated to establish these forms of community based, personal development focused informal education. Pathways to access services and groups of this nature should be clearly signposted and easily accessible. The introduction or expansion of mentor related programmes would also be largely beneficial to young people as the importance of a meaningful and positive relationship with an adult not only created the opportunity for pro-social modelling but the participants also identified that this was something that was important for them as having someone that they did not want to “let down” and someone that they could “make proud” was really important to them. A final recommendation as a result of this study would be the development of Peer support groups which employ models of peer support in conjunction with restorative practice approach to allow the young people to grow and develop within their peer groups, shifting the culture of peer influence from being a negative one to one which is supportive, reflective encouraging and empowering.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Consent form for interview



Waterford Institute of Technology

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project:

A Brighter Future: Understanding Desistance in young Irish Men.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Brianna Connaughton

Department of Applied Arts, School of Humanities, Waterford Institute of Technology.

Mobile:

E-mail:

Please initial

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions on anything that I do not understand or any matter that worries me.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reasons why I want to leave.

I agree to take part in the above study which consists of me agreeing to be interviewed.

I am aware that the interview is audio recorded and I give my consent for this.

Please tick box

	Yes	No
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initials of Participant initial)	Date	Signature(x or
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Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
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Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Interview



Waterford Institute of Technology

Participant information sheet

Hi

My name is Brianna Connaughton and I am a Master's student at Waterford Institute of Technology. I am researching and writing a thesis which is trying to understand what are the factors which influence a young person to continue or to desist (stop) from offending.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully:

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of my study is to try to understand the experiences of young Irish males who offend and what are the factors which lead to them desisting (stopping) their offending. In doing this I hope to have a clearer picture of how we can help other young men in similar situations to also desist (stop) their problematic behaviour at an earlier stage of in a more sustainable manner.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen to participate in my study as you have been involved in offending at some point in your life prior to this. You also have either stopped offending since or you continued to offend. I want to find out why, in your opinion, were the factors that resulted in you making the decisions you did/ or how you ended up where you are today. I want to find out what you think could have been done differently to help you stop or what helped you stop your offending behaviour. I want to understand things from your point of view. I want to know what your experiences have been like and how they have affected you and impacted your life.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to take part, but I would be very grateful if you did! It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason'.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked give consent to taking part in the study. Before you do this you will be fully informed in relation to what you have to do and the purpose of the study. As earlier stated, you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you agree you will sign the attached consent form and return it to me. At that point then I will arrange a time to carry out an interview with you. On the day of the interview I will ask you some questions. It will be quite conversational and relaxed. You can stop the interview at any point and you are can refuse to answer any question if you wish. Details of what you should do with this are given below.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that the results of this study can be given back to the agencies, support groups and government departments that deal with juvenile offenders so that they can introduce new ideas aimed at encouraging juvenile offenders to get out of a life of crime. This is also a chance for you to tell me things from your point of view! Hopefully this will then be used to help other young people who find themselves in situations similar to you.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, it will just be you and I present at the interview. You will not be asked any personal details in the interview. After the interview is completed it will be transcribed and “cleaned” to ensure anonymity.

If I use any data that I get from the interview i.e. direct quotes, this will be written in such a way that it will be impossible to identify anybody.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part you will participate in an interview. This will be carried out at a time convenient for you. You will have the option to do the interview in a community centre in Waterford city or alternatively we can arrange a public location closer to you. We will agree on location, day and time in advance. On the day you need to bring nothing with you, you are just required to turn up. You can sign the consent form once you arrive to the meeting.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be used by me in my Master’s thesis. A copy of my thesis will be placed in the WIT library. You are most welcome to read it.

Who is organising and funding the research?

My supervisor is Neil van Dokkum, a law lecturer at the Department of Applied Arts, School of Humanities, Waterford Institute of Technology, College Street Campus, Waterford City. Nobody is funding my research, I am self funded in conjunction with Waterford Institute of Technology.

Who has reviewed the study?

My research has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Waterford Institute of Technology, who were satisfied that your interests are protected and that you will not be harmed in any way by my research.

Contact for Further Information

If you need to contact me my e-mail address is briannaconnaughtonresearch@gmail.com. If you are unhappy about anything that I have done whilst conducting my research please talk to me about it, but if you do not want to talk to me about it, you can contact my supervisor Neil van Dokkum at nvandokkum@wit.ie.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this. Please ask questions about anything that you do not understand or that makes you feel worried.

Date:

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule (Semi Structured interview)

Interview

Age

Tell me a little bit about yourself growing up (siblings, from, family, parents, employment, education, hobbies)

Describe your teenage self to me

Tell me about your offending – both detected and undetected crime. (age, type, how regular, with whom,)

Tell me about your cautions or were you even in court? (type, number)

Why do you feel you were involved in offending?

What are the factors that you think aid a person to stop offending?

What age were you when you were last arrested?

How long prior to that had you offended?

Are you currently involved in offending?

What changed for you?

Why do you think you stopped offending?

What keeps you from offending now?

What do you think that young people who are involved in offending need to do or need in their lives to stop offending?

Tell me about where you are at in your life now (education, training, employment, hobbies, future plans, family, friends, hobbies)

Appendix 4: Screenshots from NVivo

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with the 'Sources' view selected. The main workspace displays a table of interview sources. The table has the following data:

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
interview 1 transcribed	41	72	10/09/2015 14:50	BC	10/09/2015 14:50	BC
interview 2 transcribed	33	47	10/09/2015 14:50	BC	10/09/2015 14:50	BC
interview 3 transcribed	46	88	10/09/2015 14:50	BC	10/09/2015 14:50	BC
interview 4 transcribed	37	56	10/09/2015 14:50	BC	10/09/2015 14:50	BC
interview 5 transcribed	35	44	10/09/2015 14:50	BC	10/09/2015 14:50	BC
interview 6 transcribed	0	0	15/09/2015 15:24	BC	15/09/2015 15:24	BC

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with the 'Nodes' view selected. The main workspace displays a table of nodes. The table has the following data:

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
advice or whats next	5	11	10/09/2015 14:19	BC	10/09/2015 19:47	BC
age	5	5	10/09/2015 14:22	BC	10/09/2015 19:35	BC
attitudes	0	0	10/09/2015 14:30	BC	10/09/2015 14:57	BC
community culture	5	16	10/09/2015 14:04	BC	10/09/2015 19:37	BC
current situation	0	0	10/09/2015 14:19	BC	10/09/2015 14:57	BC
Education	0	0	10/09/2015 14:00	BC	10/09/2015 14:57	BC
factors leading to desistance	1	1	10/09/2015 14:19	BC	10/09/2015 15:18	BC
factors which led to offending	0	0	10/09/2015 14:11	BC	10/09/2015 14:58	BC
family	0	0	10/09/2015 14:05	BC	10/09/2015 14:58	BC
hobbies and spare time	4	6	10/09/2015 15:08	BC	10/09/2015 19:38	BC
offending history	0	0	10/09/2015 14:07	BC	10/09/2015 14:58	BC
peers	1	1	10/09/2015 14:06	BC	10/09/2015 15:26	BC
personality- self discription	5	9	10/09/2015 14:11	BC	10/09/2015 19:39	BC
relationships	0	0	10/09/2015 14:30	BC	10/09/2015 14:59	BC
type of crime	5	20	10/09/2015 14:09	BC	10/09/2015 19:43	BC

