
Desistance in Transition: Exploring the desistance narratives of intensive probationers within the context of "Transforming Rehabilitation"

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Abstract

Desistance from crime can generally be considered to constitute a transition from a state of offending to one of non-offending, along with the underlying processes that support this transition. While the available literature has examined the impact of social structures such as employment, relationships and family formation on desistance transitions, the impact of involvement in perhaps less influential social structures has been largely overlooked. Not only this but, with a few notable exceptions (for instance Barry, 2010a), there is a shortage of literature surrounding the impact of this transitional phase itself, and the limiting factors associated with it, on to the ability for ex-offenders to maintain desistance. If, as is often the case for young adults, desistance transitions are undertaken alongside numerous other transitions (such as the transition into adulthood and between youth and adult criminal justice provisions), how do ex-offenders negotiate all of these transitions in their early stages and how do wider structural changes impact upon behaviours being attempted within this multiple liminality? Through the use of 18 double narrative interviews with probationers on an Intensive Community Order, 10 semi structured interviews with probation staff, 6 months of observations and the collection of probationer “End Data”, the current research was able to understand the ways in which initial desistance transitions are maintained by probationers within the context of a probation service which was transitioning around them. It was found that the disruption to probation supervision (which was deemed to be a structural source of support outside the “big structures” evidenced in the literature), impacted upon the rhythms and routines of probationers in the sample, challenging their ontological security and fledgling pro-social identities developed in this transitional state.

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I am here
yet not here
I am there
yet not there

Here I am
I wanted to say
yet could not

...

I'm seem to be part of this
yet I'm not
I seem to be there
yet I'm not

- Josephine Lee

Chapter 1. Introduction

“One *goes* legit. One does not talk about having *turned* legit or having *become* legit. The “going” is the thing” (Maruna, 2001: 26)

What follows is a tale of transitions, charting the ways in which early desistance transitions are undertaken by intensive probationers in a newly formed Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). The available literature surrounding desistance from crime (discussed in more detail below and throughout this thesis) suggests that involvement in social structures and the social contexts around such structures have the potential to both aid and hinder the desistance efforts of the individual attempting change. Yet discussions around such social structures (and contexts) tend to form around the desistance potential of employment, social networks and familial and romantic relationships. The role of the probation service as a structural agent, along with how *changes* in the lived experience of being “on probation” impact upon the maintenance of desistance for probationers, has, with few exceptions (see for instance King, 2014), been overlooked.

Through an examination of 18 double narrative interviews with probationers serving an Intensive Community Order, 10 interviews with probation staff, an extensive research diary and probationer “end data” (documenting successful completion, or otherwise, employment status, and desistance status), the research was able to investigate the ability of probationers to successfully maintain desistance from crime in the context of the changing nature of their supervision experience. In order to do this, the research sought the answers to two research questions:

- How do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?
- To what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?

However before commencing with a brief overview of the available literature it is important to stress that this research did not attempt to provide an evaluation of either the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' or the Intensive Community Order office in which the fieldwork took place. The purpose of the research was to obtain an understanding

of how initial desistance transitions were maintained within in the context of transitioning criminal justice provisions.

1.2 Understanding Desistance

It has been suggested that “the topic of desistance has ‘come of age’ as an area of scientific study in recent years” (Maruna et al, 2004: 271). This is interesting in itself in relation to criminology which, as a discipline, “has been far more interested in the question ‘why do individuals start’” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 1). Indeed, “by helping to elucidate some of its facets, a theory of desistance would enable criminal justice policies aimed at reducing offending to be fine-tuned and for the elements of these interventions which “work” best, to be more thoroughly understood” (Farrall and Bowling, 1999: 254). An initial difficulty in understanding desistance however concerns the lack of a clear definition of just what we mean when we talk about “desistance” (see Laub and Sampson, 2001). As such, the available literature offers a range of definitions that tend to fall into one of two categories (discussed in more detail in chapter 2). The first of which adopts the position that desistance is a termination event; Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983) for example define desistance as “the moment a criminal career ends”. However, questions have been raised about the utility of termination event theories, particularly in relation to the notion of permanence, arguing that it is difficult, if not impossible to ascertain that an individual has completely terminated offending until said offender is deceased (see Laub and Sampson, 2001; LeBlanc and Frechette, 1989). The second of the two positions suggests that desistance is perhaps best thought of as a maintenance process, or the “long term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending” (Maruna, 2001: 26), thereby allowing the notion of desistance to be reconceptualised as “continuity rather than change – continuity of non-deviant behaviors” (ibid: 27). The notion of desistance/persistence as being fluid can be found throughout criminological literature: from Glaser’s (1969) interpretation of offenders walking a “zig-zag” path between delinquency and conformity, to Matza’s (1964) notion of delinquency and drift, with offenders drifting in and out of offending states.

Various explanations of desistance have been offered in the available literature, including those that suggest that desistance is a product of age. Indeed, it is well known that offending behaviour begins to increase during early adolescence, peaks during late adolescence and then begins to decline. In fact, that notion that age is the best predictor of criminal propensity

is considered to be one of the few agreed on facts within criminological research (see Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Stolzenberg and D'Alessio 2008; Glueck and Glueck, 1930, 1937, 1943; Dannefer, 1984; Laub and Sampson, 1991 and Graham and Bowling, 1995), while other theories have looked at the involvement of social structures such as employment (Laub and Sampson 2001; Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998; Mischkowitz, 1994; Farrington et al 1986 and Farrall, 2012) the formation of stable relationships (Gibbens 1984; Horney, Osgood and Marshall, 1995 and Shover 1983) and the impact of criminal justice interventions.

The available literature also considers the role of an offender's social context in the successful maintenance of desistance from crime. Such discussions tend to centre on the key structural institutions for the development of pro-social capital, familial and romantic relationships (for instance Farrall and Bottoms, 2010). Yet such factors alone do not encompass all that makes up an individual's social context. Bottoms et al (2004: 374 *emphasis in original*) adopt a wider approach, suggesting that "structures, culture/habitus and situational contexts might reasonably be described as the *social context* in which desistance is or is not accomplished". While again they discuss the notion of a social context, the generality of the factors which build this social context allows for a consideration of changes within structures and situational contexts. The available literature has suggested that changes within an individual's social context, particularly in relation to those which constitute "criminogenic needs", have the potential to both help and hinder desistance efforts. While the same may not be as directly evident in factors considered to be "non-criminogenic", to suggest that they have no impact on desistance decisions at all seems somewhat inaccurate. Indeed, it is argued here that one aspect of an individual's social context which is largely overlooked by the available literature and which the current research would suggest plays a role in the ability of individuals to successfully maintain desistance, concerns their status as an individual in receipt of a criminal justice intervention. Should social context, as Bottoms et al (2004) suggest, include involvement in structures and situational contexts, it would seem logical to suggest that changes in such structures (like the probation service) would alter the social context of an individual's desistance attempts and potentially their ability to maintain this desistance.

However the problem with both of these positions is that they fail to consider the role of the *individual agent* in the change process. It has been suggested that, under the above paradigms, "the wholeness and subjectivity of the individual" has been largely overlooked (Maruna, 1999: 4). However, research evidence is increasingly suggesting that "substantial

and lasting change in criminal behavior rarely comes about only as a result of passive experience [...] such changes are best conceptualized (sic.) as the outcome of a process that involves significant participation by the offender who, in many respects, acts as his or her own change agent” (Adams, 1997:334). The importance of subjective factors in the desistance process is evidenced throughout the available literature. Giordano et al (2002), for instance, emphasised the importance of subjective factors in their theory of cognitive transformation. Burnett and Maruna (2004) discussed the role of both subjective and social factors in the desistance process. They developed their notion of “hope” which (synonymous with definitions of agency in the available literature (see Healy, 2014)) required both the “will and ways” in order to change. Finally, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) discuss subjective factors in their identity theory of criminal desistance. It is suggested that the narrative tradition allows for an exploration of the subjective nature of desistance while also considering the impact of social factors. Maruna argues that “from the narrative perspective, when an individual desists from crime, s/he acts as his or her own change agent and is not merely the product of outside forces or social control, or personality traits” (1999: 9, see also Maruna 2001). From here the focus then becomes about how change is initiated and subsequently maintained by the individual, with structural and contextual factors either enabling or inhibiting change (see also Healy, 2014; and LeBel et al, 2008).

Recently, the available literature has begun to focus on the spatial dynamics of desistance (Farrall et al, 2014, Bottoms, 2014), investigating the spaces and places within which desistance transitions occur. However, these have presented somewhat of a unidirectional approach: investigating the ways in which desistance influences the spaces and places that individuals engage with on a daily basis without much consideration of the influence of places and spaces on the successful maintenance of desistance (although this discussion does exist elsewhere in relation to the “big” structures discussed above, see for instance Farrall, 2004). As such, the impact of smaller social structures and the minutia of day-to-day rhythms and routines in supporting desistance transitions are largely overlooked in the available literature. Not only this, but the majority of large scale desistance studies which consider the role of places and spaces within which desistance transitions are attempted, tend to do so with reference to desisters whose desisting trajectories are relatively stable (Farrall et al, 2014). As such, these studies do not offer an insight into the ways in which these spaces and routines impact upon the *early* desistance transitions of individuals attempting change. With this in mind, it seemed pertinent at the outset of this research to assess how probation supervision, as

an aspect of an ex-offender's daily routine, impacts upon the initial desistance transitions. However, the notion of probation supervision, just like marriage and employment, is not fixed. Indeed, at the time of planning the research, the probation service was undertaking a considerable transition of its own as part of the coalition governments 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda.

1.3 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

Considered by some to represent the “end for the probation service” (Guilfoyle, 2013); 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was introduced by the coalition government in 2012. In a series of consultation papers under their proposed “rehabilitation revolution” plans were laid out for the implementation of a system of “payment by results”, allowing the potential for the Ministry of Justice to open up probation work (including the management and supervision of medium and low risk offenders) to competition with the incentive of payment by results (MoJ 2013a; 2013b; 2013c).

As part of the proposed implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', probation contracts for medium and low risk offenders were to be open to competition from private and voluntary organisations. Such organisations, to be known as “Community Rehabilitation Companies” (CRC) would be responsible for “manage[ing] an annual caseload of c.265,000 offenders” (MoJ, 2013b), representing over 80% of the workload. In line with the Ministry of Justice's ethos of public protection, however, the remaining high risk probationers and those subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) would remain on the caseload of a new, public sector National Probation Service (NPS), which would also be responsible for overseeing the work conducted by the CRC and conducting all breach proceedings when such proceedings go past the initial warning stage. “The NPS caseload [was estimated to] be about 12% of the 300,000 clients under statutory supervision. But the role of the NPS [was to] be limited to high level responsibilities. Its concerns [would] be the management of risk, public protection, compliance and enforcement issues, court reports and liaising over the supervision of high risk offenders” (Senior, 2013: 3 sic.) The idea behind the introduction of the outsourcing of probation contracts needs to be seen, in part, as a consequence of the economic downturn and the Ministry of Justice's commitment to the reduction of the deficit by “deliver[ing] annual savings of over £2 billion” by the 2014/15 spending review (ibid: 8), along with the notion that competition within a system breeds efficiency within that system, underpinned by an incentive policy of “payment by results”.

According to the MoJ; in order “to be fully rewarded, providers will need to achieve both an agreed reduction in the number of offenders who go on to commit further offences, and a reduction in the number of further offences committed by the cohort of offenders for which they are responsible” (MoJ, 2013c:15). The logic behind the implementation of an incentive system for effective programme delivery is clear to see; Hedderman (2013: 44) for instance argues that “on the face of it, this ‘Payment by Results’ (PbR) idea is hugely attractive, particularly in the current economic climate and under a government which is so keen, not only to reduce public expenditure, but also to reduce the scale of the public sector”. Its implementation in 'Transforming Rehabilitation' however has been drawn into question. Firstly, as noted above, success will be measured through improved reconviction rates, yet the validity of current reconviction measures leaves much to be desired (MoJ, 2013e). Also, throughout the consultation documents on the implementation of payment by results, it is suggested that “providers will be rewarded with success payments primarily when they achieve an offender’s *complete desistance* from crime for a 12 month period” (MoJ, 2013c: 14 *emphasis added*). As noted above (and in more detail in chapter two) desistance is a complicated process which does not lend itself to such simple definitions. Indeed, throughout the same consultation documents, no attempt is made to define what is meant by *complete desistance*, making an assessment of how this will be measured much more difficult.

The implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' has seen increasing numbers of qualified probation officers leaving the service (MoJ, 2014b), the reassigning of probation staff between NPS and CRC offices with little consideration of individual skill sets (NAPO, 2014) and the reassigning of probationers between NPS and CRC caseloads on the basis of their risk of reoffending, to name but a few. With this in mind, it is logical to suggest that such changes have the potential to impact upon the social contexts of probationers currently involved in the service as it is going through these changes. The current research aimed to investigate the ways in which desistance transitions are maintained by probationers within the context of the changes to probation supervision introduced as part of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'.

1.4 Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 concerns the ways in which the available literature defines the concept of desistance. It is argued that the research literature, while purporting to study desistance from crime, offers little in the way of a definition of the very thing it is studying. Through an analysis of the available literature it is argued that finding a definition of desistance which stands alone from the research project which operationalises it is unnecessarily difficult. The two different types of desistance definition - one which defines desistance as a sudden termination of offending and the other which sees it more as a maintenance of crime free behaviour - are analysed and a definition of desistance is offered which will be utilised for the remainder of the report. It is suggested that, for the purposes of the current research, desistance can be defined as *the underlying processes which support the maintenance of crime free behaviour after a period of offending*.

Chapter 3 presents what is currently known about desistance from crime. It examines the three theoretical positions to which desistance explanations are associated. Firstly, the ontogenic position which suggests that desistance is the product of the ageing organism, irrespective of context (Dannefer, 1984). Secondly, the sociogenic position which suggests that desistance is a byproduct of involvement in social structures, such as gaining employment and the formation of romantic relationships. Finally the narrative position which suggests that desistance is the result of the transformation of a personal identity, from an offending identity to that of an ex-offender. A discussion of the role of agency in the desistance process is also provided, suggesting that it is in fact an amalgamation of individual agency and structural factors which prove most beneficial in relation to the maintenance of desistance for probationers. It is argued that structural barriers to desistance within the social context in which attempts to desist are performed can lead to the activation of forms of agency more likely to result in reoffending.

Chapter 4 considers the importance of understanding desistance from crime as a process of transition, suggesting that under this paradigm the ontology of the offender as a transitional agent opens up the potential for an exploration of the transitional process itself and how this shapes desistance trajectories. It is argued that the probationers involved in the current research were synonymous with Healy's (2014) notion of "liminal desisters" and the role of liminality is discussed in relation to desistance transitions. Desistance transitions however are highly contextual and that a full understanding of how desistance transitions are undertaken

cannot be achieved without understanding the broader contextual factors which may shape the direction of these transitions. It is noted in the chapter that, for the probationers in the current sample, the transition towards desistance was not only accompanied by a transition from young adult to adult statuses, but also by a transition between young offender and adult offender services, each of which had an impact upon the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. Additionally, these initial transitions were being undertaken within the context of offender supervision by a probation service, which itself was also undertaking a period of transition from public to private sector ownership as part of the coalition governments 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda. The rationale and practicalities behind the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms are also introduced.

Chapter 5 provides an account of the methodology which guided the current research. The underpinning epistemology which informed the choice of methods is discussed along with the rationale behind the undertaking of the research and an outline of the research questions which the project has aimed to answer. The methods used in order to answer these questions and the rationale behind the adoption of these methods is also provided. The process of securing access to a fieldwork site is then discussed including the methods utilised to make contact with the probation trust who agreed to be involved in the project. A discussion of obtaining and subsequently maintaining access to all of the different participants in the research is also provided, along with the potential for selection bias which was evident in the research. Ethical considerations and the processes which were utilised in order to manage such considerations are also highlighted. Finally, a discussion of the method of analysis, the constant comparative method, is also provided.

Chapter 6 (the first of three data chapters) discusses, to utilise terminology from (Giordano et al, 2002), the “up front” cognitive work required for desistance transitions to get off the ground. It considers the notion of liminality, or a sense of limbo, exhibited by probationers in the sample who had moved away from their former offending self, but found themselves unable to fully achieve their desired future self. In order to ensure that probationers did not fall back on iterative forms of agency and fall back into old patterns of offending behaviour, it was noted that the probationers in the sample utilised a range of “discursive tools of desistance” which allowed them to distance themselves from their offending past. Such discursive tools included: “being a grown up”, “I’m not like them” and “it wasn’t that bad really”. Evidence of diachronic self-control and situational compliance are also discussed.

The chapter highlights the intentional self-change that was evident in the accounts of the probationers in the sample and provides further evidence of the role of individual agency in the change process.

Chapter 7 discusses the role of social structures, including the probation service, in the facilitation of capital within probationers. It suggests that, while individuals may possess the initial motivation to desist, such motivation is put to the test in the form of structural stumbling blocks. It was suggested that probationers in the sample experienced a deficit of capital (both human and social) as a result of their “multiple liminalities” which prevented them from fully participating in conventional society. It is suggested that as probationers initiated desistance transitions, their interaction with forms of capital and social structures needed to transition with them. As such, probationers in the sample evidenced support from social structures such as familial and romantic relationships, and the working relationships developed between themselves and their supervisory team as opposed to anti-social peer networks and former criminogenic skill sets. It is suggested that the working relationship developed between a probationer and their supervisory team, while facilitating the acquisition of human capital, allowed them to perceive their probation office as an additional source of emotional and practical support when needed.

The focus of chapter 8 concerns the ability of probationers to maintain their tentative steps towards desistance within the context of probation supervision that was transitioning between public and private ownership. It is suggested that the discursive tools of desistance, the use of diachronic self-control (discussed in chapter six) the acquisition of capital and the interaction with social structures (discussed in chapter seven), created a protective cocoon which was able to shield a developing desisting identity from the hazards associated with early desistance transitions. Importantly this cocoon had been developed alongside a stable and consistent supervisory regime. It is argued that the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', particularly the reallocation of probation work between the NPS and the CRC based upon risk, developed an undercurrent of liminality, identity transformation and ontological insecurity within both the probation staff and probationers in the sample. Not only did this represent a potential attack on the fledgling desisting identity of probationers in the sample, but it was also coming from a direction in which this protective cocoon was not able to shield them. Through this discussion it is suggested that the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' has the potential to impact upon the ontological security and,

ultimately, the successful maintenance of desistance transitions for probationers in the sample.

Finally, chapter 9 concludes by providing an overall discussion of the findings before anchoring these findings to the research questions highlighted earlier in this chapter. A discussion of the implications of the research both in terms of academic advancement and policy and practice is provided before the limitations of the study and potential directions for future research are also highlighted. The chapter concludes offering a response to a question posed to the researcher by a member of the Ministry of Justice, who suggested that the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' would have little in the way of impact on the successful maintenance of desistance for probationers. It is argued that, by impacting upon the day to day routines of the probationers in the sample by altering their experience of probation supervision, 'Transforming Rehabilitation' has the potential to impact upon the ontological security of probationers which in turn impacts upon their ability to undertake agentically driven transitions towards desistance from crime.

1.5 Conclusion

The chapters that follow provide an exploration of the early desistance transitions of probationers on an intensive community order, within the context of a transitioning probation service. By doing so they provide an account of not only the ways in which immediate desistance transitions are undertaken and subsequently maintained, or even solely the impact of transitioning probation supervision on the supervisory experience; but also of the ways in which change in organisations impacts upon those who interact with it, particularly when changes to the organisation were not designed to impact upon this interaction. While this research predominantly concerns desistance transitions, it also aims to investigate just how deep the rabbit hole of organisational change, actually goes.

Chapter 2: Defining Desistance

Interest in desistance from crime has been on the rise in criminological research in recent years (Maruna et al, 2004), yet the concept is hampered by problems, one of which being the way desistance is defined. The following discussion will highlight how the implications of not having a set definition of desistance range far and wide. However, the majority of definitions, when made explicit, are found to be limited in their application or else are gleaned through examination of the results or discussion sections of research papers. The somewhat clandestine presence of definitions in desistance research causes problems in relation how such a concept is operationalized by researchers, and evidenced by offenders. The lack of clarity when defining desistance led Laub and Sampson to “urge researchers to make their definitions more explicit” (2001: 12). The following discussion highlights the current debates surrounding the definition of desistance, and the ways in which these debates have influenced the present research. The two main perspectives regarding the definition of desistance (termination event and maintenance process) are analysed and it is suggested that the maintenance process perspective, for the purpose of the current research, provides the most utility. With this in mind it is stated that in order to answer the research questions “how do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?” and “to what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?” the term “desistance” is defined here as the underlying process which supports the maintenance of crime free behaviour after a period of offending.

It has been suggested that “the topic of desistance has ‘come of age’ as an area of scientific study in recent years” (Maruna et al, 2004: 271). This is interesting in itself in relation to criminology which as a discipline, “has been far more interested in the question ‘why do individuals start’” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 1). The implications of understanding why individuals desist have been discussed in the available literature on the subject. It has been suggested that “understanding the factors that lead to desistance is important in shaping interventions that reduce reoffending among those already involved in crime” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 3; Piquero, 2004; Ward et al, 1997; Kazemian, 2007). Indeed, the potential implications of a clear understanding of desistance from crime are wide reaching in terms of policy developments aimed at encouraging desistance. Farrall and Bowling elaborate this point, stating that “by helping to elucidate some of its facets, a theory of desistance would enable criminal justice policies aimed at reducing offending (e.g. the work of the probation

service) to be “fine-tuned” and for the elements of these interventions which ‘work’ best to be more thoroughly understood. Without a theory of why people stop offending, it is difficult to envisage which policies and practices are needed if offending behaviour is to be addressed by criminal justice agencies” (1999: 254). Not only would a clear theory of desistance enable wider public protection and community reintegration by reducing levels of recidivism by ex-offenders, but it would also relieve a degree of financial strain placed on the criminal justice system.

It has been estimated that “in 2007-08, re offending by all recent ex-prisoners cost the economy between £9.5 billion and £13 billion” (National Audit Office, 2010: 6). Such costs are located within the context of contemporary developments in offender management (which shall be discussed in chapter four). With caseloads being offered out to private and voluntary sectors, payment by results (see chapter four) and the government aiming to “achieve [ex-offender rehabilitation] in a way that was affordable within the context of the Ministry of Justice’s commitment to deliver annual savings of over £2 billion by 2014/15” (Ministry of Justice, 2013b: 11). Such ideas provide not only a degree of contextual background to the proposed research, but also a degree of justification. By assessing the extent to which probationers are able to maintain initial desistance transitions within the context of a transforming probation service, the research will allow for the development of criminological understanding surrounding early desistance transitions and the impact of multiple transitions upon this process. Through an analysis of the data collected for the research, this understanding then has the potential to be operationalized into policies which can mitigate against any detrimental effects of change and aid in the desistance process in a way which has been identified to be effective. This, in turn, could potentially reduce levels of reoffending which, in turn will relieve *a degree* of the financial strain upon the criminal justice system.

Creating a theory of desistance however, is not as straightforward as it may first appear. To start with there is no clear cut definition of what is actually meant by the term “desistance”. Maruna states that “one obstacle to understanding desistance from crime is the lack of a clear definition of just what this thing is we hope to understand (2001: 22), a point also stressed by Laub and Sampson who suggest that “currently there are no *agreed-upon* definitions of desistance” (2001: 8 *emphasis added*). Although Laub and Sampson were writing in 2001, it is noted elsewhere that the definition of desistance is still contested in contemporary debates on the subject (Kurlychek et al, 2012). It is important to note here that the above quote from

Sampson and Laub suggests that although there is no “agreed upon” definition of desistance that does not mean that no definition exists at all. Indeed the literature on the subject contains numerous attempts to define the phenomenon under investigation, which, if anything, muddies the waters even further. This shall become evident in the following discussion.

The implications of such conflicting definitions of desistance within the available research literature are far reaching. For those interested in studying desistance from crime, a lack of clear definition poses problems with regards to operationalization and, in turn measurement. Without a clear definition of desistance it is difficult to know what you are looking for and how you go about finding it. Maruna for example, provides an account of his research into desistance from crime. He states that at the outset of the research “while I had never met anyone who identified themselves as a “desister” or a “persister”, I assumed that such people could be easily identified in a random sample of ex-offenders” (2001: 43). After attempting to find such individuals however, he states that “I soon reached the conclusion that such classification [that of either a “desister” or a “persister”] is purely a convenience for statistical classification” (2001: 43).

Another problem with defining desistance, which shall be explored in greater detail below, concerns the notion that whether behaviour is defined as “desisting” or not is based upon the epistemological leaning of the researchers and the time at which this behaviour was observed. Maruna et al highlight this point when they suggest that “what looks like desistance from time [and position] X might appear like a mere lull from the vantage point of time [and position] Y” (2004: 272). They go on to suggest that, although this may be somewhat frustrating for researchers, it is worse for those who are actually attempting to desist from criminal activity and “often want to make the case that they have permanently “changed”, “reformed” or become “new” people” (2004: 272).

Laub and Sampson suggest that “a clear and precise definition of desistance cannot be developed that is separate from a clear and precise research question” (2001: 8). This seems logical, as mentioned above the epistemological leaning of the desistance researcher will orient their research questions and, ultimately, their research in a particular way (see Mulvey et al, 2004). Therefore given the problems inherent in attempting to define desistance, it seems logical to argue that in order to provide clarity to their work, researchers should be explicit when outlining what they are looking for when researching desistance from crime.

Yet an analysis of the available literature suggests that this is seldom the case. Indeed Laub and Sampson suggest that “some researchers do not define desistance but purport to study it” (2001: 8). Although this is not always true, in a number of papers examined as part of this analysis, definitions of desistance were either outlined but vague or else gleaned less through explicit definition and more through induction, by which I mean definitions only becoming clear upon analysis of the results or discussions presented towards the end of the papers analysed. Farrall and Bowling for example suggest that the “modest purpose [behind their article] is to use case studies to illustrate the potential of theoretical strands in the development of explanations of desistance from crime” (1999: 261) yet they do so with little account of what they are actually referring to when using the word “desistance”. Vaughan’s analysis of the “internal narrative of desistance” suggests that “desistance can only be grasped through an understanding of the agent’s ultimate concerns – the commitments that matters (sic.) most and dictate the means by which he or she lives” (2007: 390). This may be so, but the analysis provided is not grounded in any clear cut definition of what he means by the term desistance. Without this, his argument can be drawn into question on both epistemological and analytical levels. Yet while some discuss desistance without defining it, others provide definitions which do not lend themselves easily to empirical investigation. LeBel et al (2008: 131) for instance state that “most persistent offenders eventually abandon criminal activity (or ‘desist from crime’) as they get older”.

With this in mind, Laub and Sampson “urge researchers to make their definitions more explicit and provide details regarding the measurement of these concepts” (2001: 12). In order to provide clarity to the current research, the definition of desistance which shall be applied throughout will be clearly outlined in this chapter. This definition has been developed through an analysis of the available research on the subject. In order to do this however, it is first important to discuss the available research which has been explicit in its attempts to define desistance and how much can be taken from these definitions and their application in the field.

In order to shed a degree of light on the subject, Bottoms et al (2004) turn, somewhat logically, to the dictionary. They suggest that “while dictionary definitions should not drive criminological analysis, a look at the dictionary can, we suggest, help here” (2004: 370). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the verb “to desist” is defined as “to cease from an action; stop or abstain” (OED 2010: 450). To think of this in relation to criminal justice

parlance, “‘to cease and desist’ means to abstain from committing further offending behaviour” (Maruna et al, 2004: 271).

2.1 Desistance as a “Termination Event”

One strand of desistance theory which uses definitions similar to that put forward by the OED is the criminal career perspective which sees desistance as a “termination event” (Maruna, 2001: 22). From this perspective, desistance from crime is considered to be an event, the moment at which an individual ceases their involvement in criminal activity; it suggests a *permanent* change away from anti-social and towards pro-social behaviour. Maruna succinctly highlights that “in this version of desistance, one quits crime much in the same way as one resigns from a legitimate occupation” (2001: 23). Such definitions can be found throughout the criminal career literature. Shover (1996: 121) for example, defines desistance as “voluntary termination of serious criminal participation”. Farrall and Bowling (1999: 258) define it as “the moment a criminal career ends”. Sommers et al (1994: 127) suggest that desistance is “the cessation of a pattern of criminal behaviour” and finally, Piquero et al (2003: 380) define desistance as “the termination of a criminal career”. As is evident from the above examples such definitions imply a permanence in relation to desistance, yet they are also vague as to when such a phenomenon occurs, which is not helpful when it comes to operationalizing the concept. Maruna highlights this point using the example of a purse snatcher, he suggests that “for example, a person can steal a purse on a Tuesday morning then terminate criminal participation for the rest of the day. Is that desistance?” (2001: 23).

In order to clear the confusion in this area, some authors have argued more explicitly that the point at which an ex-offender can be considered a desister is perhaps most accurately established using age as a determinate for criminal propensity. Since Quetelet (1831) first identified that there was a correlation between age and criminal propensity, a large number of researchers have pursued this line of enquiry (this shall be discussed in more detail in chapter three). Indeed it has been suggested that “the research on the relationship between age and crime has been one of the most studied issues within criminology” (Piquero et al, 2003: 361). The scale of the difference between age and levels of criminal activity in these examples however is such that using these theories for policy development is problematic at best and some, as suggested by Laub and Sampson, are “so idiosyncratic to a study or a data set that they are hard to defend” (2001: 8). Warr for example suggest that an ex-offender can be considered to have desisted from criminal activity after a crime free period of one year

(1998). Whereas Loeber et al (1991) suggest that desistance has occurred when an individual has refrained from offending for a period of less than a year. Finally, Farrington and Hawkins (1991) suggest that desistance has occurred when there have been no convictions between ages twenty one and thirty two following a conviction before age twenty one. Although this final example is quite clear regarding what it considers to be desistance, it is so specific to the participants involved in their research, that any use regarding generalisation or later policy development is problematic, although not impossible.

Although the above examples are more specific in relation to when they consider desistance to have occurred, they suffer from the same issues with regards to operationalization as the more vague definitions highlighted above. As previously noted, the definitions of desistance put forward under the criminal career perspective stress the permanence of the action, and it is this permanence that causes a range of problems in relation to operationalization (see Piquero, 2004), conceptualisation and, in turn, policy development. Criticisms regarding the degree of permanence of desistance have been explored in the available research literature.

The notion of permanence also creates problems on conceptual and operational levels. Maruna suggests that the permanence of desistance put forward by criminal career researchers is problematic as it “can only be determined retrospectively – presumably after the ex-offender is deceased” (2001: 23). In addition, Reiss suggests that high profile offenders are “more likely to leave the risk pool through death” (Reiss, 1989). Because of this, researching what has been referred to as “genuine” desistance (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 6) can be difficult for researchers who have limited research budgets and time constraints upon their research. This point is reiterated by Piquero et al who states that two of the major problems associated with longitudinal criminal career research are “the costs associated with following people over a long period of time and the time required to study certain questions (e.g. desistance)” (2003: 410).

The notion of permanence has also been drawn into question with the use of follow up studies into desistance. In a follow up to earlier research conducted by the same authors (1987), Barnett, Blumstein and Farrington (1989) tested the power of a model which aimed to predict levels of recidivism among the same cohort of offenders as the previous study, only at a later stage in the life course. They found that “the original model accurately predicted the number of recidivists, the degree of recidivism risk, the total number of recidivist convictions, and the

time intervals between recidivist convictions” (1989: 373) for the participants between their 10th and 25th birthdays. In the new model, when participants were measured between their 25th and 30th birthdays, of the “frequents” in the study, that is, “those who commit crimes at a higher rate than “occasionals” (p.374) “five of them actually became recidivists, in comparison with the expectation of only 0.31” (p.384). Contrary to expectation, the model suggested that “they started offending relatively late; they then had several convictions in quite a short period of time and then apparently ceased their criminal careers at age 19.4 on average. [...] However, after a period of 7 to 10 years with no convictions they were all reconvicted at an average age of 27.3, and three of them in fact [had] yet another conviction at an average age of 29.4” (1989: 384). It is interesting to note here that, of all the explanations of desistance outlined above, the only definition which is applicable in this instance is perhaps the most complicated, that of Farrington and Hawkins (1991). Yet even this does not account for the fact that the participants discussed above had a significant crime free gap before re-offending. Such findings also draw the permanence of desistance as outlined by the criminal career perspective into question.

One of the main criticisms levied at the termination event theorists is that they fail to recognise the multifaceted nature of the underlying processes at play in encouraging an individual to desist from crime. It has been suggested that “this focus on the final state of non-offending ignores the nature of the *process by which individuals reach* the final state of non-offending” (Bushway et al, 2001: 493 *emphasis added*). It has been suggested that termination event theories lack utility in this regard. Given the problems inherent in such a perspective, it is difficult to identify whether or not those who adopt this view are in fact researching desistance and not simply temporary cessation of criminal activity. With this in mind, attempts have been made to distinguish between termination, or temporary cessation, and desistance. Such attempts however, can be multifaceted, complicated and also have the potential to fall into the same traps as those that ensnare termination theorists. Laub, Nagin and Sampson (1998) suggest that desistance should not be considered to be a standalone event, and that it should be considered as “gradual change, that is, [they] do not expect criminal activity to drop abruptly to zero, rather [they] expect a gradual decline towards zero or a very low rate of offending” (1998: 227). Such a perspective is in line with Lober and LeBlanc’s (1990) typology of desistance which breaks desistance down into four components: “Deceleration” which concerns a reduction in the *frequency* of offending, “Specialization”, which involves a reduction in the *variety* of offending; “De-Escalation” or a

reduction in the *seriousness* of offending and finally “reaching a ceiling” which, like Laub, Nagin and Sampson’s (1998) notion, involves the individual remaining at a certain level of offending both in terms of seriousness and variety. What is interesting about both of these positions is that they *do not* suggest that desistance needs to involve the termination of criminal activity, and that simply a reduction in levels of offending is enough to consider an ex-offender as a desister. This however could be levied as a criticism of this perspective as it seems almost illogical to provide a definition of desistance from crime which does not include the, even temporary, cessation of criminal activity.

A further criticism which could be put to the above research along with the termination event theories is that it “misses a fundamental fact about criminal behaviour [...] it is sporadic. Therefore, termination takes place all the time” (Maruna, 2001: 23). Indeed Glaser suggests that “those who live in both the criminal and the conventional social worlds may walk a zig-zag path between the two” (1964: 54). It is suggested that, instead of viewing desistance as a stand-alone event, or a finish line, which we know to be problematic (see Barnett, Blumstein and Farrington, 1989); desistance, and the motivation to desist, should be thought of as fluid. It has been suggested that “the delinquent *transiently* exists in a limbo between convention and crime, responding in turn to the demands of each, flirting now with one, now the other, but postponing commitment, evading decision. Thus he *drifts* between criminal and conventional action” (Matza, 1964: 28). Such a perspective has lead researchers to develop a different perspective regarding desistance from crime. Instead of seeing desistance as a termination event, it is regarded more as a process which encourages conventional action. Bushway et al, suggest that “instead of viewing the transition to desistance as a qualitative change in states (offending to non-offending), the transition can be considered a quantitative change in frequency, from higher levels, to lower levels and *finally* to zero” (2001: 495 *emphasis added*). Fagan suggests that desistance is “the process of reduction in the frequency and severity of violence, leading to its eventual end when ‘true desistance’ or ‘quitting’ occurs” (1989: 380). McNeill supports this notion, suggesting that desistance “is not an event, it is a process; a process of ‘to-ing’ and ‘fro-ing’ of progress and setback, of hope and despair” (2009: 27). Although these definitions of desistance are more malleable than the termination event theories, as they allow for setbacks during the process; the discussions surrounding these theories still suggests that the process has an end point. They suggest that it is a process which can be completed. This, in turn, means they can still fall foul of the same criticisms applied to termination theories regarding the difficulty in establishing the point at

which it can be categorically stated that this end point has been reached.

2.2 Desistance as a Maintenance Process

In order to avoid such a criticism, Maruna (2001: 26 *emphasis added*) suggest that “desistance might be more productively defined” as a maintenance process, in which “the focus [...] is not on the moment of change, but rather on the *maintenance* of crime free behaviour in the face of life’s obstacles and frustrations”. The advantage of this position, over the termination event theories and those which suggest desistance as simply a process is that it allows for relapse at any stage. Desistance is not something which is conferred upon someone, it is a constant process of maintaining pro social behaviour. This notion is supported by Clarke and Cornish who suggest that desistance may not be thought of as an end point, but may simply be “part of a continuing process of lulls in the offending of persistent criminals” (1985: 173). Gadd and Farrall also agree with this idea. They suggest that “desistance – like recovering from alcoholism – involves an unending state of going straight, with few practitioners ever fully satisfied that they have recovered, reformed or *gone straight*” (2004: 124).

It is interesting to note that, simply adding the word “maintenance” to the definition of desistance changes the way in which the notion is operationalized. When suggesting that desistance is a process, research can aim to analyse the steps of that process but will still ultimately be concerned with the end point or change in behaviour. When looking at a *maintenance* process however, attention is drawn away from the change in behaviour and towards the way in which this change is sustained. Maruna highlights this point succinctly suggesting that “the study of desistance might be best construed as the study of *continuity* rather than change – continuity of non-deviant behaviours” (2001: 27).

Although the definition of desistance as a maintenance process prioritises the underlying process that maintains non-offending behaviour, it is understood, somewhat logically, that before this can occur offending behaviour needs to stop. With this in mind advocates of this position utilise the notion of termination in various guises to explain the difference between the cessation of criminal activity and desistance. This distinction is important and can impact upon how the concepts are operationalized and upon policy development aimed at tackling both termination and desistance. Maruna highlights the fact that, when using the maintenance perspective, termination and desistance should not be thought to have the same underlying

cause, suggesting that “the ability to *maintain* abstinence might be wholly unrelated to the initial cause for *ceasing* the behaviour in the first place” (2001: 27). Therefore policies aimed at securing termination may concern themselves with one set of factors, whereas policies aimed at securing the maintenance of desistance may concern themselves with others.

Several attempts have been made to distinguish between termination and desistance. It should be noted here that, unlike the distinctions made between these two outlined in the discussion of termination event theories; desistance in these instances refer to the underlying process which maintains crime free behaviour in an ex offender. Firstly Maruna et al (2004: 273) proposed two stages of what they refer to as a “labelling theory of desistance”. These stages are linked with the work of Lemert (1951) and his notions of “primary deviance” which involves an initial flirtation with crime and “secondary deviance” characterised by the internalisation of a deviant label which is subsequently acted on and reinforced through societal reaction (discussed in more detail in chapter 3). For Maruna and colleagues “primary desistance would take the term desistance at its most basic and literal level to refer to any lull or crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career” (2004: 274). Whereas “in secondary desistance, crime not only stops, but existing roles become disrupted and a reorganization based upon a new role or roles will occur” (2004: 274). It is suggested that, as termination (or primary desistance) occurs regularly, it is secondary desistance that should be the focus of empirical enquiry (see chapters three and four). The problem with this definition is that, the use of the term “desistance” for both phases can become complicated when it comes to disseminating the findings. Not only this, but it suggests that desistance is dependent upon role transformation. Bottoms et al state that “the approach seems to suggest that if someone has experienced no strong role or identity change, but just stops offending for a significant period, he or she is not a “true” desister. We are not sure this is helpful” (2004: 371). Another problem with the primary and secondary desistance distinction is that the boundaries between the two can become blurred for multiple offence types. For instance, an individual may begin to abandon the identity of a burglar but, could still potentially fall back on iterative forms of agency and respond aggressive when challenged, leading to a further offence (discussed in more detail in chapter 6).

In an attempt to provide a clearer distinction, Laub and Sampson (2001: 11) suggest that “it is important to distinguish termination of offending from the concept of desistance. Termination is the time at which criminal activity stops. Desistance, by contrast, is the causal process that

supports the termination of offending”. While this distinction is more semantically pleasing than that put forward by Maruna and colleagues, as it avoids the use of the term “desistance” for both categories, it also emphasises that the notion of desistance is a support process and not an end in itself, as such, it perhaps offers more utility than Maruna’s for the present research.

2.3 Conclusion

The above discussion highlights the intricacies involved in defining desistance. The two major perspectives that attempt this task have been discussed. It should be noted that each of the perspectives surrounding defining desistance, and the subsequent definitions themselves have been borne out of, or in preparation of empirical research on the subject. Indeed it has been suggested that “developing a definition of desistance for the sake of having a definition is not worth the effort” (Laub and Sampson 2001: 8). Yet there are few accounts that explicitly state what they are referring to when they use the word desistance. For the most part, the definitions provided in the above research are either limited in their application, or buried within the discussion of research findings. Such reluctance to define terms at the outset of a paper or research project can have implications that span beyond the research community (see above discussion). The research questions for the current project were developed with this in mind. The questions ask, “how do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?” and “to what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?” Within the questions lies an indication of how, for the purposes of this research desistance is defined. But in order to provide a degree of clarity, it is important to identify how desistance will be defined for the current research project.

When discussing desistance, this research will be referring to the underlying process which supports the maintenance of crime free behaviour after a period of offending. In a similar vein to that put forward by Laub and Sampson (2001). This definition has been adopted given the advantages discussed above in relation to clarity and operationalization. Adopting the view of desistance as a maintenance process allows for the “zig-zag” nature of desistance in a way not directly amenable to termination event theories, accounting for relapses and de-escalations and focusing upon the intention to change as the vital component. It may be helpful here to substitute the definition used for the actual word. The current research will be investigate the ways in which probationers discuss the underlying processes which support

their initial maintenance of crime free behaviour after a period of offending and how disruption to probation supervision has the potential to impact upon this. Although the above statement is somewhat cumbersome, it is used for illustration purposes only. Now that the definition of desistance that shall be utilised throughout the research has been established, the following section shall discuss the available research literature that attempts to explain desistance from crime, thereby providing the contextual background for the present research.

Chapter 3: Understanding Desistance

3.1 Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche states that “all terms which semiotically condense a whole process elude definition; only that which has no history can be defined” (1956: 212). I would argue, with the previous chapter as testament to this, that the same idea could be applied to the process of desistance. Somewhat ironically, developing our understanding of desistance from crime makes any attempt at producing a succinct definition more complicated. Throughout the construction of the previous chapter I attempted to produce a definition of desistance that, although informed by previous research, could stand separate from it. Although the production of a standalone definition is useful as an academic exercise, it is important to remember that these definitions are used as a springboard for research into the phenomenon and so the two should always been seen in conjunction with each other. Definitions of desistance go hand in hand with research, as Laub and Sampson (2001:8) assert “a clear and precise definition of desistance cannot be developed that is separate from a clear and precise research question.”

The problem here lies in the fact that the majority of research questions will utilise different theoretical frameworks to others. McNeill et al (2013:3) explain that “there is no single theory of why people stop offending”, and so various explanations of desistance are evident throughout the available literature. The following chapter shall outline the currently available theories of desistance. While each of the theoretical positions presented in this chapter have furthered our understanding of desistance from crime, it is suggested that recent developments in relation to the spatial dynamics of desistance offer perhaps the most utility for the present research. Indeed, while this may be the case, there is an argument that until now the majority of discussion of the spatial dynamics of desistance present somewhat of a unilateral account, offering an insight into how desistance shapes daily life with little in the way of discussion as to how daily life shapes desistance. This is particularly so in relation to involvement in social structures which fall outside the typically defined “big structures” of employment, relationship formation and parenthood. Not only this, but the research literature which focuses on the spatial dynamics of desistance has, to date, tended to do so with participants who have established desisting identities (see Bottoms and Shapland, 2016). As such it offers little in the way of an account of the temporal construction of *early desistance narratives* for individuals making their first tentative steps towards change. The chapter

provides a critical account of how we currently understand desistance from crime, and stresses the need for desistance research to explore the minutiae of an individual's social context, as well as the larger scale turning points, particularly if we are to develop an understanding of the initial desistance transitions for individuals on “the threshold of change” (Healy, 2012a: 35), a need which the current research aims to address

3.2 Ontogenic Theories of desistance

One branch of theories investigating desistance from crime suggests an individual's propensity towards criminal activity declines with age. Indeed, the age distribution of crime is widely accepted to be “one of the few facts agreed on in criminology” (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983: 552), and “the empirical fact of a decline in the crime rate with age is beyond dispute” (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983: 565). It has been noted that “when age is plotted by crime rates, the slope of the relationship ascends rapidly during adolescence, peaks in early adulthood and then falls thereafter” (Stolzenberg and D'Alessio 2008: 66). Such a distribution is now commonly referred to as the “age crime curve” (see appendix A). This seems relatively logical; Greenberg, for instance, states that “since neither infants nor the elderly possess the prowess and agility required for some forms of crime *some* association between age and criminal involvement can be expected on biological grounds alone” (1977: 191). Age graded theories of desistance can be traced back to the work of Quetelet (1883/1969). Perhaps the largest contributors to knowledge concerning the relationship between age and criminal propensity however are Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1930, 1937, 1943) whose longitudinal study of male offenders over a period of 15 years highlighted the impact of the age effect across a large cohort. The influence of the Glueck's research in this area is evident throughout the literature on desistance. Laub and Sampson suggest “the research literature clearly shows that the Gluecks were correct about the fundamental importance of age, and that their evidence [...] remains some of the best available on the subject” (1991:1430). They also argue that the “Gluecks ‘Understanding Juvenile Delinquency’ [their seminal text on the subject] is considered to be one of the most influential in the history of criminological research” (Sampson and Laub, 2004: 3). Indeed the Glueck's legacy has been discussed throughout the available desistance literature (see for instance Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Dannefer, 1984; Laub and Sampson, 1991; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Maruna, 1999; Farrington, 2002; Burnett and Maruna, 2004 and Stolzenberg and D'Alessio, 2008).

Although the relationship between age and criminal propensity “represents one of the brute

facts of criminology” (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983: 552), there are numerous concerns that should be considered. It has been argued in the literature that while age graded theories work in relation to aggregate level offence data, the same cannot necessarily be said on the individual level. It has been suggested that “to know that a child of 10 has committed a delinquent act is no more useful than to know that a child of 15 has done so” (Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983: 581). A further issue concerns the implications of adopting age-graded theories in a criminal justice setting. If we are to accept the notion that offenders simply “age out” of crime, we must consider the knock on effect for institutions that aim to achieve the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders into the community (such as probation services and programmes). If desistance is merely a product of an “ageing organism” (Dannefer, 1984: 109), and purely down to the individual experiencing change, then logically the best rehabilitative aid would be time itself, with criminal justice systems having to wait it out, or contain offenders until they “grow out of crime” (Graham and Bowling, 1995: 4).

Maruna (1999:3), for example, suggests that “portraying desistance as 'natural' might actually decrease public support for the social mechanisms (such as rehabilitation and reintegration services for ex-offenders) that may be instrumental in existing patterns.” The main concern with ontogenic theories of desistance for the purposes of this research however is that, as Weaver (2016:12 *emphasis added*) states, they “divorce the individual from the *context* within which these developmental changes occur by eliding the role of relational, cultural, social or structural processes [while also neglecting] the role of cognition, reflexivity or agency in the process of change”. Ontogenic theories in essence remove the individual from the contextual base within which desistance trajectories are developed and “tend to treat as 'natural' a subject matter that is *irreducibly social in its character*” (Dannefer, 1984: 113 *emphasis added*). As such, many theories under the ontogenic paradigm fail to explain how an individual’s desistance trajectory can be shaped by agentic, structural and spatial factors. If, as it shall be contended throughout this thesis, desistance is a sensitive, highly contextual process, which requires an interaction between a reflexive individual and their immediate social context, then any theoretical position that fails to consider the role of either of these factors in the desistance process can be of limited utility here.

3.3 Sociogenic theories of desistance

Sociogenic theories of desistance focus more on the contextual dynamics of the desistance process, suggesting that, while age may provide an indication of an individual’s desistance trajectory, it is less to do with biological factors and more to do with increased involvement

in pro-social structures as an individual ages. Gadd and Farrall (2004: 124) suggest that “of course ageing does not in and of itself ‘cause’ desistance. Rather ‘age’ is an index of other processes that have some bearing on involvement in crime, such as the amount of time a person is likely to have been enmeshed in social networks and their psychological development and maturation” (see chapter 6). They suggest that “male offenders typically cease to offend about the same time they embark on the processes associated with family formation and (re)enter stable employment” (ibid). Bottoms et al, (2004: 279) suggest that “the path to desistance (or otherwise) might well therefore be intimately connected, for many, with this more general transition into adulthood” (a notion discussed in more detail in chapter 4).

When discussing their own earlier work in 1993, Laub and Sampson (2001: 20) note that “job stability and marital attachment in adulthood were significantly related to changes in adult crime – the stronger the adult ties to work and family the less crime and deviance among both delinquents and controls”. According to a sociogenic paradigm, involvement in work or committed relationships reduces the propensity to offend owing to the idea that “as investment in social bonds grows, the incentive for avoiding crime increases because more is at stake” (Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998: 225). Such ideas, which present the offender as a rational actor, are evident throughout the criminological literature (see Hirschi, 1969). Sampson and Laub (2004: 17) suggest that “involvement in institutions such as marriage, work and the military reorders short-term situational inducements to crime and, over time, redirects long-term commitments to conformity” (see also Bouffard and Laub, 2004). The notion that investment in pro-social social groups/institutions such as work and the development of pro-social relationships can aid desistance is supported in the wider research literature. Mischkowitz (1994: 313) found that “erratic work patterns were substituted by more stable and reliable behaviour” among a sample of desisting ex-offenders. Farrington et al (1986: 351) identified that “proportionally more crimes were committed by [participating] youths during periods of unemployment”. Farrall (2012: 146) notes that securing paid employment can impact upon an ex-offender's life by allowing them to achieve *inter alia* “a reduction in ‘unstructured’ time and an increase in ‘structured’ time [discussed in chapter seven]; an income, which enables ‘home-leaving’ and the establishment of ‘significant’ relationships; a ‘legitimate’ identity [discussed in more detail below], an increase in self-esteem; use of an individual’s energies, financial security; daily interaction with non-offenders [discussed in chapter 6]; [and] for men in particular, a reduction in the time spent in

single-sex, peer-aged groups [discussed in chapter six]”.

The impact of involvement in social institutions on the desistance process, however, has been drawn into question in the available research literature. For instance, there is a range of research that discusses offending behaviour in the workplace (see for example Ditton, 1977; Henry, 1978; Grahame and Bowling, 1995). Such a position could also not be used to describe offences that could only occur when the offender is employed (such as “white collar” or “corporate” crime; see for example, Hansen 2009). Gottfredson and Hirschi discuss the role of employment in the desistance process, paying particular attention to how employment is linked with age and the tailing off of criminal propensity. They suggest that, upon analysis of the available evidence, “employment does not explain, or help to explain the reduction in crime with age” (1990: 139). With regard to the formation of stable relationships and family life, it is suggested that although they “sound nice, and [...] are almost by definition inconsistent with crime, [...] they may be abandoned if they prove inconvenient or overly restrictive [...] they do not account for the decline in crime with age” (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 140). Also, it needs to be remembered that “people can choose to turn [sociogenic commitments] down and even if they accept a new social position, they are not bound to remain” (Vaughan, 2007: 392). Another flaw in this explanation is that it fails to consider the notion that families and communities may, in fact, encourage offending to continue as opposed to cease. Research conducted by Farrington et al (1996: 47), for example, found that “offending is strongly concentrated in families and tends to be transmitted from one generation to the next”. Finally, it has been suggested that establishing a convincing causal link between the formation of relationships and desistance is not common place in the available research literature; Gadd and Farrall (2004: 126) suggest that “much criminal careers research proceeds as if the meaning of these all important social relationships can be simply read off from evidence of their presence”.

The location of desistance within the sociogenic paradigm has also attracted a degree of criticism. For Laub and Sampson (2003), desistance happens almost by accident, as a by-product of involvement in social institutions such as marriage, family life and employment. They suggest that “desistance arises from ‘side bets’ as employment and marriage makes the prospect of criminality less alluring” (ibid: 391) and that it occurs “without [offenders] even realising it” (ibid: 278). Such a position is in line with what LeBel and colleagues would refer to as a “strong social model” in which “social circumstances matter most in whether or not a person is able to desist from crime” (2008: 139, see also Giordano et al, 2003 for a discussion

of change in friendship relations and the desistance process). The disadvantage of such a position is that the agency of the individual offender, and the context within which these desistance decisions are made are all but ignored. Individual agency, however, still plays a primary role in the desistance process. Vaughan (2007:394) argues that “the fallacy of structural accounts is to presume that a force for change such as employment will get its ‘hooks’ into the agent with little or no participation from the individual” (see also Carlsson, 2012).

Maruna argues that “essentially what seems to be missing from both ontogenetic and sociogenic approaches is the person – the wholeness and agentic subjectivity of the individual” (1999: 4), an argument which is echoed by Vaughan (2007: 390) who argues that “many accounts still downplay the role of the active agent. Typically, they overestimate the power of the social environment to instil law abiding behaviour without much reflection from the agent in question”. The role of agency in the desistance process has also been highlighted by Adams (1997: 334 *emphasis added*) who argues that “substantial and lasting change in criminal behaviour rarely comes about only as a result of passive experience, and such changes are best conceptualized as the outcome of a process that involves *significant participation by the offender*, who, in many respects acts as his or her own change agent”. Bourdieu (1986: 85 *emphasis added*) suggests, the accumulation of capital “costs time, time which must be *invested personally by the investor*”; the same should be said about the commitments listed under a sociogenic paradigm. While involvement in social institutions such as stable employment and pro-social relationships are important in the desistance process, their importance is conditional on the amount of investment that is placed in them by the *individual undertaking change*. Giordano et al (2002: 1001) suggests that people will “refrain from criminal or deviant behaviour, not just because they have much to lose [as is suggested in sociogenic theories discussed above], but also because they have begun to look back with increased disdain on their former spendthrift ways”. Again however, such discussions still fail to provide much acknowledgement of the spatial dynamics and immediate social context around desistance transitions (with the exception of Laub and Sampson (2003) who acknowledge routine activities in their theory of informal social control). While we consider the desister as being a rational actor who invests in social structures in order to maintain desistance, there is little in the way of discussion in the theoretical literature within the sociogenic paradigm concerning how this investment and rational choice may be disrupted by contextual elements of the day to day realities of

undertaking desistance transitions. One approach that discusses the potential for agentic action to be mediated by social structures and contexts concerns the transformation of a personal identity.

3.4 The Narrative Approach to Desistance

A more agentic approach found in the available desistance literature concerns the “transformation of personal identity” (Laub and Sampson 2001: 13) from an anti-social to a pro-social one. With this in mind I would argue that the narrative approach provides particular utility here. Ansbrosio, (2008: 232) argues that “the work on desistance has found a natural partner with that of the “narrative” which proposes that the opportunity to mentalise and verbalize a narrative of one’s life, re-writing the script from a hopeless one to an optimistic one, can be instrumental in the choice to desist”. Indeed the use of narrative accounts can be found throughout the available literature on desistance (see Maruna, 2001; Vaughan, 2007; Gadd and Farrall, 2004; Rungtanaudomwong, 2004; Giordano et al, 2002; Giordano et al, 2003; Hänninen and Koski-Jännes 1999: 1838, to name a few). It suggests that people ascribe meaning to their lives by “grasping it as a narrative” and that “the self-narrative structures the concept of the past by focusing on the events considered to be essential in shaping the life course. It also provides future orientations” (Hänninen and Koski-Jännes 1999: 1838). Finally, it has been suggested that, “to truly desist from crime, according to the narrative perspective, a person needs to restructure his or her understanding of self” (Maruna 1999: 10).

The narrative position allows for a discussion of individual agency in the desistance process, something that is not directly amenable to the discussion of age and involvement in social structures outlined above. Maruna argues that “from the narrative perspective when an individual desists from crime, s/he acts as his or her own change agent and is not merely the product of outside forces or social control or personality traits” (1999: 9). It suggests that desistance is a “choice” and that an individual can re-write a negative life script into a positive one without imposing any particular time frames upon this change. Through the use of narrative, “the agent is able to recognise his or her past as qualitatively different from present commitments yet cannot completely sever him or herself from it. Instead, these past events are recouped into a narrative that defines itself in terms of shunning previous habits and constancy to some future ideal self” (Vaughan, 2007: 391, see also Healy’s (2014) discussion of “liminality” in chapters four and six).

As has been previously noted, the use of the narrative in the desistance process can be found throughout the available literature. Particularly so in the work of Shadd Maruna. Indeed, his influential research into desistance from crime utilised the notion of “scripts”, with the desisters in the sample conforming to what he describes as a “redemption script” (2001, see also Rumgay, 2004). He describes this as the process by which “the goodness and conventionality of the narrator” is re/established (Maruna, 2001). Indeed, the desisters in the research identified a number of key themes that allowed for this redemption script to be realised. Firstly, it was identified during the interviews for the research that the desisters in the study possessed a degree of control over their own agency. This is an idea that is evident throughout the research literature. Le Bel et al (2008) for example, identify a notion that they refer to as “hope” which, in a similar vein to that of Merton’s (1938) strain theory, concerns a desired goal and the means by which to achieve that goal. Le Bel et al suggest that “hope” characterised “the desire for a particular outcome and also the perceived ability and means of achieving the outcome” (2008: 136), a notion which is also evident in contemporary debates surrounding agency (discussed in more detail below). They suggest that “desisting offenders maintain a distinctly optimistic sense of control over their future and strong internal beliefs about their own self-worth and personal destinies” (2008: 136) and that “belief in one’s ability to “go straight”, or belief in self-efficacy (or ‘hope’) may be a necessary if not a sufficient condition for an individual to be able to desist from crime” (Le Bel et al, 2008: 154). Conversely it has been suggested that “long term persistent offending may be related to the fatalistic mind-set that one’s destiny is out of one’s control” (Burnett and Maruna, 2004: 399); that they are “doomed to deviance” (Maruna, 2001:74). Although this position places more of an emphasis upon the ideas of individual agency in the desistance process, another factor of the redemption script is that the offender alone cannot achieve such a script. It is suggested that, in order for the redemption script to take hold, the “catalyst for change [was] an outside force” (Maruna, 2001: 96, also discussed in chapter eight). He suggests that “at first, the individual had no belief in himself or herself, but someone else “believed in” the person and made the ex-offender realize that they did in fact have personal value” (2001: 96). This is an idea that can be found throughout the desistance literature. Vaughan (2007: 402) suggests that, “the testimony of others provides the impetus to shake off the heritage of the past and commit to a future ideal self by which a person is held accountable”. Indeed, Maruna (1999: 10) found that desisters in his study “attributed their radical lifestyle change to outside forces as well – usually to the generosity of some forgiving person or persons who could see past the ex-offender’s mistakes”.

The true utility of narrative accounts for the purposes of the present research, however, is that they begin to consider the importance of social context in the desistance process. Bottoms et al (2004: 374) state that “social context is important for all pathways in and out of crime. So both increasing criminality and increasing conformity are likely to be shaped by and interact with the context in which the individual finds himself or herself”. For instance “if a person sees himself as ‘backed against a wall’ or feels that his dignity has been challenged by some insult, he may commit certain acts of violence that would be deemed senseless by the public. Yet these acts might be perfectly rational in terms of that person’s self-understanding” (Maruna, 1999: 10). The influence of societal reaction to deviance is evident throughout the available criminological literature. Indeed it has been suggested that “the idea that [...] our self-concepts are formed as reflections of the responses and evaluations of others in our environment is close to being an axiom in sociology” (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983: 77). This idea is attributed to the work of Cooley (1902) and his notion of the “looking glass self” (see also Maruna et al, 2004). He suggests that the “self-idea of this sort seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgment of that appearance and some sort of self-feeling such as pride or mortification” (1902: 152). It has been suggested that “very often, it is through seeing the self through the eyes of others that raises the questions about the worthiness of past and present choices (Vaughan, 2007: 391), and that “fashioning a new identity for oneself is often dependent on considering one’s current identity as viewed by others” (2007: 394). To quote Shapland and Bottoms (2011: 276) at length, while:

It is not unreasonable to think of the path to desistance as gradually acquiring a set of more virtuous dispositions; of breaking old routines and habits of thought, and acquiring new ones, it is not undertaken in a social vacuum. The offender may be starting out on an agentically driven journey towards desistance - but societal actors [...] are likely to still be seeing him or her as an offender. Acquiring new routines relevant to a non-offending life may mean, among other things, finding work despite the disadvantages of a criminal record; scaling down expenditure on leisure pursuits despite the lure of a hedonist consumer culture; and learning to cope with the fact that many people's first social reaction to ‘an offender’ will be negative”.

In the face of such obstacles and difficulties around the successful maintenance of desistance within the social context in which these attempts are being made, it seems logical to suggest that individuals attempting this change will look for external support.

This is not to suggest that the narrative approach can be used to explain desistance from crime fully. For instance criticism has been aimed at the notion of the transformation of the personal identity; Bottoms et al (2004) argue that this transformation is not strictly necessary for an individual to desist from crime. Others suggest that the narrative approach, particularly concerning the concept of the “looking glass self” ignores the role of agency in the process. That “taken alone, the looking glass self-orientation leaves us with an essentially passive and conformist view of human beings, one which emphasises an external force as the locus of the content or substance from which we construct our self-concepts” (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983: 78). It should be remembered, however, particularly with regard to operationalizing a narrative approach that the change agent here is the individual themselves, and that, although we construct our self-concept based upon the way we are viewed by others the change in this self-concept originates from within. It is argued that “a pre-requisite for change then, is that the agent is at least willing to consider different options” (Vaughan, 2007: 394, see also Giordano et al, 2002) and that although “the outside force removes the ‘brick wall’ [...] it is up to the individual to ‘take off’” (Maruna, 2001: 96).

3.5 Social Structure and Agency

So far then, the above theoretical positions, while describing potential ways in which individuals are able to maintain desistance, have been criticised for not fully exploring the role of agency in the process. While there is a large body of literature concerning the “structure-agency debate” about which, as Bottoms et al (2004: 372) argue “much ink has been spilt in the last two decades”, it has been suggested that “the theoretical elision of structure and agency has created a ‘false dichotomy’ which conceals the interconnectedness of the social and personal worlds” (Healy, 2013: 565, see also Farrall and Bowling, 1999). Indeed, Furlong and Cartmel (2006: 5) suggest that, to focus on individual decision making without paying attention to the influence of social structures on such decision making represents an “ontological fallacy”. An increasing body of work is beginning to appear which suggests, as is evident from the above discussion, that it is in fact an amalgamation of individual agency and structural factors which prove most beneficial in relation to the maintenance of desistance. Barry (2010b: 123) identified that “many recent accounts of young people’s experiences of youth transitions suggest that their narratives and transitional experiences are guided as much by personal agency as they are by structural factors”. A point which is confirmed by King (2012: 318 *emphasis added*) who suggests that “any account of human action needs to give proper consideration to agency, but also needs to account for *the*

role of structure in enabling or constraining that action". For Healy (2014: 874) (in line with the work of Paternoster and Bushway (2009) and the narrative approach discussed above), 'agency' represents the "dynamic interaction between the person and their social world that is directed towards the achievement of a meaningful credible new self". Under this paradigm it is not sufficient for offenders to be able to imagine a desisting future identity for themselves, it must also be seen as accessible *within the individual's immediate social context*. For "an intention to change, coupled with a social context which includes enabling structural properties, is more likely to encourage imaginative future oriented agency" (King, 2012: 323, see also the discussion of "hope" above). While desistance may be a process of changing one's life narrative from a negative to a positive one, and utilising involvement in social structures to support this change, the ability to act agentially is dependent upon one's ability to not only see a desired future self, but also to see a way in which one can achieve this self within one's immediate social context. This creates a particular problem for young people attempting desistance from crime.

For Barry (2010a: 1) "young people strive towards conventionality and integration, albeit often held back by the attitudes and practices of adults which can be both discriminating and disempowering", and such discrimination can be compounded further when accompanied by the stigma attached to a criminal record. Indeed "because of their reputation as an offender and because of limited legitimate income, they are likely to have less opportunities to adopt a more conventional lifestyle or gain legitimate income through employment" (Barry 2010b: 132). The discrimination felt by young people generally, and the extended nature of this discrimination ascribed to young ex-offenders, arguably restricts their ability to see a manageable path to their desired future self, making recidivism a likely alternative. For it has been argued that continued failure to achieve a desired future self in the face of the incumbent frustrations on the road to desistance may result in the adoption of "iterative agency", whereby the individual falls back on old routines and habitual action which, for ex-offenders, is likely to be pro-criminal (see King, 2012). Indeed Healy (2014) noted, in her research on the desistance potential of probationers in Dublin, Ireland, that, in the absence of a desired self, the agentic potential of the ex-offenders in her sample remained dormant.

3.6 The Importance of Social Context

The above discussion highlights the available literature surrounding the importance of an interaction between agency and social structure in the facilitation of desistance. Yet, while discussions surrounding the interaction between agency and social structure in the desistance

process have received more attention of late, discussions of social structure and social context largely focus on a discussion of big structures influencing change (marriage, employment, pro-social relationships) as is evidenced from the above discussion. The impact of changes within social structure on the desistance process have also been examined (see Farrall et al, 2010), but again this discussion has been largely centred on the big structures identified above. If, as the available literature suggests, agentic action is constrained by the social context within which it is performed, and “agency is conditioned by an individual’s social context which delimits the range of future possibilities available by variously enabling or constraining change” (Weaver, 2016: 25) then, it is argued here, that an examination of the minutiae of an individual's social context, and the spatial dynamics which constitute it, are just as worthy of examination as the involvement of larger social structures in the desistance process.

In their theory of cognitive transformation, Giordano et al (2002) focused upon the up-front agentic action required for desistance transitions to occur. They identified four closely linked cognitive transformations which, while agentially driven, also allowed for an examination of the “reciprocal relationship between [agentic] actor and environment”(ibid: 999). These cognitive transformations were: an initial openness to change; exposure to hooks for change; being able to envision and begin to fashion an appealing and conventional ‘replacement self’ “that can supplant the marginal one that must be left behind [and the] transformation in the way the actor views the deviant behaviour or lifestyle itself” (ibid, 1002). Interestingly these cognitive transformations were evident throughout the probationer sample for the present research and will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

The theory of cognitive transformation allows for an examination of the impact of social structures on the desistance process but, as its primary focus is upon up front agentic action, it is not constrained by these structures; rather it is the up-front agentic work which enables individuals to latch onto these structural hooks for change (Giordano et al, 2002). The real utility of the position offered by Giordano and colleagues for the purposes of the current research however, is that it allows for an exploration of desistance transitions when social structures (such as the “big” structures, or the social structures which have received a large proportion of research attention, as discussed above) are not directly amenable to those undertaking desistance transitions. They argue that their theory of cognitive transformations “takes into consideration individuals who manage to change their life direction, even in the absence of traditional frameworks of support and resources like those provided by a spouse or

a good job” (ibid: 992). This is something that, as discussed above, is not always evident in the available desistance literature.

While there has been some movement in an analysis of the temporal space within which agentic action and structural enablements/constraints exist, this area of investigation remains somewhat under explored. Indeed, Weaver (2016: 27) argues that “the situational and spatial dynamics of desistance have barely featured in the criminal careers literature as yet”. The accounts that have done so in recent times however present a rather unilateral and somewhat predictable account of the relationship between places and spaces and desistance from crime. Farrall et al (2014:159) provide arguably one of the first accounts the “spatial dynamics of desistance” in recent times and, in doing so, provide an account of the ways in which “desistance impacts upon individuals every day activities, including the spaces and places in which these take place” (ibid: 160). Utilising May and Thrift’s (2003) notion of TimeSpace which, *inter alia*, discusses the notion that time is perhaps best conceived as a series of rhythms and routines, each of which having its own spatial dimension, Farrall and colleagues begin to examine the places and spaces within which desistance from crime is maintained. Their research suggested that desisters and persisters inhabit different social spaces and undertake different activities. While desisters in the study adopted certain routines around family and work, the persisters in the study inhabited somewhat different spaces. They were largely unemployed and while their daily routine made limited reference to any kinds of social appointments/engagements, of those that did a large proportion centred on crime or criminal justice. While the research conducted by Farrall and colleagues (for example Farrall, 2002; Farrall and Calverley, 2006) cannot be disputed in relation to its utility in developing our understanding of desistance, it is also susceptible to common omissions that are seldom explored in the available literature. While the accounts provided by Farrall et al (2014) are useful in providing an account of the reaffirming nature of the spaces and places desisters inhabit, it is important to remember that this analysis was applied to *pre-existing categories* of desisters and persisters and, as such, offers little in the way of an account of how places and spaces are important to individuals undertaking the *initial transition* towards desistance from crime. As such, while there is an increasing amount of literature on the spatial dynamics of desistance, these discussions still fall foul of the issues identified by Bottoms and Shapland (2016) discussed above. There remains a gap in the literature on the ways in which the routines and rhythms of daily life impact upon the *initial* desistance transitions of individuals on the threshold of change. It is this gap that the current research makes initial steps towards

addressing.

3.7 Conclusion

Desistance transitions have been the focus of much research since the Gluecks' (1930, 1937, 1943) influential work on criminal careers. Research has started to recognise that for an individual to maintain desistance from crime, there needs to be an interplay between agentic action and structural factors. It is not enough for an individual to want to change, there needs to be provisions in place to support this change process. This interplay has received a considerable degree of research attention, with some suggesting that agentic action represents the “dynamic interaction between the person and their social world that is directed towards the achievement of a meaningful credible new self” (Healy, 2014: 874). While such a definition allows for an understanding of the interplay between individual action and social structures, it also highlights a potential stumbling block for desistance transitions. It is suggested under this notion that it is not sufficient for offenders to be able to imagine a desisting future identity for themselves, it must also be seen as accessible *within the individual's immediate social context* and that if such a desired identity is not amenable given the offender's immediate social context, the potential for the activation of iterative forms of agency and subsequent reoffending is a real and present danger.

With this in mind it is suggested that a deeper understanding of the spatial dynamics within which desistance transitions occur is perhaps useful. That, in order to understand what aspects of social context are important for the activation of agentic potential, we should spend time examining this context in detail. Indeed there is increasing attention being paid to the spaces and places within which desistance occurs and how desistance transitions influence the places and spaces a person inhabits (see Farrall et al, 2014). But this discussion tends to focus upon the impact of desistance on behaviours and routines which centre on the “big structures” which dominate much of the available desistance research (employment, relationship formation and parenthood). It is important to note here that current discussions surrounding the involvement of social structures and the social contexts within which desistance transitions are made are perhaps more problematic for young adults making their first tentative steps towards desistance from crime. It is suggested that the discrimination felt by young adults, and the extended nature of this discrimination applied to young adult ex-offenders, arguably restricts their ability to see a manageable path to their desired future self, making recidivism a likely alternative. Not only this, but the available desistance literature that examines the spatial dynamics of desistance tends to do so with ex-offenders with,

arguably, stable desistance narratives. As such, these discussions offer little in the way of utility with regard to the ways in which spatial dynamics impact upon the *initial transitions* towards desistance for ex-offenders. It is argued that more attention needs to be paid to the immediate social contexts within which these burgeoning desistance transitions occur, beyond the discussion of the “big structures” which have dominated desistance research to date.

Chapter 4. Desistance in Transition: Setting the context of the research

4.1 Introduction

Where the previous chapter has suggested that the current discussions surrounding desistance transitions do not focus enough attention on the transient nature of desistance transitions themselves, this present chapter aims to address such issues. Through an initial discussion of the limitations of assuming a dualistic notion of desistance as being either primary or secondary, the chapter expresses the need to examine the process of transition in more detail, particularly its early stages, as it is often the case that desistance transitions do not occur in isolation. It is suggested that using Van Gennep's (1960) notion of 'rites of passage', particularly the intermediate idea of "margin" or "limen" whereby an individual is betwixt and between two states of being, provides a useful starting point for a discussion of desistance as a process of transition. It is argued that the probationers involved in the current research were synonymous with Healy's (2014) notion of 'liminal desisters', and the role of liminality is discussed in relation to desistance transitions. However, as discussed throughout the chapter, desistance transitions are contextual, therefore a full understanding of how desistance transitions are undertaken cannot be achieved without understanding the broader contextual factors which may shape the direction of these transitions.

It is noted in the chapter that, for the probationers in the current sample, the transition towards desistance was also accompanied by a transition from young adult to adult statuses, but also by a transition between young offender and adult offender services, each of which had an impact upon the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. Not only this, but these initial transitions were being undertaken within the context of offender supervision by a probation service which itself was also undergoing a period of transition from public to private sector ownership, as part of the coalition governments' 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda. The final section of the chapter discusses the rationale behind the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms along with its practical application. In a thesis discussing the importance of understanding the context behind desistance transitions, it seems somewhat pertinent to include a discussion of the context within which the research was conducted.

4.2 Problematizing secondary desistance for desisters in transition.

The available desistance literature discussed in chapter three has been criticised for focusing on the latter stages of the desistance process. Maruna and colleagues (2004: 19), for instance,

suggested that primary desistance “would not be a matter of much theoretical interest” as temporary cessation from criminal activity occurs countless times during the course of a criminal career. Desistance research seems to have continued down this particular trajectory; Healy (2012a: 35), for instance, suggests that “despite widespread recognition that pathways to desistance are rarely straightforward and are usually preceded by temporary cessations and decelerations of activity, few studies have examined primary desistance”. While admittedly there is undeniable utility in researching secondary desistance, or “the movement from the behaviour of non-offending to the assumption of the role or identity of a ‘changed person’” (Maruna et al, 2004: 19), there is also, arguably, utility in looking at the initial transitional phases of desistance or, as Healy (2012: 35 *emphasis added*) notes, “what occurs in the minds and lives of individuals *on the threshold of change*”. It is argued here that the dichotomy of primary and secondary desistance does not allow for a full exploration of the disorganized and, at times, chaotic nature of the desistance process.

While these distinct phases have been identified throughout the available literature, the seemingly catch-all nature of this heuristic device does not account for the considerable heterogeneity within these categories (see King, 2014). For instance, should an individual be contemplating a desired future self (to borrow from both Paternoster and Bushway, 2009 and Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983) but have yet to assume such a role, are they considered to be a primary or secondary desister? Such questions are not helpful in developing our understanding of the desistance process and, if anything (as evidenced above), have the potential to stunt desistance research in these areas. It has also been noted that “the evidence which supports the conceptualisation of primary and secondary desistance is largely based upon the retrospective accounts of individuals who have desisted over a certain period of the life course” (King, 2014: 33) and, as such, offers little in the way of discussion of the initial transitional state. With this in mind, it is argued here that more research attention needs to be given to the transitional nature of desistance from crime, particularly so for individuals on the threshold of change.

4.3 Desistance: Transition in isolation?

An advantage of identifying desistance from crime as a transitional process is that it allows for an identification of the considerable heterogeneity of desistance pathways, as discussed above. This literature, however, follows a similar pattern to the interactionist theories of desistance discussed in the previous chapter in so much as they examine desistance

transitions within the context of individual agency and, typically, the involvement of ‘big structures’ in shaping *this* transition. It is argued here that if, as the literature suggests, there is considerable heterogeneity in desistance pathways, then any analysis of desistance transitions needs to take this into account, and that more attention needs to be given to the *immediate temporal and contextual issues* that surround transitional activity. With this in mind, it is argued here that more can be done in this regard to further develop our understanding of desistance, particularly initial desistance transitions and the social and temporal contexts within which they are enacted.

There is a wealth of literature that examines the impact of involvement in the ‘big structures’ identified in the previous chapter on desistance transitions (Farrall, 2012; Laub and Sampson, 2001; Bouffard and Laub, 2004; Farrington et al, 1996; Mischowitz, 1994; and Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990, for example). It could be argued, however, that this literature focuses its attention upon the impact of wider structural factors at the expense of fully acknowledging the transitional process. By this I mean that the available literature looks at the ways in which structures and agentic action influence desistance transitions without necessarily considering the impact of *being in a transitional state in itself*. A slight deviation from this trend however, which is particularly pertinent for the present research, is the literature which focuses upon the link between youth transitions and desistance. Barry (2006: 3 *emphasis in original*) argues that “there are few criminological theories that are successful in fully understanding offending as a *process* of change for the individual in the transition to adulthood”. As was noted in the discussion of age graded theories of desistance discussed in the previous chapter, there is no stronger correlate of desistance than age, with the majority of male offenders peaking in offending behaviour during late adolescence, after which involvement in criminal activity begins to decline in line with the transition into adulthood (Glueck and Glueck, 1930; 1937; 1943; Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Dannefer, 1984; Laub and Sampson, 1991; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Farrington, 2002; Burnett and Maruna, 2004 and Stolzenberg and D’Alessio, 2008). As such, in order to examine the initial desistance transitions for individuals on the threshold of change (Healy, 2012a), it seems pertinent to examine these transitions in line with the transition into adulthood. Indeed, Barry (2010a:125) argues that “studying youth transitions in parallel with youth offending enables an exploration of the dynamics of age, power interdependence and integration in the transition to full citizenship in adulthood”. Given the age category of the probationers who participated in the present study (18-25 discussed in more detail in the following chapter) it is particularly valuable to explore

the importance of transition in the desistance process beyond the “desistance transition” discussions that have taken place in the available literature to date.

The utility of examining the transition into adulthood in line with the transition from offending to a state of non-offending lies not only in its discussion of the link between social structures and reduced anti-social behaviour, but it also allows for a discussion of the ontology of the offender which is less amenable to the discussion of the interplay between structure and agency outlined in the previous chapter. As each of these positions were evident in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the present research, it is important to briefly elaborate on both here.

Given what we know about the age distribution of criminal activity, and what the available desistance literature highlights concerning involvement in social structures which are only available upon entering adulthood (employment, marriage etc.) on the desistance process; the link between transitioning into adulthood and desistance from crime seems relatively logical. Indeed Barry (2006: 24) suggests that “given the emphasis within the desistance literature on employment and relationships as a stimulus to stopping offending, a parallel investigation of transitions (where employment and relationships are two key components) would also seem pertinent” (see also Massoglia and Uggen, 2010, and Healy, 2014). While this link is almost self-evident, the true utility in transitions literature, as mentioned above, lies in its discussion of the ontology of the offender in transition which, in itself is temporally constructed through an interaction between the change agent and their immediate social context.

4.3.1 The liminal desister: 'Betwixt and between' several worlds

By utilizing an approach that examines desistance as a transitional process there remains an underlying assumption that there is an element of movement from one state of being towards another. A discussion of this transition is important here as it allows for an exploration of the spatial and temporal dynamics within which desistance from crime takes place. Rungay (2004: 413 *emphasis added*) suggests that “desistance from crime may be viewed, not as a single decision emanating from a resilient personality, but as a process in which skills and advantages *accumulate over time*, mutually reinforcing each other and progressively enhancing the offender’s capacity to avoid recidivism”. With this in mind, it is important to understand the behaviours involved in supporting desistance from crime during the time in which such skills and advantages are being accumulated.

Concerning the transition to adulthood, Van Gennep (1960) typified the transition into adulthood as being undertaken in three stages or 'rites of passage'. The first is 'separation' whereby the individual detaches themselves from a fixed point in their existing social structure; secondly, 'margin' or 'limen' whereby the individual is in between states, with few commonalities with either past or future orientations; and thirdly 'aggregation' whereby the individual once more has rights and obligations in relation to this new orientation (see Turner, 1967). While there is utility in discussing each of these positions in relation to desistance from crime, and indeed there are incarnations of these discussions throughout the available desistance literature (see for instance Healy, 2014), there is particular utility, for the purposes of this research' in examining in more detail the idea of liminality in the desistance process, as this is not only where the initial transitions towards desistance from crime and the development of new rhythms (see chapters three and seven) begin to emerge, but the context of the present research also.

It has been noted elsewhere that "in order to desist, individuals must often separate themselves from existing social networks, roles and environments. They must leave behind established lifestyle choices and entrenched cognitive behavioural patterns" (Healy, 2012: 36). It is the intervening period between this separation from old routines and rhythms and the establishment of new ones that is the concern of discussion surrounding the notion of 'liminality'. Turner (1969: 94) for instance suggests that "during the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject [...] are ambiguous: he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state". In her research with Irish probationers, Healy (2014) identified three different forms of desisters; "imagined desisters", closely linked to primary desisters, who formulated a desired future self but deemed that self to be unattainable; authentic desisters who "transformed an imagined identity into a meaningful crime-free self" (ibid: 878). This category is perhaps most closely related to the theoretical understanding of desistance presented in chapter three. Finally liminal desisters, in line with the discussion of liminality above, were somewhere in between these two. While liminal desisters "have formulated a clear vision of a desired future self [they also] believe that their new identity, while achievable, cannot be attained in their current circumstances. In the meantime, the liminal desister develops a meaningful substitute self that permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity" (ibid). Not only did this category largely typified the probationers in the present research (discussed

in more detail in chapters six and seven), adopting an understanding of desistance transitions which include a liminal state allows for a more nuanced investigation of desistance transitions; namely not only recognition and subsequent achievement of a desired future self, but also the transitional processes which may underpin this shift from recognition to achievement (a discussion of which dominates both chapters six and seven of the thesis).

However, these transitions are highly contextual. Healy (2014) argues that “the process of identity construction is not just an inner journey but is also influenced by the wider social context which determines the availability of new pro-social identities and roles”, and indeed, particularly in relation to youth transitions and their subsequent link to desistance from crime, research has shown that the contexts within which these transitions are taking place can lengthen an individual's experience of liminality. Barry (2006: 30), for instance, notes that “for many young people in Britain this phase in the life cycle [characterised by liminality] holds no status and there are few supportive structures to guide their transition to adulthood. This lack of support in the liminal phase leaves young people precariously poised between the two stools of protected children and autonomous adults”. She argues that “many young people are excluded from higher education (through lack of qualifications or financial support), from employment opportunities, and from housing” (2010a: 122); that capital (discussed in more detail in chapter seven), in all its forms “is difficult to accumulate in transition” (2010b: 6); and that, for the young women in her research, “legitimate employment [which, as noted in chapter three, is important in order to desist from crime] was elusive to the majority of them, [as they] seldom had the skills, qualifications or social networks necessary to find paid work” (2010b: 14). While there is undeniable utility in developing an understanding of desistance transitions in line with the transition into adulthood, particularly for young adult offenders like those who participated in the present research, it is argued here that we need to consider the wider context of this transition, and the numerous other transitions which may be occurring at the same time.

Barry (2006: 25) argues that “growing up nowadays involves several transitional processes rather than a one-off initiation process”. To paraphrase this idea, the context for the probationers in the present sample was characterised by several transitional processes, not simply the transition from offender to non-offender. For the majority of probationers in the sample, they were also in the process of transitioning between adolescent and adult statuses, and also young offender provisions and adult criminal justice criminal justice interventions

and, as such, evidenced multiple liminalities that influenced their decision making processes. Each of these transitions were evident in their desistance narratives discussed in chapters six and seven and clearly shaped the ways in which they interpreted certain avenues for the activation of agentic potential. While research has examined desistance transitions in particular (see King, 2014); the transition to adulthood on the desistance process (Barry, 2006); and the transition between youth and adult offender provisions (Judd and Lewis, 2015; Farrington et al, 2012 and Dorling and Garside, 2011), it is important to recognise that these transitions do not occur independently from each other. In fact each of these transitions shape the social context within which desistance transitions are made and, as such, more research needs to be conducted concerning the interplay between these transitional states on the agentic potential of desisters in transition.

So far, this chapter has considered the individual/personal contexts within which desistance transitions are attempted. However, to suggest that it is only personal contexts that shape desistance transitions would be to miss a fundamental influence on agentic action that has been discussed throughout the previous chapters. It is not simply the individual, nor personal contexts that shape agentic action, rather this action is shaped by an interaction between the agent and their immediate social world (Healy, 2014a; Weaver, 2016). Macdonald (2006: 381) argues that “there is a tendency in much criminal career research to overplay individual-level risks at the expense of those that are presented by the historical and spatial contexts within which youth transitions are made”. Part of the spatial context within which the desistance transitions of the probationers in the sample was undertaken involved their interaction with the probation service. Indeed, as probationers in the sample were undertaking an Intensive Community Order (ICO) which (see appendix E), requires considerably more engagement than a “standard” community order, a large proportion of the probationers' time was spent within a probation setting. As such, interaction with the probation service formed a significant part of the “rhythms and routines” which made up the immediate social context within which desistance transitions were undertaken. Not only this, but the *consistency* of their interaction with the ICO allowed for the development of a sense of “ontological security”, or “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens, 1991: 92; see also chapter eight) for probationers.

While the ability of the probation service to facilitate desistance within probationers in the immediate sense has been drawn into question in the available research (see Farrall et al, 2014; King, 2014), probationers were still required to interact with the service in order to comply with their community order. Yet, at the time of the research, while these probationers were attempting to manage the numerous personal transitions discussed above, they were doing so while interacting with a probation office that was also experiencing a transition, from a public sector organisation to private as a result of the coalition governments' 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms.

4.4 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

By 2010 the prison population had reached record levels and it was estimated that “the cost of reoffending by recent ex-prisoners as being somewhere between £9.5 billion and £13 billion” (MoJ, 2013b: 7). Within the context of the economic downturn and the Ministry of Justice’s commitment to the reduction of the deficit by “deliver[ing] annual savings of over £2 billion” by the 2014/15 spending review (ibid: 8) it was “clear that we needed a revolution in how we work to prevent offenders from reoffending” (ibid: 7). One way to achieve such a reduction in spending was through competition, and in 2010 the Ministry of Justice launched their “rehabilitation revolution” in the Green Paper “Breaking the Cycle” (MOJ, 2010). The paper proposed, *inter alia*, the implementation of a system of “payment by results” (discussed in more detail below).

This was followed in 2012 by a series of consultation papers, the first, “Punishment and Reform: Effective Probation Services” (MoJ, 2012a), highlighted the potential to open up probation work (including the management and supervision of low risk offenders) to competition with the incentive of Payment by Results. The second, “Punishment and Reform: Effective Community Sentences” (MoJ, 2012b), “aim[ed] to consult on the development of existing and future provisions envisaged in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill” (Collett, 2013:175). Effective Community Sentences proposed, *inter alia*, “[a] punitive element in every community order, the introduction of intensive community punishments” (Collett, 2013: 175) and a further discussion of the implementation of a system of “Payment by Results” which allowed for contracted providers to be remunerated “according to their success at reducing reoffending” (MoJ, 2012b: 37). In 2013, under the new Home Secretary, Chris Grayling, the Ministry of Justice launched their revised rehabilitation revolution in the form of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' (MoJ, 2013b, 2013c)

which was announced under the auspices of the “Offender Rehabilitation Bill” in the Queen’s Speech in 2013. It was noted that “the government’s plan for ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ sets out the ways in which central government intends to send criminal justice contracts out to tender and reduce the number of offenders being directly supervised by probation services within the public sector” (Harper, 2013: 37).

The proposals outlined in the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ papers included the “opening up [of] the market to a diverse range of new rehabilitation providers” and “new payment incentives for market providers to focus relentlessly on reforming offenders [...] but only paying them in full for real reductions in offending” (MOJ, 2013c: 6). It has been argued that ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ has involved the wholesale restructuring of the probation service (Robinson et al, 2016). The impact of division of probation workloads between two new organisations was evident in the accounts provided by the probationers in the sample (see chapter eight), it is therefore important at this point to highlight how this division was implemented along with the rationale for its undertaking.

4.4.1 NPS or CRC: who goes where and does what with whom?

One of the proposals put forward as part of the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ agenda stated that “the majority of community-based offender services will be subject to competition” (MoJ, 2013b: 10) with the majority of medium and low risk offenders in the community (including those on community orders and those released from custody) being “managed on a day-to-day basis by contracted providers” (ibid: 13) known as Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and it was estimated that there was the potential for “competed providers to manage an annual caseload of c.265,000 offenders” (ibid). This represents over 80% of the workload which, before these proposals, sat within the remit of the probation service, going out to private tender. The logic behind contestability, first introduced in the Carter Report, is that “competition from the private and voluntary sectors, [attempts] to improve the provision of the service for offenders, make them more target driven, effective and efficient, and provide better value for money” (Mair and Burke, 2012: 172). Essentially, competition breeds efficiency in a system. To support such claims, the MoJ refer to the savings made through the first round of prison competition, arguing that “the first round of prison competition achieved savings of £216m when compared to current costs” (MoJ, 2013c: 6), although establishing a causal link between competition and increased efficiency is at best troublesome (see Logan, 1996; Mobley and Geis, 2001; and Nellis, 2003). The outsourcing of

probation work also required a rearrangement of probation trusts in order to “achieve economies of scale and avoid undue complexity and duplication, whilst also ensuring each area is large enough for us to be able to measure significant changes in reoffending rates and to facilitate payment by results” (MoJ, 2013b: 24). Probation trusts would cease to exist and in their place it was initially planned to introduce 16 contract packages, or probation areas. However, after the initial consultation and concerns surrounding the fact that such large areas would prevent medium and small organisations from being involved in the bidding process, the number of contract packages was increased to 21. The successful bidders for each area were confirmed on the 18th December 2014 (see appendix B).

In line with recent trends however, there remained a strong emphasis on public protection. With this in mind, a new, *national* public sector probation service (NPS) was created, responsible for “carrying out the critical roles of providing pre-sentence advice to courts, assessing the risk an offender poses to the public, directly managing those subject to MAPPA [Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements], those who pose the highest risk to the public [and] any cases transferred back to the public sector due to risk escalation” (MoJ, 2013b: 20 - 25). The new service works under the National Offender Management Service; is managed directly by the MoJ; and NPS staff became Civil Servants. The NPS is also responsible for overseeing the work performed by the CRCs in relation to public protection, in order to ensure that the “risk of harm to the public posed by these offenders is properly managed” (MoJ, 2013a: 21). The NPS decide on all breach action once breach proceedings have gone beyond the first warning stage. It was suggested that “the NPS caseload will be about 12% of the 300,000 clients under statutory supervision. But the role of the NPS will be limited to high level responsibilities. Its concerns will be the management of risk, public protection, compliance and enforcement issues, court reports and liaising over the supervision of high risk offenders” (Senior, 2013: 3).

Concerns have been raised about the CRC/NPS split. For instance, it has been argued that such a split further removes the probation service from its origins as a local service. Bowen and Donoghue (2013: 15) argue that such change “place[s] decision making firmly at the national level [...] the move to 21 contract package areas (see appendix B and C)[overseen by the national public sector probation service] is a significant centralization”. The shift to civil service status for NPS staff further limits levels of autonomy in the service and “destroy[s] the remaining residues of independent professionalism” (Nellis, 1999: 308).

Concerns have also been raised about the difference in training required of NPS and CRC staff, while the NPS staff will still be trained using the Community Justice Learning (CJL, formerly Probation Qualification Framework (PQF)), CRC's are only required "to maintain a workforce with appropriate levels of training and competence" (MoJ, 2013c: 41). Burke and Collett (2015: 93) suggest that "the watering down of training combined with a significant reduction in resources available to work with individuals who often have disorganised lives must raise concerns that this new rehabilitative endeavour will result in a 'race to the bottom'". Finally, the personal/emotional dimension of this shift on those who work for the former probation service has also been an area of concern. Firstly, for those transferred to the NPS (the procedures behind which have been drawn into question elsewhere (NAPO, 2014; 2015a)), although they will experience greater job security and improved training "their role will be fundamentally one of public protection with little room for margin of error or innovative practice" (Burke and Collett, 2015: 93; see also Phillips et al, 2016). Indeed it was argued that "there is no doubt that the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) will be a difficult place for probation staff to find a home. Eventually to be run by private outsourcing companies with little sympathy or understanding of the traditions of probation" (Senior, 2013: 4).

4.4.2 Payment by Results: Profit in Probation?

The second of the changes introduced as part of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' Agenda concerns the notion of "Payment by Results" (PbR). The system of incentives introduced by 'Transforming Rehabilitation' is built on two mechanisms, "fee for service" and "payment by results". According to the MoJ in order "to be fully rewarded, providers will need to achieve both an agreed reduction in the number of offenders who go on to commit further offences, and a reduction in the number of further offences committed by the cohort of offenders for which they are responsible" (MoJ, 2013b: 15). The principle behind the introduction of payment by results is simple; offering bonuses for performance improvement but refusing payment where targets are not met has the potential to both improve service quality and save money. Indeed Hedderman (2013: 44) argues that "on the face of it, this 'Payment by Results' (PbR) idea is hugely attractive, particularly in the current economic climate and under a government which is so keen, not only to reduce public expenditure, but also to reduce the scale of the public sector". There are, however, issues with the notion of payment by results generally, and in criminal justice in particular, which need to be considered.

Payment by results has been implemented elsewhere in the public sector, and unfortunately

the results of such implementation do not provide much in the way of optimism. Hedderman (2013: 52) argues that “contracts and the measurement of targets involved in operationalising PbR require very detailed planning and careful monitoring. Evidence from previous PbR schemes suggests that this is likely to be neither simple nor cheap”. For instance Marini and Street (2006: 1), in their analysis of the implementation of Payment by Results in three Hospital Trusts and three PCTs, identified that “costs were estimated to have increased by around £100k-£180k in hospital trusts and from £90k to £190k in Primary Care Trusts.” It should also be noted that the basis upon which payments will be made is questionable; if, for instance, it is reconviction rates which will be used as a measure of success, given the fact that a recent government document suggested that reconviction data was missing in 10 per cent of cases searched (MoJ, 2013e), more needs to be done to make reconviction rates more robust in order to support the PbR model. Secondly, throughout the consultation document on 'Transforming Rehabilitation' it is suggested that “providers will be rewarded with success payments primarily when they achieve an offender’s *complete desistance* from crime for a 12 month period” (MoJ, 2013b: 14 *emphasis added*). Complete desistance is a contentious issue, however, and no effort is made throughout the consultation documents to elaborate on what is meant by it. As is seen in chapter two, desistance from crime is a notion which is difficult to define, yet such definitions are important, particularly in relation to PbR, if we are to understand what we are using as a measuring stick.

When discussing the implementation of the 'What Works' movement, George Mair (2011b) uses the phrase “a house built on sand” to suggest that the 'What Works' movement was not built on solid ground. I would argue that the same could be said about the changes brought in by the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda. Questions have been raised about the use of payment by results, with examples from other public sector agencies showing that it may, in fact, cost more in terms of implementation. Concerns have also been raised about the split between the NPS and the CRCs, with some deeming the split to be largely unnecessary. Hedderman, (2013: 53) notes that “Probation has been making inroads into overall reconviction rates; and, anyway, has a much better record of reducing reconviction than prison in like-for-like cases”. Indeed the “Probation Trust Annual Performance Ratings” published by the Ministry of Justice (2014a) ranked every probation trust as “good” or “exceptional” for the period 2013/2014. Harper (2013: 38) goes further and asks the question “if community orders are both more effective in reducing future offending and economically more efficient, it raises the question why [Justice Secretary Chris] Grayling is not

championing the extension of existing probation arrangements and calling for low-level offenders to be given sentences to serve within the community, as opposed to custody – with cost savings being redirected to support the recruitment of additional probation staff”. Others go on to suggest that “Transforming rehabilitation will almost inevitably weaken probations' links with the local community [where its roots are located] and replace political accountability at the local level with systems of contractual accountability located at the regional or national level” (Burke and Collett, 2015: 130).

Concerns have also been raised about the timescale in which such changes are being implemented. The time frame from introduction of the TR agenda to the new providers commencing delivery of the service was just over 18 months. The speed of such change can be seen as worrying on several fronts. Firstly with regards to the implementation of Payment by Results, it has been suggested above that the development of more rigorous reconviction data is paramount to the success of PbR. Hedderman (2013: 53) argues that “The original plans to pilot and then roll-out PbR might have allowed for [the development of adequate reconviction measures], but the 'big-bang' approach now being pursued will happen well before such changes can be made. This is risky on many levels, so it is to be hoped that the Ministry does have good contingency plans (or deeper pockets, than they appear to have)”.

Secondly in relation to the speed in which the TR agenda is being implemented, it has been noted that “Historical evidence provides us with case studies demonstrating that speed of change can undermine and derail even well-meaning implementation plans. Indeed we only have to go back to 2001 when the National Probation Service was first created and the rushed introduction of accredited programmes contributed to some of the failures in delivery subsequently experienced” (Senior, 2013: 2). Indeed, a recent publication by the Ministry of Justice indicates the increased pressure felt by those in charge of enacting change. Sickness levels have increased across the NPS and CRC staff both in terms of quantity and duration as has the number of qualified NPS staff leaving the service (MoJ, 2014b). While it has been argued that service delivery has not been affected by the inbound changes, cracks are beginning to show. The development of TR has been fraught with challenges, primes have withdrawn at short notice, the date for the NPS/CRC split was delayed and the entire TR agenda has been subject to a legal challenge from NAPO in the form of a judicial review, which was dropped before being heard.

4.5 Desistance transitions in the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'.

It was argued earlier in this chapter that it is important to take into consideration the impact of being in a transitional state alongside the overarching impact of change itself. The same can be applied to the probation context here. Indeed, an increasing amount of research evidence has identified some interesting similarities between the conceptualization of desistance transitions discussed in this chapter and the experiences of probation workers in transition under TR. Up until recently this work had been largely speculative (Robinson, 2013; Dominey, 2016; Evans, 2016), however a recent study by Robinson et al (2016) has provided an interesting insight into the emerging identity of a newly formed CRC (and its staff) during this period of transition.

Robinson and colleagues (2016) conducted an ethnography of a newly formed CRC and, *inter alia*, identified similar transitional narratives in CRC staff that have been identified in the literature surrounding desistance transitions discussed above. There was a strong theme of liminality resonating throughout the accounts provided by the CRC. Indeed, they go on to suggest that “it is possible to conceive of the whole population of CRC staff as ‘liminars’, operating in a temporary domain ‘betwixt and between’ two worlds: That of the ‘old’ trust’ (which has been dissolved and lives in the past) and the new ownership which [at the time of the research] had yet to be determined.” (2016: 166). They go on to suggest that “It is this liminal state which distinguishes CRC staff from other public sector workers [...] CRC staff find themselves in a ‘halfway house’ – a ‘holding tank’ as one middle manager put it – in which it is difficult to fully ‘settle’” (ibid).

This idea quite clearly resonates with the “liminal desisters” identified in the present sample and in research undertaken by Healy (2014) who found themselves ‘betwixt and between’ two states of being, having separated themselves from their offending past, but were as yet unable to fully align themselves with their pro-social future. Notions of separation and loss were also identified in Robinson et al’s (2016) research, notions which can be found throughout the available desistance literature, although perhaps less agentically driven than they are in research on desistance transitions (see for instance Giordano et al, 2002; Paternoster and Bushway, 2009; Weaver, 2012). Interestingly however, in the available research literature, these resonances between desistance and organisational transitions are seldom explored further. Indeed a search of the available empirical research, with a few notable exceptions (Rex, 1999; Healy, 2012a; King, 2014; Farrall 2014 for example),

identifies few attempts to understand the desistance transitions *of probationers* within the context of an ever-evolving probation service. With research in this area focusing more on the impact of these transitions on the occupational cultures of probation staff (see Robinson, 2013; Robinson et al, 2016), or more generally, the impact of these transitions on probation staff (see Philips et al, 2016). Even the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' early implementation reports (HMPI, 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2016) did not consider the impact of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' on probationers until the second such report, arguably once the initial transitions had already been implemented.

This omission from research evidence is somewhat perplexing, and, arguably, the distinction between desistance research and probation research allows for an unhelpful distinction between the two to be made. If, as the available literature suggest, agentic action and desistance transitions are facilitated, or inhibited, by the contexts within which such transitions are enacted (King, 2014), then research should be paying more attention to all aspects of an individual's social context, *including* their supervision arrangements and changes to these arrangements as a result of transitioning organisational identities. It is important to recognise the fact that the social context of the probationers in the sample contained numerous transitions, from offending to non-offending, from young adult to adult social status and from youth to adult criminal justice interventions. Not only this but, somewhat uniquely, they were doing so with the help of a probation office that was experiencing its own identity transition, from a former trust to a privately run CRC. As such, the current research is able to examine the maintenance of desistance for intensive probationers in the face of multiple liminalities, something which previous research on the link between desistance transitions and probation supervision, has struggled to investigate.

4.6 Conclusion

Throughout the available literature, desistance from crime has generally been accepted to be a process within which an individual develops and maintains a non-offending identity. Indeed, while research has focused its attention on the development of these desisting identities and the interaction between individual agency and social structures in its development, it is argued here that discussions of the wider contextual issues beyond the 'big structures' (outlined in chapter three) in the desistance process have been, until recently, relatively overlooked. Conceptions of primary and secondary desistance, while useful in developing our understanding the importance of identity transformation provide little in the way of a

discussion concerning the in-between states or how the transition from primary to secondary desistance is developed. It is argued that, in order to understand how individuals on the threshold of change (Healy, 2012) undertake this transition in its early stages, we need to consider the individual as a transitional subject and the contexts within which these transitions are enacted.

The transitions literature offers more utility in this regard as it allows for not only a discussion of how offenders in transition interact with social structures but also of the ontology of the offender in the change process. The notion of liminality, or being 'betwixt and between' two states of being provides extra utility in this regard. By recognizing this third step of the desistance process, we are able to avoid the almost binary dimensions of primary and secondary desistance and allow for a more detailed exploration of the transient properties evident in the desistance process. It is important to remember, however, that the transition to desistance does not happen in isolation. The probationers in the sample, at the time of the fieldwork, evidenced multiple liminalities, transitioning between several other states of being simultaneously during the course of the fieldwork. Each of these transitions, plus numerous other contextual factors, created the rhythms and routines that informed their daily life. One such factor involved reporting to probation. Although the available literature has suggested that the probation service has been evolving since its inception in 1907 (Mair and Burke, 2012; Raynor and Vanstone, 1994; McWilliams 1981; 1983; 1985; 1986; 1987), for the probationers in the sample their routine and their involvement with the probation service had remained relatively stable. The introduction of the coalition governments' 'Transforming Rehabilitation' initiative, however, caused the probation service to enter its own liminal state. With this in mind, the current research aimed to investigate how *fledgling desistance transitions* are undertaken and maintained by probationers, when an aspect of their routine (that being probation supervision) was disrupted along the way. The following chapter shall discuss the way in which the research was conducted, the two which follow discuss both agentic and structural factors in the desistance process for the probationers in the sample. The final data chapter discusses how these transitions were experienced in the face of the probation service transitioning around them.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction and Research Questions

In order to understand how probationers are able to maintain desistance from crime within the context of numerous other transitions, including that being undertaken in the probation service, it seemed logical to assume that the best course of action would be to ask them (Jones, 1985: 46). The following chapter discusses the way in which the research was conducted. It discusses the epistemological positions which informed the research design, before moving on to discuss the narrative interview, which was utilised as the main research method with probationers in the sample. The chapter progresses to highlight the use of semi structured interviews with probation staff. A thorough account of the data collection process is then provided which highlights the (perhaps relatively unconventional) way in which access to the field was organized and subsequently sustained. It also discusses the ways in which probationers were accessed to take part in the research. This also allows for a discussion of the need for reflexivity in the research process and the mistakes that were made, and learned from along the way. An account of interviewing probation staff is also provided, along with the ethical considerations which needed to be taken into account, and reflexively developed during the course of the data collection process. Finally a discussion of the process of data analysis is provided. Taking influence from grounded theory, the data was analysed using the constant comparative method and reflections on the success of this analysis are also made, as this involved an appraisal of the core ideas presented in this thesis.

The research questions which guided this project were informed by the analysis of the available literature outlined in the previous two chapters and were as follows:

- How do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?
- To what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?

5.2 Research design and epistemology

In order to establish the form of methodology that would best suit the research, consideration was given to both epistemological leanings and the methods which will most comfortably fit the requirements of the research. It has been suggested that, although there is a degree of

divergence in the field surrounding issues of epistemology and technicality (or the degree of appropriateness of particular methods for the research), one can, and does inform the other. Bryman (1984: 76) highlights this point, suggesting that “the choice of a particular epistemological base leads to a preference for a particular method on the grounds of its greater appropriateness given the preceding philosophical deliberations”. To take each of these in turn however for the sake of clarity, given the epistemological leaning of the proposed research, it is apparent that the “narrative study of lives” (Maruna, 2001: 39) is the position which holds the most utility here in relation to understanding desistance from crime. It seems logical to suggest that the narrative tradition, which emphasises the importance of stories and what these stories tell us *inter alia* about the narrator (see below), falls most logically into the qualitative methodological paradigm, although this is not to suggest that it cannot be utilised in a quantitative methodology also (see Lösel, 2008).

A clue to the epistemological leanings of the research, which ultimately inform the methods used within it, can also be found in the research question. The research question utilises the definition of desistance as a maintenance process. This position allows for an examination of “the maintenance of crime-free behaviour in the face of life’s obstacles and frustrations” (Maruna, 2001: 26 *emphasis added*). It has been suggested however that the methods utilised under a quantitative methodology “fail [...] to address the way in which respondent’s meanings are related to circumstances” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:8), meaning that, through adopting a quantitative methodology, the “obstacles and frustrations” which may pose a threat to desistance transitions could potentially be overlooked (a problem also inherent in some forms of narrative interview, see below). Secondly it has also been suggested that, although the quantitative tradition allows for easier aggregation and subsequent generalisation of findings, such manipulation reduces the individual impact of each case. Josselson (1995: 32) argues that “when we aggregate people, treating diversity as an error variable in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular”.

Once a methodological tradition for the current research was adopted, the methods most appropriate to answer the research questions could then be formulated. It was decided that, given the aim of the research was to investigate the desistance narratives of probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', it was important to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was impacting upon the running of the probation office and, subsequently, the supervision experiences of offenders in

the sample. The chosen methods are outlined in table 5.1 below. As the principle research method was the use of double narrative interviews with probationers, the discussion behind the rational for this method shall dominate this initial discussion.

Table 5.1 Research methods used.

Research Method	Population Studied
Double Narrative Interviews	Probationers
Semi Structured Interviews	Probation Staff (Management, POs, PSOs, Mentors, Administrative staff)
Research Diary	Whole probation office
End Data	Probationers

5.2.1 The narrative interview

The narrative interview method, which falls under the banner of ethnographic research, provides “an elaborate, connected piece of talk presented in a social situation consisting of an informant and an ethnographer” (Agar, 1980: 223). With the “primary data [...] being the stories that individuals tell to account for their behaviour (Maruna, 2001: 38). It has also been argued that the adaptable nature of the interview affords it wide applicability (Punch: 2006) along with the seemingly logical notion that if we wish to find out about participants lives, we would “do well to ask them” (Jones, 1985: 46). It is important to stress here however that the research is not intended to be an ethnographic study, rather, the research is located within the qualitative tradition which utilises ethnographic methods.

The narrative interview in particular appears to be the most amenable to the present research for several reasons. In earlier chapters it was suggested that the key to maintaining desistance for ex-offenders lies in the reconstruction of a pro-social identity guided by a “narrative of change” (Gadd and Farrell, 2004). In order to investigate such ideas within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', the narrative interview appears to lend itself well to this task. There is, however more to this relationship than simple vocabulary. It has been suggested that “over the past twenty years there has been a dramatic increase in interest in the narrative among those adopting qualitative approaches to research” (Elliott, 2008: 17). Arguably this is due to a “long standing humanist tradition within sociology which stresses the importance of

attempting to understand the meaning of behaviour and experiences from the perspective of the individual involved” (Elliott, 2008: 17). Indeed it has been suggested that the narrative interview, whose primary data consists of “stories that the individual tells to account for their behaviour” (Maruna, 2001: 38), is able to “provide rough indicators of the internal self-story that the person actually lives by” (Maruna, 2001: 49). The importance of identifying this self-story has been emphasised by McAdams (1993: 11) who states “if you want to know me, then you must know my story, for my story defines who I am”. For, as Hubbard states, “through [...] subjective accounts of past experiences, researchers have the capacity to explore respondents’ perceptions of their sense of *agency and understandings of the structural influences* on their personal experiences” (2000: 5.3 *emphasis added*). Given the discussion of the importance of all forms of social structure in shaping agentic action which dominated chapters two and three of this thesis, the applicability of the narrative interview in desistance research is self-evident.

The narrative interview was chosen as the primary research method over, for example, the formal (question and answer type) interview which, it has been argued, fails to consider “shared assumptions, contextual understandings, common knowledge and reciprocal aims of speakers in everyday life” (Mishler, 1993: 1). The narrative interview method allowed for an exploration of how ex-offenders understand their own maintenance of desisting behaviour. Their narration of events allowed for an examination of how they construct their own behaviour and, by extension, the behaviour of wider society. It has been suggested that “one of the best ways to understand a particular subculture or group at a particular time is to analyse the stories that members of that group are telling. Similarly, understanding the stories that ex-offenders use to interpret their lives should help us understand how western society constructs criminality at this moment in history” (Maruna, 2001: 39). The narrative interview allowed for story telling more so than the more formal interview methods.

5.2.2 Additional Methods

While the principal aim of the research was to investigate the extent to which the changes in the supervision experience as a result of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' (TR) impacted upon the desistance transitions of probationers in the sample; the possibility that probationers may not *realise* change was happening was realised relatively early in the design stage. This was not to suggest however that, should this be the case, TR would not have impacted upon their ability to desist at all, rather that the impact of TR may have affected desistance indirectly, or by impacting upon something which impacts upon the desistance process. It was therefore

important to capture the impact of the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' across the entire office in which the fieldwork was being conducted. With this in mind the decision was made to interview all categories of probation staff within the office (Management, Probation Officers (POs), Probation Service Officers (PSOs), Mentors and administrative staff. The semi-structured interview with probation staff was decided upon as the interview was more directed to probation practice and the impact of change on their work, whereas interviews with probationers attempted to target the wider context in which the individual previously offended and is currently attempting to maintain change. It was also decided that during the course of the research a detailed research diary would be maintained. This allowed for an analysis of the unspoken impact of change within the probation office while also allowing for a degree of reflexivity concerning the undertaking of research in a probation office. The use of research diaries has been documented throughout sociological research, with Burgess (1981: 76) for instance suggesting that “if ethnographers are to provide detailed portraits of the situations that are observed then they require careful recording in the researcher’s diary”. Indeed, Bauwens (2010: 41) argues that collecting observation data allows for a deeper understanding of the research environment than can be achieved through the use of interviews alone, suggesting that “on the one hand, interviews may improve our understanding of probation work and elicit probation officers ideas about various aspects of the job. On the other hand, observations may add to a more holistic and contextual understanding of the interview results and helps to explain apparent anomalies or distortions emerging from the latter”.

The diary was simply an A5 notebook which documented thoughts and events witnessed during the course of the fieldwork, in order to get a sense of the impact of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' on the probation office, while also allowing for reflexivity in the research setting. Finally, the research was supplemented with the collection of “end data” for the probationers in the sample. This consisted of finding out whether the probationer in question had successfully completed his community order and whether he had been in contact with the criminal justice system since the completion of the second interview along with any additional information that could be provided concerning employment status and general social context.

5.3 Data collection: Rolling with resistance to understand desistance.

Early on in the fieldwork process, a probation officer with whom I had developed a good working relationship informed me that a colleague of hers once told her to “roll with

resistance” while dealing with difficult probationers. While this term is used a lot in academic and practice literature, particularly surrounding motivational interviewing (Miller and Moyers, 2006; Markland et al, 2005), upon reflection this statement also resonated with the research process for the current project. Resistance in this instance is referring to, not only external resistance, or that of the probation service and the participants in the study, but also internal resistance, and the initial reluctance of the researcher to step away from the security of the lessons learned from a thorough analysis of the available literature and “roll with resistance” in whatever form it presented itself. The following discussion documents the complete process of data collection, from the first draft of research tools to the final day of observations. It aims to demonstrate, not only the ways in which the research was conducted, but also the role of reflexivity and innovation in the data collection process.

5.3.1 Approaching Probation: Access

Once the research design had been developed it was time to approach the probation service in an attempt to secure access to a fieldwork site. The difficulty here however lay in the fact that, as my interest in the probation service and its ability to facilitate desistance within probationers was born out of purely academic interest, I had no “inside contacts” who could help me secure access. Not only this, but I was to be approaching the probation service during a period of considerable change, which carried with it the threat of job instability. As such, it was important to approach the gatekeepers for the study carefully and with consideration for the situation in which they found themselves in order to ensure that my application for research was not simply rejected at the initial approach. Each of these considerations, and the ways I circumvented them, are discussed in more detail below

The available research literature suggests that having “personal contacts to the study population or site [makes] access much easier to negotiate” (Reeves, 2010: 317). Indeed, tip number one from Trulson et al's (2004: 459) top ten tips for breaking into criminal justice institutions in order to conduct research is “get a contact” as “entrance into correctional or other institutional environments is not necessarily related to what the researcher knows, but often times, who the researcher knows”. However, having developed an interest in probation and theories of desistance from a purely academic standpoint, I had no inside contacts who were able to help me obtain access. The literature suggests that, when a researcher does not come from a practice background, or have any semblance of “insider status”, utilising the expertise of academics in your institution can be just as beneficial (see Trulson et al, 2004 and Reeves, 2010). Indeed, while there were colleagues at the university who undoubtedly

could have offered their help in securing access to the fieldwork site (and who ultimately did intervene and support the process), initially I was prepared to attempt to secure access on my own. The idea being that research has been conducted in probation services by individuals without insider status before, therefore gaining access for “outsiders” must be possible.

In order to obtain access to the fieldwork site, I emailed every probation trust nationally with the research proposal and design. Attempting to make contact through email however appeared to be an exercise in futility as my attempts at contact using this method were met with silence. As such I decided to try a slightly different, and perhaps unconventional approach and began to message probation trusts through their social media accounts. During the course of designing the research it became apparent that the majority of probation trusts in England and Wales had developed a social media presence, allowing for greater public engagement and outreach. While email had proved to be unsuccessful, I was hopeful that contacting probation trusts through social media would, at the very least, result in a response. In this sense, my optimism was rewarded as one probation trust responded to my approach and an initial meeting to discuss my proposed research was organised.

This however was where the research encountered its second stumbling block as, after discussion with the social media contact, it became apparent that the individual in question was in no way involved with conducting probation research. He did, however, know who was and immediately made the necessary introductions. I was told that, while the probation trust in question usually adopted a blanket refusal to all student research, as the research proposed was for the award of PhD, the trust was more inclined to assist. Such a notion was, perhaps, indicative of the scale of the task involved in securing access to a probation office in which to conduct the research. The reluctance of the probation service to be involved in the research was not surprising. In fact Trulson et al (2004: 457) note that “it should hardly come as a surprise to learn that those who supervise and manage the kept [or supervised] do not initially welcome scholars and other outsiders into their institutions to poke about for largely self-serving interests”. It was therefore important to ensure that this initial interest was sustained. Upon discussion with the gatekeepers in the Probation Trust I began the construction of the information they requested before deciding on whether or not to permit me access to a fieldwork site. As such, two interview schedules were constructed, along with two different information sheets (one for the first interview with probationers in the sample and one for the probation staff), along with the necessary consent forms (see appendix D). The interview schedules were constructed utilising the lessons from Hollway and Jefferson’s (2001) Free

Association Narrative Interview.

The Free Association Narrative Interview was chosen over other forms of narrative interview (such as the life history narrative interviews or other autobiographical methods) for several reasons. Firstly, it has been suggested that “a narrative can be understood to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood in relation to that whole” (Elliot, 2008: 3). Utilising an autobiographical method requires the participant to present their stories in a way which ascribes to a conscious logic (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). They are required to organise events into a seemingly fluid sequence. One potential problem with this, as highlighted by Becker (1968), is that events which are at odds with the narrative currently being presented may be omitted from its telling, due to their perceived irrelevance or distasteful nature. These stories however could be of vital importance to the researcher and the research. The Free Association Narrative Interview however does not require events to be presented according to a conscious logic. In fact “incomplete, contradictory or confused sentences are just as important as word perfect responses, since both can read as evidence of the character structure of the inherently *defended subject*” (Gadd, 2012: 38). The notion of the defended subject also played a part in the selection of the Free Association Narrative Interview for the present research.

It has been suggested in the available literature that the use of free association allows the researcher to “grapple with the more commonplace phenomenon of human defensiveness” (Gadd, 2012: 38). Hollway and Jefferson argue that “threats to the self create anxiety [and that this] anxiety precipitates defences against the threats it poses to the self” (2001: 19). This defensiveness is interesting as it allows for an understanding of the ways in which the participant, whether consciously or unconsciously, is able to protect their sense of self from external threats. As evidenced in chapter six (see below), for the probationers in the present sample, discussing their past offending behaviour, which they were attempting to move away from, represented a challenge to their conventional morality and fledgling desistance identities. To simply question this behaviour utilising traditional interviewing methods (which are more likely to impose the researchers own concerns upon the participant) could potentially have resulted in these unconscious defence mechanisms negatively impacting upon the data collected. The use of narrative interviews guided by the principles of free association and the idea that there is a *Gestalt* (or “a whole which is more than the sum of its parts (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001: 34)) however, while attempting to mitigate against the negative impacts of this human defensiveness on the stories told, also allowed for an

examination of that defensive behaviour when it arose.

When constructing a narrative interview schedule based upon the principles of free association, several rules should be followed:

- Use open ended questions
- Elicit stories
- Avoid “why” questions
- Follow up using respondents’ ordering and phrasing (2001: 34-36).

It was decided that, as the interviews with probationers were attempting to elicit stories of the probationer’s full involvement in crime including their decision to desist and how they maintain the motivation to do so, the initial question looked to investigate the overall context within which offending behaviour began for the probationer. As such it began with the question “tell me a little about yourself” with prompts prepared around family life, involvement in school, friends and so on should stories of such factors not be forthcoming on their own. This question was constructed in this fashion as it conforms to an important aspect of the Free Association Narrative Interview outlined in the literature in as much as it was an attempt to elicit stories from the probationer from the outset. It was hoped that this opening question (and the backup questions which followed) would do just that. It was also broad enough to elicit stories which may not have seemed immediately relevant to the research. While it was hoped that this first question would elicit stories which would describe the probationers’ lives and the context within which their offending behaviour, and experiences of transition occurred, a series of questions were constructed in order to probe for further information, should this information not be forthcoming off the back of this initial question. These questions were constructed in a similar fashion to the first but around the four categories of “background”, “delinquency/anti - social behaviour”, “probation” and “the future”. The interview schedule also contained a reminder to *“follow up with prompts such as “then what happened?” remembering to use participants own phrasing of events. Remember to refer to the information discussed in the background section if relevant”*.

During the initial planning stage, it was decided that double interviews would be conducted with the probationers in the sample. Although it has been suggested that the story telling in the Free Association Narrative Interview method “stays closer to the actual life-events than methods that elicit explanations” (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000: 32), it is important to

remember (and shall be discussed in more detail in section 5.3.4 below) that the accounts presented in the interview are not transparent accounts, they are still *representations* of events, potentially full of contradictions and omissions on the part of the participant. Although the Free Association Narrative Interview method which influenced the construction of the research tools allows for such contradictions by letting participants discuss whatever comes to mind, reducing the fieldwork to a single interview per participant limits the possibility for such contradictions to be pursued. For this reason, and to allow for further examination of participants' accounts, it was decided that the research would consist of a double interview with each probationer spaced roughly six months apart allowing for examination of accounts and the testing and development of hypotheses on the part of the researcher and for a period of reflection for the respondent (see Hollway and Jefferson, 2000: 43). The six month follow up period was chosen for several reasons, initially owing to the time constraints on the research. By the time I had obtained access to the fieldwork site there was only a period of 8 months left in which to conduct the research. A six-month follow up period allowed for me to conduct double interviews with all probationers in the sample in the time that was available. While there is a potential caveat where the time scale for the research is concerned, particularly given what we know about the zig-zag, long term nature of desistance (see Glaser, 1964), the focus on *initial* desistance transitions arguably circumvents these concerns. It was important that the research attempted to capture the initial decisions and process behind early desistance transitions. It is argued here that, should the research have continued longer than 12 months, the discussion of these initial processes had to the potential to be attributed to hindsight, something which the wider desistance literature has been criticised for (see also chapter 4). The six month follow up period was, arguably, brief enough to ensure that the desistance transitions being undertaken by the probationers in the sample were still in their early stages.

The second interviews with probationers were relatively unstructured. As such there was no standard interview schedule drafted. Each interview was constructed on the basis of information presented in the first interview and knowledge gained about the probationer's community order through discussion with members of his supervisory team. The interviews concerned their efforts to maintain desistance since the first interview, along with any concerns which may have arisen in this regard and a discussion of their desires for the future. The second interview allowed for the opportunity to discuss issues raised during the course of the first which were perhaps unclear or needed clarification, while also providing an

opportunity to test out themes and hypotheses which emerged through the analysis of the first interview stage. The interviews with probation staff were more structured and, as such, the interview schedule was designed to facilitate a discussion about the staff members' past involvement with the service, their current work and their thoughts on the changing nature of practice as a result of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'. The schedule was constructed in this way in an attempt to understand how the staff member perceived change as it was happening.

The design of the interview schedules and research materials involved a back and forth process between me and the probation trust in order to ensure that each question was worded appropriately while ensuring the validity of the tools remained intact. Eventually the research tools were agreed upon by both parties (see appendix D) and attention then moved to the question of sample size. It was initially planned that the research would be conducted with 10 - 15 ex - offenders currently undertaking a community order, along with 10 members of staff. Interestingly, upon initially requesting this number of "ex-offenders", a term used in order to avoid the potentially labelling consequences of assuming the potential participants were still actively offending, I received an email from my contact within the probation trust suggesting that they did not have any *ex-offenders* available as "*we only work with current offenders*", a notion which, of itself is interesting but space constraints do not allow for a full discussion here. Upon requesting this number of participants for the research the probation trust approached each office within their area in order to identify those willing to take part. The result was that only one office was willing to take part in the research and could only guarantee me up to four probationers who could be involved. Four however, was still better than nothing and, once the office (an Intensive Community Order (ICO) office, formerly known as Intensive Alternative to Custody (IAC) a discussion of which can be found in appendix E) had approved my research materials I was invited to present the work at a staff meeting and begin obtaining a sample for the research.

5.3.2 The probationer sample

It was decided early in the design stage of the research that a comparison group of active offenders would not be used. The reasoning behind this was largely due to the understanding of initial transitions evidenced in chapters two and three. As the research was aiming to understand the initial desistance transitions of probationers, it was acknowledged that the probationers in the sample could potentially be both desisting and persisting simultaneously. This is due to the notion that while probationers in the sample may be making tentative movements towards a desisting identity, there was always the potential (due to their status as

liminars among other things) for them to fall back upon iterative forms of agency and reoffend. Therefore assigning “desister” and “persister” categories would not have served any real purpose in the present research. Maruna succinctly highlights this point, suggesting that “most persisters one finds do not seem to really persist, most desisters do not seem to really desist, and, honestly, it is getting harder than ever to find any ‘innocents’” (2001: 43). While a comparison group of active offenders can indeed offer a degree of utility to desistance research with individuals who characterize themselves as “desisting” (see for instance Farrall et al 2014); the fluid nature of desistance transitions (see Glaser, 1964), particularly in their early stages, meant that obtaining a comparison group would be at best problematic.

Although a formal approach process was drafted in order to ensure that probationers were fully aware of the details of the research project before reporting to their office on the day of the interview (see appendix D), the practicalities of utilising such a tool were far from ideal. As such access to probationers was generally sought on the day the probationer in question was due in the office for a different appointment. Such access then, was reliant upon another set of gatekeepers, the probation staff. It has been suggested in the available literature that “central elements of access are gatekeepers. These people can help or hinder research depending upon their personal thoughts on the validity of the research and its value, as well as their approach to the welfare of the people under their charge” (Reeves, 2010: 317). While it is important to note that the staff in the ICO office were extremely welcoming and particularly forthcoming with potential participants to take part in the research (discussed in more detail below), it was imperative that I maintained a positive working relationship with them, not only because without it, access to potential participants may become more restricted but also out of an acknowledgement that access to the ICO office to conduct the research fieldwork was a privilege, not a right. As such, it was important that once an impression had been made, this impression was maintained. Trulson et al (2004: 465) note a series of “little things” which allow for the maintenance of a successful and productive working relationship between a researcher and their gatekeepers, some of which (“be on time”, “show up regularly and at the same time”, “show up when it’s convenient for them, not you” and “stay out of the way”) were employed during the course of the current fieldwork.

The facilitation of a successful working relationship between the probation staff and I meant that, should probationers come in that I wanted to talk to, if at all possible the probation staff would accommodate my request. There were also instances where probation staff would

approach me suggesting that a certain probationer was in later on that day who might be useful for my research and I was welcome to talk to them. As such, although four probationers were initially offered for the research, during the course of the first round of interviews the target of 15 probationers stated in the research design was reached within a couple of months. It was decided however upon analysis of the initial pilot interviews (discussed in more detail below), along with an analysis of similar research in the field (see for instance King, 2013a) that the research could benefit from a few extra probationers in the sample. Therefore an extra three probationers recruited to take part, making the final total for the first round of interviews consist of 18 male probationers aged 18-25 (see appendix F), with interviews lasting between 40 and 90 minutes. For the sake of clarity however, it is important to stress that there was not a 100% success rate for the first round of interviews. A total of 20 probationers were approached to take part in the research, it was consistent with other research in the area (see King, 2013a) and also to ensure that sufficient data was collected in order to answer the research questions. This however was a reflexive process and, should the data not have been as rich as hoped, there was the potential for more probationers to be recruited for the research. Of the 20 that were approached to take part, two probationers declined representing a 90% success rate for the first phase of interviews.

It should be noted at this point that, as part of their involvement in the research, probationers in the sample were given payment in the form of a £10 high street voucher upon completion of the second interview. While there are some concerns with regards to payment for involvement jeopardising the free will of the individual to be involved in the research (see Wertheimer and Miller, 2007), it was suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2000: 84) that “for people who were often unemployed or at least very hard up, remuneration for their time was important, and a mark of our respect for their participation”. While Jacques and Wright (2008: 29) argue that “although the payments involved are often relatively modest, they are important to criminals, as the idea of doing something for nothing is anathema to many of them”. Not only this, but also the research design and briefing before the commencement of each interview stressed the idea that participants were free to terminate their involvement at any stage during the course of the research. This is evident in the fact that of the 18 probationers who initially took part in the interview, only 14 returned for the second interview, representing a 33% attrition rate. Due to financial constraints on the research, the probation staff in the sample were not provided with reward vouchers for their participation.

5.3.2.1 Interviewing probationers, initial failings

Once access had been granted to the fieldwork site the research tools needed to be piloted in order to ensure they were able to collect the data required for the research. It was decided that, as I was interviewing probationers on an ad hoc basis when they reported to the ICO, I would pilot the narrative interview on the first two probationers in the sample and then analyse the data collected in order to ensure the methods were appropriate. This proved to be a fruitful exercise as these two interviews lasted roughly 20 minutes each, when it was initially anticipated that each interview would last somewhere between 40 minutes to an hour or longer. These interviews were transcribed and analysed and, upon this analysis, it became apparent that while the tools were eliciting the stories that they were designed to, I was stifling the process by not allowing the participant in question to pause and consider the stories they were telling me. Each pause by the participant was met by me asking the next prompt on my interview schedule and, as such, cutting the probationers story off mid flow. While admittedly this was a frustrating discovery it did allow for a degree of reflexive practice in the research. While I had constructed the research tools in line with a detailed analysis of the available research literature, it was important to remember that the research literature, and the research tools I had designed in line with them, were meant to be *facilitative* of the research process. Yet, somewhat interestingly, this commitment to the literature, following the guidelines for interviewing and maintaining access set out by Hollway and Jefferson (2000) and Trulson et al (2004: 465), while ensuring I was doing all the things required of me according to this literature, was in essence removing me from the moment of the interview itself.

Once I had identified this issue I ensured that I allowed the probationers in the sample time to process the information they were communicating to me and tried, wherever possible, to avoid interjecting in the stories they were providing, it was, after all, their story to tell. It was important during the remainder of the interviews for the fieldwork, then, that my involvement in the interview should be minimal. Although I asked the initial question and probed where necessary, it was important to ensure that the majority of the talk was provided by the participant. Giving them time to formulate their version of events, which sometimes required only a two or three second pause, allowed for considerably more nuanced and detailed stories to be forthcoming than the initial pilot interviews allowed for. Indeed, the available interdisciplinary literature on the analysis of narrative interviews suggests that the pauses in narrative interviews can be just as illuminating as the stories told and that, as narrative

interviewers, we should be “taking into account the rhythms of the sentences, the pauses, non-verbal expressions (e.g. sighs), the use of stories that are seemingly unrelated to the researcher’s questions and ultimately how participants tell their stories” (Wiles et al, 2005: 94), as this, in relation to the current research, would allow for a much richer understanding of the social contexts and rhythms within which these burgeoning desistance transitions begin to take shape, along with the ways in which disruptions to these rhythms impact upon them.

Indeed, the length of the interviews for the remainder of the sample improved considerably, with the shortest interview lasting 45 minutes and the longest lasting close to two hours. While there are undeniable self-selection issues to consider in relation to the time differences for each interview, with some participants simply being more forthcoming than others, the value of waiting and allowing research participants to consider their stories needs to be taken into account. While the guidelines for narrative interviewing laid out in the available literature are particularly useful in designing the research, the value of silence on the part of the researcher in the narrative interview, despite its value, has been relatively overlooked.

5.3.2.2 A question of self-selection?

An issue, which needs to be considered in relation to the sample obtained for the research concerns the notion of self-selection of the probationers in the sample. As discussed above, probationers were selected for interview based upon those that were in on the days I was permitted to be present in the probation office. As such the sample was confined to those who had appointments on those days as generally, when a probationer reported to the office in a state of crisis, I was unable to speak to them. While this presented an issue with regard to sample selection, the location of the interview, and the gatekeepers for the research, also impacted upon the selection of the probationer sample in the research. Firstly, as the research was being conducted within a probation office, and probationers were being approached to take part as they reported in, the probationer sample only consisted of those who were frequently attending appointments and therefore complying with their orders. This is somewhat linked to the second issue concerning the selection of the sample. During the course of the fieldwork I was discussing the research with a member of staff in the probation office who informed me that they had noticed I was being given all the “good lads” to talk to. Upon enquiring further it was evident that the probationers who had taken part in the research up to that point had been almost model probationers, fully complying with their probation orders. While this may be perceived as beneficial in a study about desistance as they,

arguably, are the ones that are working hardest towards that goal, for the sake of academic rigour I asked whether it would be possible for me to interview a couple of the “bad ones” at some point. This is not to suggest that the “bad” probationers in the sample were markedly different from the probationers who had taken part in the research up until that point, rather that they simply had previous experience of non-compliance and even breach of their community order which, if anything, is indicative of the notion of desistance as a maintenance process, discussed in chapter two, and subsequently allowed for a better understanding of the contextual issues surrounding desistance and recidivism. It also facilitated a wider discussion of the impact of change upon its maintenance. It should also be noted that the issue of self-selection was also evident for the probation staff recruited to take part in the interview (discussed in more detail below).

5.3.3 Talking to Probation staff

While the access to probationers once in the fieldwork office was, perhaps, reasonably straightforward, access to probation staff to participate in the research was somewhat more complicated. It was decided early on in the course of the fieldwork that approaching probation staff to be involved in the research would not begin until I had been present in the office for a few weeks, as this allowed me to build a working relationship with staff and allow them to be more sure of my intentions. As part of their discussion of “breaking in” to the research setting, Trulson et al (2004: 457) suggest that “the mere presence of a researcher also has unintended consequences that can make their presence feared even more by correctional administrators. For example, the presence of a researcher often leads to misperceived or heightened expectations by both staff and [offenders], no matter how much the researcher tries to allay concerns. Staff may feel that the presence of the researcher constitutes a form of monitoring of their behaviour or quality of their work. The time period in which the research was being conducted should also not be forgotten here. The research was being undertaken at a time of significant uncertainty for the probation service, with some (as discussed above) suggesting that the changes that were imminent at the time of the fieldwork, signalled the “end of probation” (Guilfoyle, 2013). Not to mention the fact that the ICO office in which the research was being conducted was to become a CRC and therefore there were questions surrounding job stability for all probation contracted staff in the office. As such, there was a very real chance that probation staff would not feel particularly enamoured toward an unknown researcher coming in and asking questions. Not only this, but it should also be remembered that the fieldwork office was a working probation office, with a

constant influx of probationers reporting for appointments or reporting unannounced in a state of “crisis” (see chapters 7 and 8), meaning that finding the time to sit down for an interview which could last anything up to an hour was at best problematic, at worst almost impossible. In fact, one particular interview with a probation service officer needed to be undertaken in three separate blocks as she was constantly required to attend to the needs of her probationers who reported to the office either early, or unannounced.

As to be expected, not all members of staff wanted to be involved in the research. Indeed, some treated the mere presence of my voice recorder with suspicion and needed to be reassured that it was in fact turned off. Others were happy to be involved in the research process and, as their involvement in the research only consisted of one interview, were happy for me to seek clarification on points of interest throughout the fieldwork period. This is not to suggest however that the members of staff who did not actively want to be involved in the research were unhelpful, in fact it was completely the opposite as they allowed me access to their probationers and were happy to discuss the general running of the office with me, just not officially. The target of 10 probation staff members to take part in the research was met, with each interview lasting between 40 minutes and one hour. While the 10 probation staff involved in the research represented a 100% success rate in terms of recruitment, the issue of self-selection needs to be acknowledged here.

As suggested above there were certain members of the ICO team who treated my presence in the office with a degree of suspicion and, while not always verbally, expressed their desire to avoid being involved in the research. When recruitment of probation staff for the fieldwork was being conducted, I remained mindful of these attitudes and therefore only approached those who seemed receptive to the research project. While there is the possibility that recruiting participants to take part in the research in this way had the potential to result in certain insights being missed, as the sample of the ICO staff contained all different grades (senior management, POs, PSOs and administrative staff), the sample remained representative of the workers in the office as a whole.

5.3.4 The role of reflexivity

It has been suggested that “the interview is so integral to social research, its prime currency, talk, is so central to our social lives, that its complexity as a social interaction can sometimes be forgotten or obscured” (Jones, 1985: 45). It has also been noted how, during the course of research, it is sometimes assumed that “what a person said in an interview context [gives the

researcher] direct access to their subjectivity and lived experiences” (Mauthner and Doucet 2003: 423). In order to avoid this, the research literature suggests the importance of remembering that the interview, and the accounts presented within it, are *socially constructed* within the context of the interview itself. Atkinson and Delmont suggest that “when social scientists collect narratives, whether life histories, biographies, myths, atrocity stories, jokes or whatever, they need to focus on the social and cultural context in which such tales are told, and to recognise that all cultures or sub cultures have narrative conventions” (2006: 165) and that “it is a common failing, for instance, to imply that informants voices speak for themselves, that personal biographical materials provide privileged means of access to informants’ personal experiences, or their sources of self-identity” (p.166). This is not to suggest that participants in research actively lie about their behaviour, indeed the available research suggests the opposite (Reissman, 2000); simply that the accounts provided in social research are constructed in accordance with the social context in which the account is being given. Schuman suggests that “too much can be inferred from answers taken at face value to questions of dubious merit [...] all answers depend upon the way a question is formulated. Language is not a clean logical tool like mathematics that we can use with precision [...] as if this complexity isn’t enough, our answers are also influenced [*inter alia*] by who asks the questions” (1982: 2). Such issues can be found in the desistance research literature which utilises narrative methods. Maruna (2001: 41) for instance, highlights the fact that “self-stories represent personal outlooks and ‘theories of reality’, not necessarily some objective reality” and that the narrative is a continuously changing entity but provides little in the way of reflexivity into the way these issues may impact upon the research findings.

These issues have also been discussed in relation to the use of autobiographical accounts in social research. It has been suggested that, “autobiographical accounts are no more ‘authentic’ than other modes of representation; a narrative of a personal experience is not a clear route into ‘the truth’ [if a singular ‘truth’ in fact exists], either about reported events, or of the tellers private experience” (Atkinson and Delmont, 2006: 166) and that “when we read autobiography [...] we are always aware that the author is telling us only part of the story, that he has selected his material so as to present us with the picture of himself he would prefer us to have and that *he may have ignored what would be trivial or distasteful to him, though of great interest to us*” (Becker, 1968: vi *emphasis added*).

This final point made by Becker is one which needs further consideration. It has been

suggested that “a narrative can be understood to organize a sequence of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood in relation to that whole” (Elliot, 2008: 3). Utilising an autobiographical method requires the participant to present their stories in a way which ascribes to a conscious logic (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). They are required to organise events into a seemingly fluid sequence. One potential problem with this, as highlighted by Becker (1968), is that events which are at odds with the narrative currently being presented may be omitted from its telling, due to their perceived irrelevance or distasteful nature. These stories however could be of vital importance to the researcher and the research. For the purposes of the present research, the ways in which negative events were discussed, or those which were offset from the main narrative being presented, allowed for a more detailed analysis of the strategies with which probationers in the sample maintained their fledgling desisting identities. While I am under no illusions that the probationers in the sample told me everything, what they did tell me, and the style of its telling, allowed for a more detailed understanding of the contextual nature of desistance and how certain rhythms and routines came into being. Without this reflexivity in the research process, such notions may have been overlooked.

Another issue which needed to be considered, or at the very least acknowledged, before the fieldwork for the current research could begin, concerned the power relations implicit within the interview setting. The interviews took place within the probationer’s local office; usually in the very rooms probationers had meetings with members of their supervisory team. As such, the position I adopted as a formal researcher asking them questions about their lives, no matter how informal the interview attempted to be, was inescapably similar to that of the probationer’s supervisory experience. Hydén (2008: 11) notes such a position in her account of undertaking narrative research with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, suggesting that “since I as a researcher held a culturally higher valued position and they as battered women or abusive men were asked to tell me about self-experiences that were culturally of low value, our power relation was not as different from the one of social worker-client as I first thought”. In fact, during the course of one interview for the current research, a probationer suggested that his experience of probation was “*all the same, just some random guy talking to you, asking you mad questions, kind of like this *laughs**” (see also Hydén, 2013).

This is not to suggest that such power relations only had the potential to be present in the interviews conducted with probationers, there were also power dynamics between the

researcher and the probation staff, which needed to be acknowledged. As mentioned above the research was conducted in the probation staff's place of work, usually in the very rooms they supervised their probationers. In this instance however, instead of asking questions they were the ones answering them. Not only this, but they were discussing their work and practice, in the same arena in which this practice is undertaken. Also, as the probation trust and senior management had approved the research, there was the potential for the probation staff to see the research as being linked with the managerial hierarchy of the probation office. This had the potential to impact upon the power relations between the researcher and the researched, while also jeopardising the independence of the researcher (see Kemshall, 2000). These power relations however were not unilateral, the probation staff in the sample were the ones who could provide probationers for me to talk to, and I was dependent upon their support in order to complete the fieldwork, it was therefore vital to keep them on side. Finally, the context of the fieldwork office and the characteristics of the interviewer also need to be considered as these also had the potential to impact upon the data collected for the research. As mentioned above (and in appendix E), the ICO office worked with male offenders between the ages of 18-25. The research was conducted by a 26 year old male and, as such, demographically at least, there was little difference between the offenders probation staff interacted with on a daily basis, and the researcher (see also Catania, 1996). While this could potentially have been an advantage for my discussions with probationers in the sample (indeed, one probationer suggested I was "sound" and was the kind of person he would go for a drink with), this had the potential to be somewhat of a disadvantage for my discussions with probation staff.

Such issues however are not necessarily possible to circumvent throughout the research process. Indeed it is argued here that attempts at circumvention are not always necessary. Instead it is simply important to remember that "human beings present different personae in different situations, to different audiences" (Jones, 1985: 50), and that participants "do not 'reveal' an essential self as much as they perform a preferred self" (Reissman 2000: 12) meaning that the accounts presented in the research are simply "representations of events" (Hubbard, 2000: 5.3). Indeed, Sandelowski suggests that "located in a hermeneutic circle of (re)interpretation, narratives with common story elements can be reasonably expected to change from telling to telling, making the idea of empirically validating them for consistency or stability completely alien to the concept of narrative truth" (1991: 165). Indeed, there are instances throughout the collected data (discussed in more detail in both chapter 6 and

chapter 7) whereby the discussion of the processes by which the probationers in the sample facilitated their desistance transitions seemed largely incongruous with what we know about desistance from crime or even from the initial trajectory of the story being told. It was only once these activities were contextualized within the individual's daily routines and past experiences that I was able to understand how such processes were able to support and sustain this attitude, for individuals on the threshold of change, in the face of the contextual difficulties they faced.

It is this last point about narratives seemingly going against what we know about desistance that I wish to pause upon to conclude this section. It is important to note that I did not enter this project with any experience of working in probation practice. My understanding of desistance from crime and the ways in which the probation service operated came from purely academic channels. As such there was somewhat of a disconnect between how I understood certain practices and ideas to work in theory, and the lived experience of these practices and ideas in reality. It was important to remain mindful of the lessons I had taken from the available literature and my research training in order to ensure I was able to get the most out of the research design, but it was also vital that I engaged with the lived experiences of the practices being undertaken in the fieldwork setting as this, after all, was what I wanted to investigate. The use of the research diary allowed me to reflect upon my position within the fieldwork site and ensure wherever possible that any preconceptions brought about through educational training, were acknowledged throughout the process. It was important to embrace the challenges posed to any preconceptions developed through academic training as this would allow for a more thorough understanding of the *lived experience* of initial desistance transitions and being "on probation". This reflexive process was evident throughout the data collection period (see above discussion).

5.4 Ethical Considerations

When conducting research with human participants there are ethical considerations which need to be taken into account when designing the research. The following discussion will highlight the main ethical considerations taken into account for the current research. The first of which concerns the notion of informed consent. Participants were required to provide their fully informed consent before they could participate in the research. The information sheet and the consent form (see appendix D) were created line with a template offered by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee and provided all the information participants required in order to provide their fully informed consent to participate in the

research.

A second ethical consideration which needed to be taken into account involved the disclosure and management of potentially sensitive information. Such disclosure has the potential to impact on the ex-offender participants, probation officer participants and the researcher himself. While participants were free to discuss whatever comes to mind during the interview process, given the sensitive nature of the interview topics (their previous criminal involvement and factors in their life which help them maintain desistance from crime), there was the potential for sensitive information to be disclosed to the researcher. Although there was limited potential for harm in this instance as, where evident, the topic had been introduced by the participant themselves (indeed this is one of the reasons the Free Association Narrative Interview Method was chosen), it was important to stress throughout the research, before the interview took place and at the final de-briefing stage that limited confidentiality of information would be maintained throughout the research process (as any disclosure of proposed criminal activity would need to be reported to their supervisory team) and the participant had the right to refuse to offer information and terminate their involvement in the research at any time.

Secondly with regards to the probation staff taking part in the research, as it asks for their opinions of the system in which participants work, there was the potential for a conflict of interests to arise in the interview process. During the design of the consent form and the information sheet (as discussed in the above paragraph) the confidential nature of the research was stressed. The interview schedule for probation staff had also been designed in a way to avoid unnecessary probing, allowing the participants to discuss only that which they felt comfortable with.

In order to maintain the anonymity of respondents each participant was given a unique identification number and pseudonym upon their initial recruitment into the study which was subsequently used in all documents relating to that participant. All the information presented by that participant was stored under that particular identification number on an encrypted personal computer. A separate encrypted file containing the identification number and a created pseudonym was also created. Every effort was made to avoid the use of any identifiable information. No hard copies of any information collected for the research were kept longer than necessary. All consent forms and pro-formas were electronically scanned and encrypted on the same personal computer. Once this process was complete, all hard

copies were destroyed. All the interviews conducted as part of the fieldwork were electronically recorded on site, under the pseudonym created for each participant (discussed above). Upon completion of the interview *and before leaving the research site*, the audio file was transferred onto the personal computer utilised for the research and encrypted accordingly. The information was also be backed up onto an encrypted portable data storage device (USB pen drive) and held separately from the PC. Once the data transfer has been completed (and checked to ensure the transfer has been successful), the original recording was deleted. Finally, while procedures were put in place in preparation for the potential of disclosure of any planned criminal activity, such disclosure did not occur during the course of the fieldwork, arguably due to the setting in which the interviews were conducted, and so such procedures were not required.

5.5 Data Analysis

As the fieldwork involved the collection of two interviews from the probationers in the sample, with the second interview leading on from the first, it was important to ensure that the analysis of the first interviews was undertaken before the commencement of the second. Although this analysis consisted of a cursory initial coding in order to establish emerging themes which may dictate the direction of the second interview, this coding impacted upon the full analysis of the data once collection had been completed. Upon completion of the fieldwork process the data was fully analysed taking influence from a form of grounded theory known as the constant comparison method. This method, defined loosely by Ragin (1994: 93) as “any systematic examination of similarities that seeks to develop concepts or ideas”, was developed by Glaser (1965: 437) who suggests that “the constant comparison method is designed to aid analysts with [...] abilities in generating a theory which is integrated, consistent, plausible [and] close to the data”. As the research was looking to identify the ways in which desistance is maintained within the context of the changes introduced into the probation service as a result of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', it seemed necessary to adopt a method of analysis which allowed for the emergence of a theory of the impact of change on the maintenance of desistance. In line with research conducted by Hewitt-Taylor (2001: 40) “data analysis was inductive, as the study sought to promote understanding of individual perceptions, not prove a preconceived theory. Codes were, therefore generated from the data, rather than predetermined”. The stages of the constant comparison method defined by Glaser (1965) were followed to construct the analysis. Once the data had been collected, it was coded by the sentence, paragraph or section depending on

the content, this code “represented a theme or idea with which each part of the data was associated” (Hewitt-Taylor 2001: 39). So, for instance, a discussion from one probationer concerning the fact that they left school with no qualifications was coded under the category “no qualifications”. Whenever another similar story was identified, before it was coded within the same category, it was interrogated against the other codes which were already present within said category to ensure the code was accurate. If the code was slightly at odds with the previous code, a new code was created to accommodate it. Once all of the data had been coded, these codes were reduced, meaning that “a higher level, *smaller* set of concepts based on discovering underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties, might occur to the analyst by which to write the theory, hence, delimiting its terminology and text” (Glaser, 1965: 441). To continue with the “no qualifications” example from earlier, the category “no qualifications” was reduced alongside other categories concerning a lack of vocational qualifications into the final category of “lacking human capital”, which was a major theme throughout the research findings. The categories identified after the completion of such reduction, formed the skeleton of the following three chapters and the subsequent theoretical position outlined in chapter 9, concerning the ability of probationers to maintain desistance transitions within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'.

As discussed above, the development of the current research project was born out of academic interest. Indeed while this had implications for the data collection process (discussed above) it also had implications in the analysis stage of the research. It was important to ensure from the outset of the coding stage that my pre-existing knowledge of desistance literature did not influence the identification of codes. There were several factors and strategies which were put in place to protect the codes from any preconceived ideas as much as possible. Firstly an engagement with the grounded theory literature provided a series of reflexive questions which I could utilise to interrogate my interrogation of the literature. Charmaz for instance encourages researchers to ask themselves the following questions: “How does my coding reflect the incident or described experience?; Do my analytic constructions begin from this point?; Have I created clear evident connections between the data and my codes?; Have I guarded against re-writing – and therefore recasting – the studied experience into a lifeless language that better fits our academic and bureaucratic worlds than those of our participants?” (2006: 69). These questions were used after each round of coding to ensure wherever possible that I was not imposing my own meaning frames and

preconceived notions upon the data. Whenever I was unsure as to whether I was doing this successfully I would approach my supervisors with the data and request guidance. As Charmaz suggests “a fine line exists between interpreting data and imposing a pre-existing frame on it” (2006: 68). It was important to make sure I stayed on the right side of that line throughout the coding process.

As inductive reasoning was utilised during the data analysis phase, it was not only the main themes which emerged from the research, but also the focus of the research that shifted slightly as a result of the data that had been collected. For instance, the initial aim of the research was to analyse the extent to which 'Transforming Rehabilitation' and subsequent probation supervision during its implementation, impacted upon the desistance transitions of the probationers in the sample. Upon analysis of the data however, and perhaps slightly in line with Farrall (2002) and King (2014), probation supervision did not dominate the transitional accounts of probationers in the sample. While being on probation was certainly part of their daily rhythms and routines (for some a big part), there were also other contextual issues which came into play throughout the version of events they were presenting. It was important then to locate their discussion of probation supervision within the wider contexts that shaped their daily lives. It was recognised that searching for a *direct* link between the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' and the successful maintenance of early desistance for probationers was perhaps a little naïve, particularly as the majority of the probationers in the sample had never heard of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' in the first place (a point discussed in more detail in the conclusion to this thesis). Instead it was important to analyse how a disruption in their daily routine, brought about through changing supervision arrangements as a result of the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' influenced their efforts to maintain a fledgling desisting identity. As such, the ontology of the research shifted from an exploration of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' to that of desistance transitions and the context within which these transitions are enacted.

5.6 Conclusion

The above chapter has discussed the theoretical underpinnings behind the methods utilised for the current research project. The initial rationale behind the development of the research was discussed and it was argued that the adoption of a particular epistemological leaning impacted upon the development of the methods that would be used to conduct the research. The narrative interview was then discussed as the primary method utilised in the research. A discussion surrounding the design of the initial research tools was then provided along with

an account of the tentative steps made towards obtaining access to a criminal justice organisation and the (perhaps unconventional), methods utilised to achieve such access. A discussion of the ways in which the fieldwork was undertaken was provided along with the difficulties experienced with regards to recruiting probation staff to take part in the research and issues surrounding the notion of self-selection. A discussion of the data analysis techniques was also provided. The importance of reflexivity in the research process was also addressed, particularly concerning the need to be aware of the co-production of knowledge in the interview setting between the participant and the researcher, the role of power relations between these two and the impact of such factors on the narratives provided.

In summary, the research in question utilised double narrative interviews with 18 male offenders between the ages of 18 to 25 on an Intensive Community Order, a number which was reduced to 14 for the second interview through attrition. Semi-structured interviews were also completed with 10 members of probation staff, including management, probation officers, probation service officers, mentors and administrative staff. These methods were supplemented by the collection of a research diary documenting events and thoughts for the duration of the fieldwork process and “end-data” collected for all probationers who took part in the research. The data was analysed taking influence from a form of grounded theory known as the constant comparison method which allowed for the inductive development of categories which structured the following three chapters and allowed for the development of an answer to the questions: “how do probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?” and “to what extent does the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?” The remainder of this report is devoted to the findings of the research, and the answering of these questions.

Chapter 6. The "Decision to Desist": Individual Agency and Discursive tools of Desistance

6.1 Introduction

In chapter 4 it was suggested that it was time for research on desistance transitions to investigate in more detail the transitional state itself, and the processes and behaviours which constitute it, as key factors in the desistance process. Indeed, the youth transitions literature offered a degree of utility in the sense that examining how desisters traverse numerous liminalities allowed for a more detailed understanding of the contextual base that could potentially inform initial desistance transitions. As part of their discussion of the transition to adulthood, Van Gennep (1960) identified three “rites of passage”; Separation, Margin (or liminality) and Aggregation. While aggregation, whereby the subject is once again stable within a new social structure is perhaps more indicative of late stage secondary desistance; the first two, ‘separation’ and ‘margin’ are evident within the narratives of individuals evidencing tentative steps towards desistance. The following chapter shall discuss the notion of separation as an agentic process. It is suggested that probationers making burgeoning transitions towards desistance from crime *actively* sought to distinguish between their offending past and their non-offending present (and future) and adopted a range of discursive and behavioural tools in order to support this transition.

Shapland and Bottoms (2011: 276) assert the notion that the journey towards desistance is “agentially driven”. Indeed, although social structures and changes in the probation services as a result of the TR reforms (discussed in more detail in the following two chapters) played a role in *facilitating* (or inhibiting) agency within the probationer, the ability to successfully maintain desistance from crime is, ultimately, up to the probationers themselves (see Giordano et al, 2002 and their theory of cognitive transformation and Rex, 1999). The position evident in the data collected for the current research and therefore adopted in this chapter follows that of Adams (1997: 334), who suggests that “substantial and lasting changes in criminal behaviour rarely come about only as a result of passive experience, and such changes are best conceptualised as the outcome of a process that involves significant participation by the offender, who, in many respects, acts as his own change agent”. Discussions surrounding the role of agency in the desistance process have become increasingly centred on the notion that agency involves an individual orienting themselves

towards a valued future self that is fundamentally different from their criminal past (see Healy 2014; King, 2012, 2014). Indeed Rumgay (2004: 414) identified the fact that “the importance of an altered self-concept emerges from the literature as fundamental to the initiation of reform efforts”. For Paternoster and Bushway (2007: 1105), “human agency [...] is expressed through this act of intentional self-change”. Not only is such self-change evidence of agentic action, it is also supported by it, with research suggesting that desistance narratives which possess strong agentic themes are more likely to achieve a desired future self than those without (Healy, 2013).

6.2 The Decision to Desist

Agentic themes were evident throughout the desistance narratives of the probationer sample in the current research as was indicated at first through participants self-reporting that *they* had made the decision to desist. For instance, when asked if he saw himself getting into trouble again, Stephen (19) who was serving an ICO for a non-dwelling burglary, was categorical in his belief that he would “*never get in trouble again*”. Stephen, a first time offender, presented as highly confident in his ability to desist. For the more prolific offenders in the sample, such as Tony, who by the age of 24 had amassed 28 convictions, their decision to desist was couched, somewhat interestingly given the interview was taking place in a probation office, in a discussion of their previous success at doing so:

“I don't see myself getting in trouble again, this is the first, this thing what I am here for now this is the first thing I have been in trouble for since I got out of jail and I have been out of jail now for three years you know what I mean? I have not been in trouble once before this and I won't be in trouble again after this.” (Tony, 24)

At the time of writing, both Stephen and Tony have completed their probation orders and had not been in contact with the criminal justice system since. Such confidence in one's ability to desist has been highlighted as a “crucial mediating factor in successful desistance” (Farrall et al, 2011: 219; see also Burnett, 1992 and Farrall, 2002), with others arguing that “an initial openness to change appears to be a minimal starting point in the move to a more conforming way of life” (Giordano, 2014: 49). This is not to suggest that once a decision to desist by the probationer has been made, desistance will simply follow on as a matter of course. To do so would be to ascribe to the “strong subjective model” of desistance proposed by LeBel et al

(2008: 138) whereby “one need only to decide to change and envision a new identity for oneself in order to go straight” and the events surrounding this decision are largely unrelated. Such a position presents offenders as, “super agents” in the words of Farrall and Bowling (1999: 258), which, while not evident in the current sample (discussed in more detail below), also represents a “narrow interpretation of agency” (Healy, 2013: 560) by failing to take into account the role of social contexts and structures in the facilitation of individual agency. Instead it should be considered that the decision to desist by the probationers in the sample represents burgeoning agentic potential which needed to be developed and maintained within the social contexts in which desistance transitions are being attempted. The difficulty with this for the probationers in the current research is that their social contexts (social networks, neighbourhoods, family backgrounds etc.) were noted as contributing factors to the offending behaviour they were attempting to break away from.

For the more prolific probationers in the sample, this “projective” agency (or “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998:971)) could be disrupted through involvement in a social context which caused participants to draw on “iterative” forms of agency (or “the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action (ibid)). Jason for instance, a 21 year old probationer with 15 separate convictions, noted how although his projective agency caused him to aspire towards staying out of trouble, his previous involvement in gangs meant that, should someone affront him, he was likely to draw on iterative forms of agency, causing him to reoffend.

Yeah, defo, 100% man [he'll stay out of trouble]. I think maybe yeah, I can't say I am going to stay out of trouble, I am not going to get arrested for nothing like burglary or anything yeah? But if I bump into someone that doesn't like me or has a problem with me obviously I am going to fight with them. I am not going to just, other than that nah I am not going to go to jail for burglary or nothing like that, definitely not. (Jason, 21)

The point to be made here is that while motivation to desist for the probationers in the sample represented burgeoning agentic action, the starting point on the road to desistance, Healy (2013: 567) argues that “motivation by itself is not sufficient for desistance”. This motivation needs to be supported by something. It should also be remembered that by enacting an initial

motivation to desist, probationers began actively separating themselves from their previous social context but were unable (for numerous reasons discussed in chapter seven) to fully integrate themselves into the roles and behaviours that formed part of their future self. Such liminality (as discussed above and in chapter 4) provided a further obstacle to desistance which needed to be navigated by probationers in order to build upon their initial decision to desist.

6.2.1 Desistance transitions and liminality

In line with the wider desistance research, the openness to desist expressed by the sample was indicative of a changing identity, from an individual who commits criminal acts, to one who does not (see Maruna, 2001; Giordano et al, 2002 and Vaughan, 2007). The desisting narratives given by the research participants, including where they see themselves now and in the future, were fundamentally different from how they saw their past and suggested the formation of an identity which was incompatible with involvement in criminal activity (see Giordano et al, 2002 and their theory of cognitive transformation). The difficulty here however lies in the fact that by altering this identity, the probationers in the sample, were actively giving up “something they were accustomed to [and/or] successful in” (Barry, 2010b: 133).

For the majority of participants in the study, the decision to desist involved the *individual* making the transition from being an individual who is open to committing offences, to one who is not. Indeed, the narrative accounts provided by the sample are littered with phrases suggesting participants were traversing a path to desistance (“*I’m on the right path*” “*I’m going in the right direction, I just need to keep it up*”). In order to go in the right direction however, participants were required to identify and move away from what they considered to be the “wrong path”. Such a move meant participants entered what is known in the youth transitions literature as the “liminal period” (or limbo) between leaving one social context and joining another. Although it was mentioned in chapter 4, for the sake of clarity, Turner (1969: 94) states that “during the intervening ‘liminal’ period, the characteristics of the ritual subject [...] are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state”. Participants in the study had, by the time of the first interview, spent an average of 8 years in the criminal justice system. For most, it was all they knew. By making an initial decision to desist probationers were moving away from past behaviour (i.e. offending) which they now began to feel incompatible with, towards a future (pro-social) self they currently have little or nothing in common with. As such, and as

discussed in chapter 4, the probationers in the sample were synonymous with what Healy (2014:878) referred to as “liminal desisters”. In order to avoid falling back on iterative forms of agency, and reoffending, or returning to social environments/contexts which facilitated their previous offending; probationers adopted a range of practical and discursive tools to ensure the security of their burgeoning transitions towards desistance. These tools could be considered, in line with existential sociology, to be a protective cocoon (to borrow from Giddens, 1991) “which allows individuals to deal with life on a daily basis and protect the inner self they know from exposure to outside scrutiny. This “veil” separates self from those things that are external and therefore not self, in this manner providing [for some] the most basic sense of ontological security [or “comfort” (Noble (2005))” (Brown, 2000: 63). The notion of ontological security shall be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

6.3 Discursive tools of Desistance

Before going on to discuss the discursive tools that probationers utilised in order to distance themselves from their offending past it is important first to recognise a caveat when conducting narrative interviews with “defended subjects” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), namely the power relations at play in the interview process. It must be remembered that the majority of the participants had spent the majority of their adolescence in contact with the criminal justice system, either with the Youth Offending Team (YOT), in prison or through some form of community supervision; this in turn will have impacted upon the narrative they provided during the course of the interview. Hydén (2013: 802) argued that “a life largely characterised by subordination [...] has most likely involved difficulties in the process of taking the world and making it their own [therefore] what the researcher can expect to hear is the echo of the dominant person’s words in the interviewees talk”. Probationers who have spent the majority of their adolescence in the criminal justice system may well have learnt to “talk the talk” and so their discussion may in fact be narratives of “situational compliance” (Bottoms, 2013) than “true desistance” (should such a notion exist). A more detailed discussion of situational compliance and the construction of desistance narratives is provided below.

In order to sustain the development of a pro-social identity, participants adopted a range of discursive tools which, while orienting them towards their desired future self, also allowed them to protect themselves from the “statuslessness” (Turner, 1969: 97) often attributed to being in a liminal state. The discursive tools utilised by the majority of the probationers in the sample surrounded being a “grown up” and not being a “criminal”. Techniques of

neutralization were also utilised to mitigate against the stigma attached to the offences in question.

6.3.1 Being a “grown up”

As discussed in chapter 3, the notion that crime declines with age is one of the few agreed upon notions within criminology, with Goring (1913) suggesting that the link between age and crime was, in essence, a “law of nature”. The available evidence suggests that “little or nothing has happened to Goring’s law of nature since he discovered it – in fact, the shape of form of the [age-crime] distribution has remained virtually unchanged for about 150 years” (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:124). While other factors, namely involvement in the “big structures” identified in chapter 3 such as employment (Farrall et al, 2010), relationship formation (Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998) and parenthood (Giordano et al, 2011) have been associated with age in order to understand how age and desistance are linked, few factors are able to predict a decline in criminal propensity with similar accuracy than age itself. It was suggested in chapter 4 that there is some utility in looking at the transitional properties of age in society and that desistance can be seen to work alongside the transitions into adulthood (Barry, 2006). A notion that was highly evident in the current sample.

Given the fact that the “age of onset” for the sample was just over 13, the majority of the offences carried out by those involved in the research were during adolescence. This is a trend that is evidenced in the wider literature along with the well-known “age crime curve” (discussed in chapter three and appendix A). It is not surprising then, that the data suggests that the majority of participants put their desistance down, in part, to notions of maturational reform (Glueck and Glueck, 1930; 1937; 1943)

“You know when you get older you calm down. So when I was 17/16 everyone was just lively you know what I mean stuff like that but erm. It is different now because I am older now. [...] Now I am 21 I just prefer to go out now I am not getting into all that again.” (Harry, 21)

While Harry discusses his shifting attitudes in relation to “aging out” (see chapter 3), others, such as James associate their changing attitudes towards crime to increasingly maturing attitudes associated with growing older:

“I wouldn't say now because like, obviously I have grown up now. I am not like immature now” (James, 18)

The use of the discursive tools of “maturity” and having “grown up now” are evident in research by Giordano et al (2002: 61) on the use of cognitive transformations in the desistance process, which identified that the desisting participants “appeared to have undergone an ‘emotional mellowing process’ as they had matured into adulthood”. The example in Harrys account is indicative of such emotional mellowing, his teenage years were predominated by partying and living a “wild life”, yet he identifies that as he has matured, his desire for that life has waned. Participants routinely spoke of their increased weariness towards offending and that there were other things they would rather be doing as opposed to spending time in a probation office or, worse, prison:

*“I don't want to go back to prison *laughs* [...] Erm, life is short you know so make the most of it, you don't want to be locked up 15-20 odd years, get out now. I would rather be at home with a nice bed you know what I mean, making a brew whenever I want have no restrictions on my life so yeah, I want to be able to do what I want to do and not someone telling me what to do.” (Kamran, 20)*

It is important to note here that this maturation is not simply of the kind utilised by the age graded theories of desistance discussed in chapter two. Rather the maturation discussed by Harry and James is more in line with that discussed by Shapland and Bottoms (2011: 257) in the sense that it is “not a passive, time serving maturation but an active construction of a different lifestyle”. For the probationers in the sample, maturity was not simply a by-product of ageing, rather it was synonymous with changing choices and attitudes, of changing desires and behaviour.

The practical realities surrounding involvement in crime were a primary cause of desistance in research conducted by Barry (2007b: 410; 2010a), who suggested that the “hassle factor” allowed for the creation of a desistance climate for the young people in her study. This “hassle factor” was also evident in the current sample. For Max (22) who was serving an ICO for possession with intent to supply class B substances, he became increasingly frustrated by being “known” to the police as it meant they were “*constantly hassling [him], won't leave [him] alone even though [he was not] doing anything*”. Andy (24) noted a similar experience of being known to the police, recounting the story of an event during the summer holidays in which a he awoke to find a police woman peering into his bedroom window on horseback to ensure he was at home and “keeping out of trouble”. For Harry however, the hassle factor for him related to going back to prison:

“Oh yeah I have had that [being involved in crime], that [crime] was more when I was a kid I can't be bothered with it all you know what I mean? If I get into more trouble I am just going straight back to prison you know it is just not the way forward I have already been there you know what I mean? I don't want to sit in a room while everyone is out and enjoying themselves it is just not for me.”
(Harry, 21)

Although the desistance narratives provided for the present research identified factors which are synonymous with notions of “burning out” (see for instance Maruna, 2001) or the “hassle factor” (see Barry, 2010b), they were mostly subsidiary to the main accounts of why the offenders in the sample chose to desist. Although they wanted to avoid any further involvement in the criminal justice system, the factors driving their accounts were more in line with the idea of “projective agency” identified above. Their reasons for desisting were more in line with things they *wanted* out of life, even if this conception was not particularly robust, as opposed to what they wanted to avoid. Following the work of Paternoster and Bushway (2009: 1116), during the first interview the offenders in the sample did not always have a *concrete* sense of what they wanted out of their new, conventional life, but did possess a “very vivid and profound image of what kind of future they now realise they do not want” (see also chapter 7).

The majority of participants in the sample put their offending down to “being a kid”, in doing so, they are reconstructing their life story, suggesting that their past behaviour is incongruous with their present identity as an “adult”. Ascribing to this discourse allowed them to distance the person they are now, from who they once were, a concept which is evident in the desisting samples in research conducted by Giordano et al (2002) (see also Presser, 2005 and Vaughan, 2007). Not only this, but the suggestion that offending is a “child’s game” is indicative of the probationers in the sample adopting a script for conventional life. Rumgay (2004: 409) argues that “specific personal identities carry with them socially recognised behavioural routines, or ‘scripts’ for their enactment which not only portray the actor as an individual who has a credible claim on that identity, but are accepted by onlookers as hallmarks of its progression”. Through this discussion of a transition into adulthood, the probationers in the sample were arguably evidencing a new behavioural routine or script within which they perceived offending to be no longer a part.

6.3.2 “*I’m not like them*”

Participants in the sample stressed their conventional goodness throughout the interviews, primarily through the use of othering the “real criminals”. The notion of “othering” has been explored throughout the available criminological literature (see for example Hudson and Bramhall, 2005), and more specifically in relation to desistance from crime (see Murray, 2010). In essence, the notion of othering in relation to desistance is a means through which desisters are able to distance themselves from active offenders, typically through such notions as “I am not like them”. This process can be either external, referring to others, or internal, referring to the self (i.e. I am not like that anymore). An example of internal othering is evident in Tony’s (24) account. He sets himself apart from the child who committed the offences in his past, suggesting that “*obviously I wouldn’t go about it like that now, I wouldn’t go about it that way now, because it was just stupid, but we was kids and you don’t think when you are a kid do you?*”. A form of external othering was utilised by the sample to imply, and reinforce their own readiness to change:

“They are the ones that don’t see it all, they don’t want to change and that is what it is for them. They probably come out of here and go and do the same thing they were doing, I don’t want to do that” (Simon, 22)

The use of othering, while fairly common throughout the narratives of the desisting sample is also evident throughout the available desistance literature. Establishing a notion of oneself as a non-offender, fundamentally different from those who commit criminal acts is major principle of the redemption script (Maruna, 1999, 2001), secondary desistance (Maruna and Farrall, 2004) and the concept of the future self (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009) to name a few. For the purposes of this research however, it is important to understand how participants utilised othering in order to maintain a conception of themselves as generally good, or at least different from those they considered “bad”.

The desisting narratives indicated a clear objection to the label “offender”, although they accepted that they had committed an offence, the term “offender” or a label more specific to their offence (i.e. burglar) was not something the participants in sample were prepared to think about themselves:

“I had done it for a little bit of money you know what I mean, it is not worth it. I am not a burglar you know what I mean? It just happened, just that one time. I won’t do nothing like that again me” (Harry, 21)

Interestingly, the participants in the study with educational qualifications utilised this as a way of further distancing themselves from “real criminals”. Kamran (20), for example, suggested that his qualifications and ability to find work (also known as “human capital” and discussed in more detail in chapter seven), sets him apart from what he perceives to be the kind of people who commit offences:

*“I know it sounds weird but like stupid, thick people out there that are really low intelligent people and, crime is their only way of life I suppose *laughs*, can't do a 9-5 job never going to get a 9-5 job. I am not stupid I have got loads of qualifications, so in a way I shouldn't be here with them” (Kamran, 20)*

The notion that “criminals” are stupid (see Murray, 2010: 125) was identified by the majority of the probationers in the sample. At times they were referring to their own offending history *“I think back I was an idiot you know what I'm saying? I was dumb man” (Jason)*, other times they were referring to individuals who they perceived as not wanting to change, and evidenced this through a discussion of those they saw as failing to take up the opportunities that were presented to them:

“But I just deal with it like that me but I look at people and I think, they are kicking off them, what is the point in that?[...] like my mate out there, he is not a mate sorry he is an acquaintance, because he lives three doors down from me. He has not been here for two months. He has not been here for 2 months, he comes in today and wonders why he has been breached. Well because you have not been here for two months you are supposed to come in three days a week.” (Paul, 21)

Paul is quick to distance himself from his “friend” first by suggesting that he only knows him because they are neighbours and secondly by juxtaposing his own compliance with his friend’s non-compliance. This was a common discursive tool utilised by the probationers in the sample, and allowed them to further distance themselves from the “criminals” in the office by emphasising their own desire to complete their order as quickly as possible and get on with their lives:

I am getting an early closure because I have finished it all early. It's easy. I just got on with it. I had to do community service, thinking skills, that is a nine week course and then I finished that, a Saturday course that was 24 hours, three hours every Saturday, that's the attendance centre. Finished that. Just got it done. (Stephen, 18)

The point here is that, through the use of othering and adopting a discourse which places them as fundamentally different from other offenders, participants were *actively* able to set themselves apart from current offenders and, in doing so, allowed them to align themselves, at least in part, with conventional society. For the sample, othering provided an extra layer of protection for their fledgling transitional identity, an extra layer of this protective cocoon (Giddens, 1991). Any challenges to this were met with hostility. Andy, who was serving a 12 month Community Order for drunken assault experienced such a challenge to this identity. One of the conditions of his order was a 3 month curfew, monitored through an electronic tag on his ankle. During the course of his curfew his tag snapped and he reported to his probation office for instruction and recounts the following experience:

“It come off in the day so I come in here and I seen my OM wasn't in at the time so I saw one of the others, have you met him? Man me and him were nearly head to head in here. He was telling me I snapped my tag, this is without him even looking at it. I said my tag has come off it needs sorting out, he starts shouting "you snapped it, you snapped it!" (Andy, 24)

Andy saw this questioning as a challenge to the developing pro-social identity he was actively transitioning towards, and he utilises a range of discursive tools in an attempt to defend this identity. Firstly, he is keen to establish at the start of the story that he was not responsible for his tag snapping and that he was successfully completing his curfew up until this point. This is consistent with other members of the sample who othered offenders who were not complying with the conditions of their order discussed above. Secondly, he established a connection to conventional morality, suggesting that he holds the value of honesty in high regard *“I'm not a liar mate you know what I mean when I have been caught I have put my hands up that is one thing I don't do is lie”*. Andy utilises the same narrative techniques adopted by other members of the probationer sample, suggesting that, by and large, he has not been in trouble for years, and is not a “criminal” like some of the others in the ICO office *“just because [you] are here doesn't mean [you] are always bad you know”*. Finally, he suggested that the offence for which he was currently serving his ICO was a de-escalation (or a reduction in severity) of his previous offending, it was *“only for fighting”* and so he was not as bad as *“some of the others that come in here”*.

The confrontation surrounding the snapping of his tag with a probation officer however, represented a challenge to Andy's morality and the pro-social identity he has developed. As

discussed throughout this chapter, the participants in the sample actively worked to distance themselves from active offenders, and their own previous offending and Andy was no different. Although he acknowledged the fact that he had committed numerous offences, his narrative was particularly focused on his “future self” (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009), and who he wanted to become (and, as such, demonstrative of projective agency). The accusation that he had snapped his tag, and the fact that he perceived he was being looked at as “a criminal” provoked a defensive reaction and continued attempts to reinforce the conventional goodness of his fledgling identity, *“he just looks down on people like everyone is a criminal and they are not. Just because they are here doesn't mean they are bad you know what I mean? [...] Ask my OM what I'm like ask [...] what I'm like ask [...] what I'm like you know what I mean?”* Once Andy had calmed down from this experience, he notably put safeguards in place to ensure such a challenge to his morality is not likely to reoccur, at least within his probation office *“ever since then I won't even speak to him because I ain't a liar and I do not want to be called a liar.”* Andy's story provides an example of how probationers in the sample utilised agentic action to subsequently maintain a pro-social future self in the face of challenges which previously may have led to a return to iterative forms of agency and subsequent reoffending.

This story provided by Andy highlights the defence mechanisms that probationers in the sample put in place in the face of challenges to their developing desisting identity. This account is also interesting in the sense that it shows that agentic action can sometimes be reactive instead of adaptive. As Andy suggests, this challenge to his developing desisting identity almost resulted in him nearly going “head to head” with this particular probation officer. Given a different context (i.e. not in his probation office), it is possible that a similar challenge could have resulted in Andy committing another offence. This is an important point to acknowledge as it allows for a more detailed understanding of the impact of context upon agentic action, along with an understanding of the notion that these agentic moves towards desistance are not always necessarily purely adaptive. It also provides an indication that strategies put in place to protect a developing desisting identity, may also allow for the activation of iterative forms of agency.

6.3.3 “It wasn't that bad really”

The work on neutralization is most commonly associated with the work of Sykes and Matza (1957) and, originally used to discuss how “the excuses and justifications that deviants use to rationalize their behaviours might themselves be implicated in the etiology of deviant

behaviour” (Maruna and Copes, 2005: 222). It has however increasingly been linked with the concept of desistance, with some arguing that neutralizations allow offenders to separate their previous offending history from their “true self”, thereby supporting the desistance process. Indeed, neutralizations in various guises were common throughout the desisting narratives of the probationers in the sample. The neutralizations offered most frequently by participants can be split into two broad categories. Firstly, it was suggested by some that, although they were involved in committing the offence, they were only on the periphery of the “action”. Tom for instance notes that, although he was involved in the burglary that resulted in his ICO, he was in fact only a lookout and subsequently, not as bad as individual committing the burglary:

Even though I was a part of the crime by looking out for him I didn't think looking out for him was a bad thing, then the police come to the front of the house and they came in and arrested me, he got away.” (Tom, 20)

Harry was also involved in a burglary as a look out but distances himself from his friend who also committed the burglary by suggesting that while he was a lookout he did not steal the valuables from the house and goes further to suggest that, although he was not really involved apart from looking out, it “all came back on him” as opposed to his friend who was “the main person doing it”:

“I was going home and my mate has just like said to me, come on we are going. I have come to the house and that, he came to me and went just keep watch for me, and obviously the people ended up waking up blah blah. Ended up running off and my mate took the car but I didn't get in the car or nothing, and it has all come back to me. He didn't get nothing. It was stupid man it was daft, and I wasn't even the main person doing it was just one of them isn't it, I was just a lookout.” (Harry, 21)

By suggesting that they were not “the main one” committing the offences, they are able, to distance themselves from the “real offenders” who undertook them. To paraphrase Maruna (2001) the individual providing the account is the “diamond”, the situation they put themselves in, described in the above extracts, was the rough. The second type of neutralization frequently adopted by the participants in the study, was based upon a decision that, given the circumstances they found themselves in, there was “no other option” but to offend. For instance, Stephen discussed how his brother had been approached by a local gang over money his friends owed for drugs, and the only way to get this money was to offend.

“They said he had a week to get the money to them or he was going to get shot or something. So then he has come to me and asked me would I make a bit of money with him because he knows how to make some money, so I said yeah because I didn't want to see him get hurt, so we have just gone to get these bikes. Then we came back, cleaned them up and just put them on e-bay, sold them all and then gave people the money back what my brother's mate owed them so he didn't get hurt.” (Stephen, 18)

Paul presented an equally fatalistic account of how he ended up offending with a friend. This friend had been locked out of the house he was living in at the time, as the owner of the property was unavailable owing to the fact he was currently in prison, the only way to get in, was to break in.

He is already in the house getting his stuff together and I have gone, got him to open the back door, as he is opening the back door the police come. So they are saying it is burglary but [...], it was just classed as it if you know what I mean because he was getting his own things but it was breaking and entering. [...] The guy whose house it was had just been done for kidnapping, so he was already in jail so the only way we could get in was breaking in to get his stuff. (Paul, 21)

Both of these accounts allow the participant to portray themselves as conventionally good, but found themselves in an impossible position, with, what they could see as only one way out. For Stephen, if he did not get the money quickly, there was the risk of physical harm befalling his brother, for Paul, the only way to gain access into the building containing his friends possessions was to break in. Such examples do not suggest that the individuals telling the stories are inherently “bad”, but again that they were simply diamonds in rough situations. This is reiterated in both accounts as they were performing these offences either against or to escape the threats of “real criminals”, for Stephen it was offending to lose the attention of a drug dealing gang, for Paul it was offending against a convicted kidnapper. It could be argued that this allows participants to mitigate against feelings of guilt for committing the offences as they were doing so against those they deemed to be intrinsically “bad”.

6.3.4 Excuses, excuses.

It could be argued that the neutralizations discussed above are seemingly incongruous with desistance, while also offering up the question “how can people change if they do not accept full responsibility for their actions?” (Maruna and Mann, 2006) Indeed during the initial drafting of this thesis the accounts presented above were referred to by a colleague as “well-worn excuses”.

While there is no denying the fact that is undoubtedly the case (particularly considering the range of literature available on each of them), this does not necessarily suggest that these excuses were intrinsically negative or indicative of a lack of commitment to desist. In fact it has been suggested in the available literature that the link between making excuses for past offending behaviour and continued criminal propensity represents a fundamental attribution error (Maruna and Mann, 2006).

Techniques of neutralisation (as discussed above) gained prominence through the work of Sykes and Matza (1957:666 *emphasis added*) who suggest that much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognised extension of defences to crimes in the form of *justifications for deviance*". Indeed, it is suggested that techniques of neutralisation allow for continued offending by mitigating against the negative impact on one's sense of self. It has been suggested that "nowhere has the notion of criminogenic nature of excuse making had greater influence than the applied world of offender treatment [particularly cognitive behavioural programmes], where excuses and justifications are often assigned the specialist label of *cognitive distortions*" (Maruna and Mann, 2006: 157). Indeed, while the term cognitive distortion has been taken from cognitive behavioural literature, its application to criminology has been somewhat distorted. Focussing predominantly upon the sex offender literature, the use of cognitive distortions seems particularly self-serving or offence justifying (something which is not included in the original cognitive behavioural literature) (see Maruna and Mann, 2006). Abel et al (1989) for instance use words such as "justifications", "rationalisation". Suggesting that such cognitive distortions "allow the offender to justify his ongoing sexual abuse of children without the anxiety, guilt and loss of self-esteem that would usually result from an individual committing behaviours contrary to the norms of society" (ibid: 137). Where Blumenthal et al (1999:129) defined the term as "attitudes and beliefs which offenders use to deny, minimize and rationalise their behaviour". In these perspectives, the use of excuses or neutralisations is particularly self-serving and allow for continued offending. By suggesting this causal link between excuses and continued offending, Maruna and Mann argue that "criminal psychology may be guilty of committing something akin to the 'fundamental attribution error' writ large". The implications of doing so have been suggested to place offenders in a "no-win situation: If they make excuses for what they did, they are deemed to be criminal types who engage in criminal thinking. If however, they were to take full responsibility for their offences – claiming they committed some awful offence purely 'because they wanted to' and 'because that is the 'type of person' they are – then they are, by definition, criminal types as well" (Maruna and Mann, 2006: 158). It is important to note at this

point that the techniques of neutralisation presented by the probationers in the sample did not fit with the notion of an offence justifying narrative. Rather, the neutralisations offered were perhaps more indicative of aligning a developing pro-social self with conventional morality.

It is generally accepted that “when challenged about having done something wrong, all of us reasonably account for our own actions as being influenced by multiple external and internal factors. Yet we pathologize prisoners and probationers for doing the same thing” (ibid: 158). For the probationers in the study, the excuses that were being offered to explain their involvement in criminal activity could be seen as a tool to maintain burgeoning desistance transitions.

As discussed above, the probationers in the sample used such excuses in order to distance themselves from not only an offending identity but also from those they considered to be “real criminals”. This idea is also evident in research by Hood et al (2002) who found that offenders who were deemed to be “deniers” by the parole board were in fact less likely to reoffend. They suggested that “some deniers, when faced with the stigma of conviction and punishment may not accept their deviant sexual acts as a reflection of their ‘real self’. Nor may they wish to associate with those they regard, unlike themselves, as ‘real’ sex offenders” (ibid: 387). These excuses allowed the offenders in the study to keep their “true self” separate from the deviant identity they were attempting separate themselves from.

It is also possible that the use of excuses or neutralizations discussed above are used in order to protect a fledgling desisting identity from the stigmatizing effects of being referred to as an offender. Maruna and Mann (2006: 163) suggest that “theoretically, offender neutralizations might be understood as providing crucial insulation from labelling or protection from the sorts of stigmatizing shame that can lead to future offending”. It is also possible that, by making excuses for offending behaviour, offenders are in fact aligning themselves with conventionality. Mischkowitz (1994: 319) suggested that “using neutralization techniques also enables [the offender] to reconstruct his [or her] biography and modify his [or her] past in a manner that is conducive for his [or her] present self-concept”. While Felson and Ribner (1981: 138) argue that excuses demonstrate “aligning action indicating to the audience that the actor is aligned with the social order, even though he or she has violated it”. These ideas are evident in the use of such excuses throughout the current sample, particularly so in the case of Andy and the snapping of his tag as discussed above. By establishing himself as conventionally good and utilizing the discursive tools of desistance highlighted above and below, Andy was able protect his new desisting identity from the harsh realities and stigmatizing effect of being involved in the criminal

justice system, challenges to this new identity were met with hostility on his part as he fought to maintain this positive self-image.

Finally, one idea which was evident in the current sample and may help us understand the use of excuses in this instance, is that of Brickman et al's (1982) notion of a "compensatory model of responsibility" whereby offenders do not take full responsibility for past problems but do hold themselves responsible for future solutions to their problems. The majority of the desistance accounts provided by the probationers in the sample were future oriented towards a desired future self, although this was not the main drive for daily desisting behaviour (see the conclusion of this chapter and chapter seven). While they accepted that their offending history existed, they evidenced a degree of futility in looking backwards. Indeed the available research literature suggests that focusing on past offending is largely considered to be a negative aspect of probation supervision by probationers (see Durnescu (2010) and his discussion of the "pains of probation"). Instead probationers in the sample wanted to focus on what they could change, most notably, *themselves*, and the excuses and neutralizations discussed above, along with the more tangible behaviours discussed below, allowed them to do so.

6.4 Diachronic Self Control

So far this chapter has covered the discursive tools that participants in the sample ascribed to in order to distance themselves from their offending past and facilitate the transition towards desistance, these discursive tools allowed participants to maintain an identity which would allow them to sustain a non-offending future. This is not to suggest that utilising these discursive tools was sufficient for participants to successfully maintain desistance from crime. Rather that, for the sample, while a cognitive shift of sorts was required as a prelude to desistance as it allowed them to develop an identity with which offending behaviour was no longer compatible, utilising these discursive tools allowed them to maintain and in some instances protect, a fledgling non deviant identity (as was the case with Andy discussed above). Nor is it to suggest that such cognitive shifts or the use of these discursive tools discussed above are always conscious decisions, with research suggesting that this is not always the case (Shapland and Bottoms, 2011). Rather, that they simply provide the "up front" work required on the threshold of change for structural factors (discussed in the following chapter) to be able to build upon. Such structural factors however, also have the potential to lead to the reactivation of iterative forms of agency. Shapland and Bottoms (2011: 272), for instance, discuss the problem succinctly, suggesting that, while offending may not have become habitual for their participants, there was always the possibility that, walking in the same neighbourhoods as one did when offending might lead to temptation,

especially when times are hard. In order to avoid this then “achieving change [...] might well have to involve significant changes in routine activities”.

It has been noted throughout the available desistance literature that desisters *actively* make subtle changes to their lifestyles in order to avoid finding themselves in positions where they could be likely to fall back on such iterative agency and potentially reoffend. Such a notion, known as the agentic process of “diachronic self-control”, first introduced by Kennett (2001) but later adapted into desistance research by Shapland and Bottoms (2011), describes the process whereby “one engages in or deliberately does not engage in activity so that, at another, future time, one will not face a situation of temptation which one believes, from experience, is very likely to result in a failure to act as one truly believes one should” (ibid: 274). Forms of diachronic self-control were identified throughout the interviews collected during the fieldwork. For instance, Mark (22), who had been involved in violence with a gang in his home town, suggested that he has no plans to return to there as the temptation to re-offend could prove overwhelming, *“That's why I don't go [there] no more, because if I'd seen them I would probably just get arrested again and it's not worth it. No matter how much I think it is, it's not. That's it.”* Whereas Gary (26), who suggested that he occasionally felt overwhelmed by the amount of different things he needed to do in order to comply with his probation order, complete the courses he wanted to complete and generally move forwards, stated that he created “to do lists” in his house to ensure that he would do everything he needed to in order to stay out of trouble, along with listing his ultimate goals in order to keep him focused on this desired future self and how to get there:

I hope not [will not get in trouble again] mate I fucking hope not because I have got bullet points at home mate, big fucking bullet points on a blackboard at home saying what I want you know what I mean, I just get up look at that, focus on that. I have written them down in big fucking bold letters on a blackboard mate on my wall in the bedroom so as soon as I wake up it is fucking there, thinking how do I get that. Each day I am writing things down in like a to do list stuff like that I need to do, like I need to go probation, like the night before so as soon as I get up I'm getting myself sorted. Otherwise because I am thinking too much I have got it all in my head, I have got too much to do and there is just not enough time when you are trying to work it round in your head but when you put it on paper mate it is fucking miles easier. (Gary, 26)

It is important to recognize at this point that while the desired future self was something which offenders oriented themselves towards, it did not, by itself allow for continued desistance.

Probationers in the sample were required to take care of the minutiae of daily routines and rhythms (see May and Thrift, 2003) which may support the ultimate transition to this desired future self and it was here where the majority of obstacles were faced (discussed in more detail in chapter seven). Utilising diachronic self-control as discussed by Gary, but evident throughout the probationer sample, allowed for this continued transition while mitigating against potential obstacles.

Such behaviour evidenced the use of diachronic self-control as a form of projective agency within the probationer sample. By actively altering their behaviour, Mark, Gary and Kamran discussed below were able to avoid situations which they all felt were likely to result in them falling back on iterative forms of agency and potentially reoffending. The most common use of diachronic self-control however concerned the reshuffling of a participants social networks, excluding the active offenders.

The influence of peer networks in participants offending history was common, indeed the majority of participants admitted getting involved with the “wrong crowd” at one time or another, but usually early on in adolescence. While recounting the stories of their various offences, participants would regularly locate themselves as part of a group who committed the offence together:

“There were just loads of us on the estate, just like when you, when I grew up all I did was just hang about on the estate there was loads of us I would say there was about ten of us to start off with, then about six of us I think it was in the end walked over to this new college that they had built, well not built it had been finished but I don't think it had been opened properly. Anyway we went in and, obviously it is trespass straight away so you are getting done for that” (Simon, 22)

The association between peer groups and propensity to offend has been documented throughout the available literature. Haynie (2002) for example identified that those whose friendship groups were exclusively criminal and were more delinquent than those who had mixed friendship groups (i.e. offenders and non-offenders) which, according to Giordano et al (2003: 295) is “indicative of a kind of encapsulation or saturation effect”. The reorientation of one’s identity however from criminal to pro-social, also has the potential to lead to a reorientation of the kind of person one wishes to socialise with. Indeed, Paternoster and Bushway (2009: 1129) suggest that “a change in identity to a more prosocial person brings with it a preference for the kind of people more likely to foster and support that new identity”. The desisting narratives of the offenders in the current

research, in a similar fashion to those in the research of others (see Giordano et al, 2003; King, 2013b), identified such a reorientation of social networks. With many of the probationers suggesting that, during the course of the fieldwork, they had stopped associating with the delinquent peers from their past and instead, formed new, pro-social relationships:

I have stayed away from those people since. [...] I am not doing that [going out drinking with delinquent peers] no more I am with the other people now, they are alright, they just want to go to town on Friday nights, Saturday nights, play pool and stuff. It is better. (Stephen, 18)

The importance of separating from friendship groups by probationers in order to stay out of trouble was perhaps most evident in the accounts presented by Kamran.

6.4.1 Kamran's narrative

The following discussion presents the desistance narrative of Kamran. This particular narrative was chosen as Kamran evidences a large proportion of discursive tools of desistance and diachronic self-control discussed by a large proportion of the sample. This narrative serves to reinforce the ideas presented so far in the chapter while also emphasising the lived experience and contextual nature of the use of neutralisations and diachronic self-control in the initial movements towards desistance. It highlights the ontological shift experienced by probationers in the sample as part of these early desistance transitions along with the impact of this ontological shift on the interaction between individuals and their social contexts.

At the time of the first interview, Kamran was 20 years old and was serving a 12 month community order for taking his grandmothers car without permission, driving without a license and leaving the scene of an accident. He has an older sister (who is just about to finish university) and was raised by his mother and, up until recently, her partner. Although he acted up in school, Kamran was one of the few in the study who gained qualifications while there. He has previous experience of being in prison, serving 10 months for supply of class A drugs, and his offence history listed shoplifting and burglary as his primary offence type. The drug offence, along with several of his other offences, were committed "with friends", in fact the only offence he conducted alone was the one that resulted in his ICO. Kamran's account of his attempts to maintain desistance evidenced most of the forms of agentic action discussed throughout this chapter. As discussed above, and evident throughout the accounts provided by other participants, Kamran evidenced the hassle factor (discussed above) throughout his desistance narrative, suggesting that one of his driving forces for staying out of trouble was his desire to stay out of

prison. This was due to the fact that he sees prison as “boring” and a “waste of time” which he would rather spend working towards a conventional life (stable employment in particular). His time in prison gave him time to think about the life he wanted, along with what was and was not compatible with that vision. He discussed his belief that undertaking his ICO has kept him out of trouble as he was required to be in the office regularly, reducing the time he is able to spend “out and about”. Indeed, the notion that attending the probation office allowed for the formation of a stable routine which aided the sense of ontological security for offenders, was evident throughout the probationer sample and discussed in more detail in chapter eight. That being said, he recognised that he was generally willing to go along with what his friends decided to do, if only for a peaceful life:

I wouldn't say I have got itchy fingers but I would say that I make bad decisions so if I had a friend saying oh lets go and do this, not that I am easily influenced but after a bit of them going oh come on come on come on I just think oh fuck it let's do it I can't be arsed listening to you saying come on anymore.

Interestingly here Kamran suggests that while the hassle factor was important in order to facilitate his burgeoning desistance transition, it was also a factor in his offending history, he presents his account as being one of a “tag-along”, not one who makes actively goes out to offend, simply one who goes with the flow in order to maintain a “peaceful life”. It is interesting to note at this point that the offence for which he received his ICO involved taking a car without consent, an offence he committed alone. During the course of the second interview however, Kamran noted that he recognised how his previous friendship network was somewhat poisonous, did not actually provide the “peaceful life” he wanted and contributed to his offending behaviour. As such, and as part of his transition towards desistance, he actively moved away from this group and began to socialise with others who he deemed more “mature” (see above discussion).

So I do make bad decisions but I changed, late last year I changed my circle of friends as well and within that like, it has not helped me but it has kept me away from certain lifestyles and certain things that I do not want to be around and that I don't want anything to do with because it is not me so I have had to say to a couple of friends, it is not that I don't want nothing to do with you and I will still be civil with you but I won't come to your house like I used to and you won't come to my house and stuff like that.

In line with the hassle factor discussed above, Kamran notes how coming out of prison and the constant calls at all times of day from friends “wanting something” made him reconsider the value of his previous social networks. His response to this re-evaluation was to cut ties with individuals whom he perceived as trouble:

Erm, 2011 I got locked up, I come out of prison. I didn't want to be around their lifestyle and their lifestyle, I had a lot more stress in my life because of them. I had people phoning my phone saying oh have you got this? And oh this is there will you go and get that for me and will you do this favour for me. I don't want you phoning my phone at half three in the morning saying do you want to hold this for me? No I don't. I would rather not speak to those people then we don't have that relationship.

Along with the perceived annoyance of being involved with delinquent groups, Kamran also identified the fact that, the “success” of his former peer network was attracting the attention of others he deemed unsavoury. This came to a head in an incident where an individual he has had trouble with in the past arrived on his front door attempting to befriend him.

There were other people from around our area looking at us and thinking oh they are doing a bit well for themselves. I could see how it was going and I just remember saying one day to my mates saying, someone knocked on my door and I didn't like the person who knocked on my door like I have had problems with him, I walked out into my garden closed the door behind me and said, why is he in my garden for one, because he never knew where, even though I had problems with him, he'd never come to my house before.

This event gave Kamran a wider perspective on impact of his involvement in pro-criminal social networks as it concerned the safety of his mother who, earlier in the interview, he described as being the most important person in his life (the importance of social relationships is discussed in more detail in chapter seven). This reinforced his desire to remain removed from such networks.

I say to my mates, it is all good if it was my house that is different, but if I ever choose to move away that is still my mums house I don't want my friends knocking on my door phoning for me you know what I mean? So I was a bit pissed off and when he found out where I lived, and the person that it was I know how he is. Like when he was coming round with my mates I thought I don't want nothing to do with none of you because if you are seen with him you are all corrupt aren't you? I don't want you

in my life kind of thing so, I just distanced myself from it.

Interestingly, this discussion is in line with the discursive tools of desistance discussed above. Kamran noted that this unsavoury character was beginning to infiltrate his friendship networks, this had the potential to infer that he embodied similar character traits to someone he deemed to be a bad person. It was therefore important to make sure that he separated himself from this person and subsequently his old friendship networks who were associated with him. Once this separation was complete, he noted that his nature as someone who can be quite frank allowed him to actively maintain this division, even though he still lived in close proximity to those he used to associate with.

Kamran: Like now I still see them now, nearly on a daily basis but we are not friends like, we don't chill together like that.

When discussing his new pro-social network, Kamran, along with numerous other probationers in the sample continuously refers to his new group as “more mature”, this acts as a form of “othering” of his past friendships. This was one of the main forms of othering utilised by the sample and is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.1, it also complies with the idea of maturational reform discussed in the same section. He also ascribed to the future oriented sense of self discussed in more detail above, suggesting that now he is more focused on himself and what he wants out of life, and that this was facilitated through diachronic self-control and his transition from pro-criminal to pro-social networks.

So now like, the friends I have got now they are more, I don't want to say more mature but they are just, yeah it is more mature it is not like, the others are a bit pathetic and a bit, slow, no not even slow, just I don't know but my friends now are like there is no like childish behaviour, you know like "he said that" or you know what I mean? I am more interested in myself so, in a way that is a plus thing, it is just more mature it is more civilised.

This was contrasted with the environment in his previous social network which he typified as very hectic and volatile. By drawing this distinction, we are able to see further evidence of the use of “othering” in Kamran’s account:

That was a very hyper situation, like volatile like, even though we would have a joke with either other, like even if we knew we were joking, if we said something and we knew like we took the piss it was still like, what is going to go on here now because

you really shouldn't have said that. I have been there a couple of times, I have been stood there before and someone has said something and I have just been looking like, he is going to beat him up, any second he is going to beat him up, and then there has been fights.

For Kamran then, the use of diachronic self-control, while allowing him to actively distance himself from a friendship group he thought to be “troublesome”, also reduced the likelihood of him finding himself in situations which were likely to cause the activation of iterative agency and allowed him to orient himself (both physically and mentally) towards the person he ultimately wanted to become:

Yeah so I am glad my friends now are more mature, and it is just, it is a less stressful lifestyle. I am not going to get a phone call at half three in the morning saying I am just coming out of the pub what are you doing, and I go I am in bed it is half three! I just don't need it, and so I am grateful for that. It is helping me stay out of trouble definitely. I wouldn't say they got me in trouble but there mentality was that so being around them it was a lot easier for me to get myself into trouble than it was to keep myself out of trouble.

6.5 “Pulling a fast one” or being a good client?

There is however, a caveat with regards to the above discussion which needs to be explored. During the course of the analysis of the first interviews, it became apparent that not only were the majority of the participants making reference to the same discursive tools in order to make sense of their desistance, they were discussing these discursive tools in very similar style. While the double interview was included in the research design for the purpose of identifying inconsistencies in the accounts provided for further investigation, it was never the intention of this design to identify the extent to which participants were telling the “truth”. It is important to remember Healy and O'Donnells (2008: 26) assertion that “the human imagination is mythopoeic in the sense that people actively construct stories about their lives” and that this construction is dependent upon the audience for which these stories are being constructed and that “the criminal identity may be fluid and that offenders often adapt their identities to suit the current situation” (Healy, 2012a: 35). With this in mind, it would seem that searching for a universal truth, utilising the methods adopted for this research at least, is a fruitless endeavour. Such a notion however, was made all the more interesting after a discussion with Laura, a Probation Service Officer (PSO), about Neil, one of her clients. She suggested that,

even though on the surface he was a perfect client, upon closer inspection it became clear that this was far from the case:

“We took him on face value and he said he was ready to change he was very remorseful, he completed wonderful victim awareness work, he completed a lot of offence focused work with me, he was coming in above intensive, so he was coming in like twice a week to see me twice a week to see his mentor he was doing more than was expected of him, but like every fabricated picture it kind of comes apart. His came apart at Christmas when we found out that he had continued offending, he is still offending. When that became obvious and you put two and two together actually this perfect picture lifestyle and what we actually knew was real wasn't happening anymore” (Laura, PSO)

Why would Neil go above and beyond his requirements and present as a perfect client if in fact this was not the case? Why put in all the extra effort? While not wanting to get caught and sent back to prison, or developing a positive record for when he gets caught are arguably potential reasons for such behaviour, suggesting intended deception on the part of Neil may be overly pessimistic. It may also be establishing a causal link between his exemplary probation performance and his continued offending which may, in fact, not exist.

Another potential reason for Neil's productivity with ICO could simply be that this is what he feels is expected of him as a probation client, a notion referred to by Bottoms and Shapland, (2014: 325) as “situational compliance” or “compliance arising from the physical or social context of the immediate situation, with no explicitly instrumental or normative dimension”. It has been noted in an earlier chapter that roles in society carry with them a set of particular behaviours associated with that role. It is therefore possible that Neil's exemplary attitude towards his ICO is because this behaviour is synonymous with what he sees as being a “good probationer”, with no ulterior motives. Such compliance is evidenced in the current sample, for instance, Neil's discussed his desire to succeed throughout his narrative, be it success before his probation order or once he has completed it. Being a successful probation client by doing all the appropriate work and more, fits in with this narrative. It should be remembered that all of the participants in the research could be considered to be successful probationers, they regularly attended their appointments and were steadily working through their requirements. With this in mind, it seems logical that, in terms of their desistance potential, their narratives were reasonably similar. The desistance literature, and the discussion of risk

and criminogenic needs in the development of probation in England and Wales (see for example Kemshall, 1998) has pointed to the facts that involvement in paid employment and establishing stable relationships have a positive impact upon the maintenance of desistance. Such notions are also evident throughout probation practice, ETE programmes, job clubs, thinking skills programmes and so on, all reinforce that message. If probation clients are told that these things will help them to stay out of trouble, which (due to such things as the hassle factor discussed above) they want, when asked in an interview setting what they want, it seems obvious to suggest they will say they want a job, a stable relationship and so on. Particularly in the context of an interview, in their probation office, with an unknown researcher who could potentially be seen as an extension of their supervisory team (discussed in more detail in the next chapter).

This is not to suggest that the accounts from participants who stated these desires are disingenuous, in fact, more often than not participants were *actively* pursuing such things, albeit with varying degrees of success (discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Rather, there is the possibility that situational compliance can propel individuals undertaking initial desistance transitions towards a desired future self as much as the discursive tools of desistance and agentic actions which have dominated the present chapter.

6.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample, and in line with the available literature on the subject (see for instance Giordano et al, 2002), that the initial transitions towards desistance from crime are agentially driven and involve the separation of the self from past behaviours and identities. This separation from previous behaviours however was not necessarily straightforward for probationers who were still located within the same areas that they previously offended in. It is important to remember at this point that Giddens (1991:51) notes that 'a person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going'. As such, in order to maintain continued separation from a past self they felt increasingly at odds with, to keep this fledgling desisting identity going and to avoid falling back on iterative forms of agency and reoffending, probationers in the sample ascribed to a range of "discursive tools of desistance" which formed a "protective cocoon" and allowed them to move away from past behaviour, while still acknowledging it occurred. Such discursive tools included discussions of maturation along with techniques of neutralization introduced by Sykes and Matza (1957).

These discursive tools alone however were not sufficient in order to desistance transitions to be maintained by the probationers in the sample. As such, a form of agentic action referred to as diachronic self-control was employed, whereby probationers would carry out certain behaviours in order to avoid finding themselves in potentially criminogenic situations at a later date. For the majority of probationers in the sample, this diachronic self-control was evidenced in the abandoning of old friendship networks which were usually associated with previous offending behaviour, and the reorientation of the self to a new peer network which was considered to be more pro-social. Finally, it was suggested that although probationers in the sample had a desired future self that structured their overall aims, which largely centred on staying out of trouble and “settling down”, this overarching aim did not necessarily structure their immediate daily concerns. Not only this, but the desisting and essentially “good guy” identity was agentially chosen by probationers in the sample and it was this that kick started their initial transitions towards desistance. There were other social roles which were placed upon them, such as “probationer” which had its own forms of behaviour which probationers in the sample were required to conform to. Each of these roles, whether chosen or assigned, had the potential to support or hinder the transition towards desistance from crime, but they were not, on their own sufficient in order to do either. The following chapter discusses how the transition towards desistance, while perhaps agentially driven, was undertaken within the context of an interaction with social structures which could also either support or hinder desistance transitions.

Chapter 7: Social Structures in Transition: The Quest for Capital

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the role of up front agentic action in initial desistance transitions. It was argued that, for the probationers in the sample, one of the early factors in the commencement of desistance transitions involved the ontological shift of self away from a past self-associated with offending, and an, at least partial, realignment with conventional society. This was achieved through the use of numerous discursive tools of desistance and evidence of diachronic self-control. It is important to remember however that agentic action is not performed in a vacuum. In fact it is argued in the available literature that such action is mediated by the context within which it is being enacted. Weaver (2016: 25) notes that “agency is conditioned by an individual's social context which delimits the range of future possibilities available by variously enabling or constraining change”. For the probationers in the sample, this ontological shift and the desired future self-expressed through their desistance narratives meant that their former, largely criminogenic, social contexts were no longer appropriate for goal acquisition. As such, the transition towards desistance also required a transition in the way probationers perceived both social structures and capital acquisition. This is not to suggest that once such a re-evaluation of interaction with social structures and capital acquisition was complete that the desired future self-became directly amenable. The status of probationers as liminars placed considerable inhibitors on their ability to fully interact with social structures and capital acquisition was deemed to be difficult. As such, although the desired future self-epitomized the overall goal, it did not necessarily inform daily behaviour which tended to be more influenced by immediate needs such as somehow finding employment. It was noted by the probationers in the sample, in a break from the available literature, that probation supervision and their interaction with their supervisory team created an extra avenue for capital acquisition which they could utilise if they needed to.

7.2 The desired future self in context: addressing immediate concerns

Throughout the previous chapter, the notion of the desired future self (see Healy, 2014) has been discussed along with the notion that probationers in the sample acted agentially in order to separate from previous iterations of self that were increasingly incongruous with the person they wish to become. Indeed while a desired future self was evident for each of the probationers in the sample, it was not only this self which necessarily drove immediate aspirations and goals. While probationers in the sample kept one eye on their desired future

self, the accounts presented in the current research suggested a preoccupation with more immediate concerns that could aid this burgeoning transition towards desistance. One potential reason for this could be due to the age range and transitional status of the probationers in the sample, with a clearer focus on the ultimate goal of this desired future self-coming later.

Participants throughout the probationer sample expressed what Bottoms and Shapland (2014: 10; see also Healy and O'Donnell 2008) have identified as “normatively conventional aspirations”. Such aspirations predominantly centred upon finding stable employment, while those who were in relationships or had children at the time of the interview suggested that they also intended upon “settling down”:

I am just going to get a job yeah and just save up some money and then, hopefully get myself somewhere you know what I mean? Try and get a nice house and a nice car and all that sort of stuff, just settle down, have kids and stuff. (Harry, 21)

While the advantages of employment in the desistance process have been discussed in chapter three, it is important for the purposes of this chapter to mention that *meaningful* employment, along with family relationships (which will be discussed in more detail below) are largely considered to be “two of the most important ingredients of social capital for individuals in Western societies” (Farrall, 2004: 61). Indeed, this is arguably why they have been the focus of a large proportion of desistance research. Probationers in the sample noted numerous reasons for their desire to find stable employment. Firstly it must be remembered that, for the majority of participants, the financial gain associated with offending was offered as a reason behind their onset (although this could simply be another method of neutralisation discussed in chapter six), meaning the decision to desist and the up-front cognitive work required to support this position (discussed in chapter six) led to a (sometimes substantial) loss of earnings (see Bottoms, 2014). Finding employment, and doing so quickly, was therefore particularly important to the sample as it meant they were still obtaining an income:

“I just want a job just to get some money behind me, so I don't have to need money and stuff. Just save up and that and try and help myself out” (James, 18)

While it is possible that the desire to find work discussed by the probationers is indicative of situation compliance (discussed in chapter six), or even evidence of Maslow's (1954) “hierarchy of needs”, whereby individuals need to satisfy basic human needs (i.e. food, shelter etc.) before higher goals (such as self-actualisation) can be realised (see also Healy

and O'Donnell 2008); the accounts presented by the probationers in the sample however suggested that there was more to gaining employment than compliance or satisfying basic needs. Harry noted that gaining employment allowed him to begin to form a routine similar to that of "everybody else". While this gave him the opportunity to structure his days and to keep himself busy, it also impacted positively on his mental health:

I had to come here every day and be in by seven, it just made me straight headed, made me feel more like I need to that I need to do that, and if I had a job I would need to do that. I would have to get up early, normally I am getting up at about 2 in the afternoon and getting up and not doing a thing you know what I mean and then going out, staying up til about 3/4 in the morning, coming home. It is just not the way to be is it? (Harry, 21)

For Simon, who related his ICO offence (drug dealing) to the fact that he was medically discharged from the army and struggled to obtain an income, employment provided not only financial gain (allowing him to distance himself from his drug dealing past), but also the opportunity to do something legitimate with his days. He readily admitted being bored at home and was previously more likely to spend time with his drug dealing peers. Employment created a way out of this life, while legitimately allowing him to maintain the social life he held to be important:

You just finish work you know through the week and at the weekend you have money in your pocket. You still have [money] through the week you know what I mean but it is just going from having nothing to always having money, it is just, because I am not bored I am not in the house doing nothing. I finish work and I am knackered so you just go home and chill, go have a bath and that is you for the night. Then at the weekend you have money so you can go and do things again, you don't have to start messing about. It is better isn't it, stops you from having time on your hands. (Simon, 22)

Finally, while employment provided financial support, supported the development of a stable routine and improved the mental health of the probationers in the sample, it also allowed for a degree of status elevation as, in Andy's case for instance, it meant he did not have to rely on benefits:

I just do labouring, it's shit work, shit money but it's a job, better than the dole you know what I mean. That's the way I see it. (Andy, 24)

Notions of generativity were not largely evident throughout the sample, one potential reason for this could be the age of the sample, Healy and O'Donnell (2008: 32) suggest that “generative pursuits usually occur later in adulthood”. That being said, Harry expressed what McAdams and De St. Aubin (1998) refer to as “generative concern” or caring and giving back to family members. He stated that employment allowed him to give back to the people who had supported him through the duration of his order:

I need to sort my nanna out as well because they have been paying for my food so I need to give them a bit of money, and obviously I have been sorting them out from the job centre but I need to sort them out a bit more because when I didn't have any money they would let me off, they wouldn't say you know get out or whatever they would never leave me on the street, so I just need to do it for everyone really and myself obviously. (Harry, 21)

During the transition towards desistance, Giordano (2014: 50) argues that “in addition to general receptivity to change, chances for successful behaviour change will be greatly enhanced when the individual also engages with other experiences that have good conventionality potential”. What was clear from the desistance narratives of the majority of probationers in the sample however was that, especially initially, they lacked the tools to be able to engage in such experiences. Their skill set and social environment were largely criminogenic and, as such, while not only promoting continued offending, reduced the opportunities for them to engage in activities which had such conventionality potential. If, as Bottoms and Shapland (2014a: 7) postulate “desistance is the process of learning to live a non-criminal life when one has been leading a largely criminal one”, probationers in the sample undertaking the transition towards desistance now had to learn (some for the first time) how to be a citizen or, as Farrall et al (2010: 548) put it “a mainstream member of civil society”. For many of the probationers in the sample however, their previous avenues for obtaining human capital (school, social networks etc.) were either no longer available or simply not in a position to advise. As such, initiating desistance transitions meant not only an active separation from a past identity associated with offending, but also a re-evaluation of both capital acquisition and the ways in which they interacted with social structures.

7.3 Capital in Transition.

It needs to be remembered at this point that 16 out of the 18 probationers in the research in had been involved in crime and surrounded by delinquent peers since adolescence. The majority had also been frequently truant or expelled from school on numerous occasions. Factors associated with citizenship (applying for work, paying tax, national insurance etc.) were almost completely alien to them. This is a concern which was also evident in research conducted by Halsey (2014: 12). The probationers in the study “like so many young men struggling to desist from crime [they] never got schooled in how to be a citizen”. The majority of participants in the sample spoke of the fact that, before probation, they had little idea of what a CV even was, let alone how to write one:

I came here I didn't have a CV done, I come here I was 22 and never had a CV (Simon, 22)

Andy, noted how when he got his first CV, which he constructed with the help of his ICO mentor, the ease with which he was able to find work was almost unbelievable:

There you go boom there is my CV. Sent it to two places, got a job straight away, you know what I mean? All the other jobs I have got I had to fight for you know what I mean? I had to go out there never had a CV to hand out, went to my mentor and boom there is your CV. I don't even look at it properly to be honest with you I just sent it to a few people next day job one after each other boom boom boom thinking wow what's going on here no way! This is what a CV does, it was mad. (Andy, 24)

This is not to suggest that the probationers in the sample had no skills at all. It was simply that the majority of their skill sets were predominantly utilised in an anti-social context. Lee for instance, discussed having a keen interest in cars. However, he ultimately exercised this interest through the theft of cars and other items which he would then sell on.

Pulling up in a different car every single day mate just selling them. People coming up giving me lists saying I want this and this and this, next half an hour or the next day you would have that thing. So let's say you wanted a 42-inch LG TV and an iPhone 5 or you want a new ford focus, like the next day or the same day yeah I would have it for you. (Lee, 22)

In a similar vein to that discussed by Halsey (2014: 13), the probationers in the sample “had many ‘skills’. It’s just that they were overwhelmingly centred on criminal and anti-social

endeavours”. Once offenders began to transition towards conformity however, this skill set became largely redundant as it was no longer in line with the fledgling pro-social identity being constructed during this transitional phase. As such, it was time to find a new one.

Of course, having a CV is all well and good, for the probationers in the sample, filling it was a different story. Of the 18 probationers in the sample, 12 did not finish school of the 6 that did, only 3 had any formal qualifications (GCSEs or NVQs) before commencing their ICO. Probationers in the sample displayed a significant lack of “human capital” or the “skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways” (Coleman, 1990: 304). For instance in order to work in construction in the UK, an individual is required to obtain a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. As working in construction was something Tony, for instance, wanted to undertake, he was required to complete his CSCS training in order to get the required qualifications:

For me, at this moment in time I want to do my theory and CSCS card and my forklift truck license with these and hopefully get a job after Christmas. (Tony, 24)

This is not to suggest that once such a lack of human capital was identified by the probationers a straightforward solution was forthcoming. In fact the effects of their liminal position (discussed in chapter four and later in the present chapter) hindered participants ability to transition from this liminal phase towards their future self by limiting their ability to achieve the human capital necessary to function in conventional society. As Harry notes, the structural blockages participants experienced owing to their liminal position were exceptionally difficult to get around alone. In order to successfully maintain a new non-offending identity, the probationers in the sample needed help:

There are things you want innit and if you are doing it by yourself it makes it a lot harder if you do it without help. (Harry, 21)

It must be remembered here that for most of the probationers in the sample however, the agentic, up front transitional work undertaken and discussed in chapter 6 involved the separation of probationers from previous social networks. As such, one previous avenue for help and support had been closed off to them. It became apparent from the probationers in the sample that, in order to successfully maintain their desistance transitions, not only did their skill set need to undergo a period of transition, but so too did their involvement with social structures.

According to Coleman (1990: 302 *emphasis added*) social capital “is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of *social structure*, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure”. For Boeck et al (2008: 8) “social capital is seen as a set of relationships and interactions that have the potential to be transformative”. It suggests that membership of a group infers upon an individual the collective capital of other members of that group. It has been suggested that “the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent [...] depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize [sic.] and the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected” (Bourdieu, 1986: 247). In relation to desistance there is consensus within the available literature that improved stocks of social capital are more likely to result in the successful maintenance of desistance. Bosker et al (2013: 67) state that “research on desistance from crime has shown that improving the so called social capital of offenders can be an essential part of an effective rehabilitation process”, with King (2014: 39) suggesting that “enhancing social capital can be a crucial aspect of the desistance process, as it entails creating opportunities for change and makes it harder to renege on certain responsibilities”. Yet questions have to be raised (and have been in the available literature) about the inherent “goodness” of social capital. Farrall (2011: 60) for instance suggests that “changes in some types of social capital alter the possibilities for various forms of social activity, and may serve to encourage the avoidance of delinquent acts in some people and the engagement in offending by others”. If, as is suggested here, social capital can promote both desistance and continued offending, it is important to emphasise the distinction between the forms of social capital which support desistance and those which support offending. As such, Hucklesby (2008: 56) makes the distinction between “anti-social capital” and “pro-social capital”, a distinction which shall be used throughout the remainder of the current thesis.

There was evidence of the role of both anti and pro-social capital in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. The identification of both pro and antisocial capital in the accounts provided by the probationers in the sample represents an important insight about the nature of capital. A cursory reading of the available desistance literature could be sufficient to suggest that capital acquisition is unquestionably positive in relation to desistance transitions. It is important to remember however, that capital in and of itself is value neutral, it is the way this capital is operationalized that makes it either positive or negative, and the tools for

acquiring it are largely the same for both pro and antisocial capital. Streeten for instance suggests that “there is of course, nothing surprising in the fact that social capital, like all other factors of production, can be put to bad uses as well as to good ones. It would be possible to define social capital as only those forms of group allegiance that have positive, desirable effects. But this would not be a helpful definition. It would mean that whenever we have good results, social capital is tautologically assumed to be present. It is preferable to define it by its characteristics rather than its desirable (or undesirable) effects” (2002:11). The notion of pro and antisocial capital adds to the discussion of the moral value of both capital and agency. Loughran et al (2013) for instance provide a detailed discussion of the link between human capital and criminal capital which McCarthy and Hagan define as a type of capital which “can facilitate successful criminal activity” (1995: 66). They suggest that the processes for the accumulation of criminal capital, mirror those of human capital. Along with the idea that although human capital can be accrued through social capital “criminal capital [...] is arguably *more* reliant on criminal social capital because of the informal social nature of most criminal enterprises (Loughran et al, 2013: 6). Lindegaard and Jacques (2014) provide an account of the potential for agency to lead to continued offending, suggesting that “although agency may lead people away from offending, it can also do the opposite” (ibid: 96). The point to be made here is that in order to maintain tentative desistance transitions, probationers in the sample needed to reorient themselves away from the criminogenic forms of capital and agency, towards those that facilitated pro social action.

It was discussed in chapter six, that a proportion of the offences committed by the probationers in the sample were in the company of friends. For Jason, involvement and relationship with gang culture and the anti-social capital inherent within this culture supported his offending behaviour. For Tony, involvement in a friendship group he now refers to as “the wrong crowd” allowed for the development of the deviant identity and subsequent offending which caused him to be the most prolific probationer in the sample. While this may have been acceptable to both Jason and Tony at the time, the decision to desist, the agentic action implemented by both to begin transitioning towards a desisting identity, and the desired future selves discussed throughout their narratives meant that such “homophilious interactions” - or interactions which occur between similarly positioned others - (Boeck et al, 2008: 10) had nothing to offer in terms of improving their social mobility. Coleman (1990: 304) suggests that “a group whose members manifest trustworthiness and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable

group lacking that trustworthiness and trust” (the notion of trust is discussed in more detail below and in chapter eight).

As is suggested in the definition discussed above, social capital (both pro and anti) is inherently linked to social structures. According to Coleman (1990: 302), unlike human capital (discussed above) social capital “inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production. [It is an] aspect of a social structure [that encourages] certain actions of individuals who are within the social structure” (see also Wright et al, 2001 and Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). The link between employment as one of the “big structures” and desistance from crime shall be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. For the probationers in the current sample, the social structure which exerted perhaps the most influence during this transitional period was their familial relationships.

The link between familial relationships and social capital has been considered to be the “main source of social capital” (Barry 2007a:190) and can be summarised by Wright et al (2001: 9) who suggest that “families that invest in their children are more able to create social bonds and to foster pro-social learning. Social capital, in short, fosters informal control while also increasing conventional moral values and decreasing access to delinquent peers”. For Coleman (1990), families transmit social capital through three mechanisms, time spent and effort invested in the relationship between parent and child, the establishment of an emotional bond between members and through the availability pro-social guidance, thereby inhibiting individuals from committing anti-social acts. The point to be made however is that the accumulation of this capital is cumulative, it does not happen instantly, and *disruption to this relationship can cause setbacks in capital acquisition*.

The importance of family relationships in the desistance process was evident in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. The way probationers were perceived by family members was deemed to be important, in a similar vein to the notions of “othering” discussed in chapter six, it was important for the probationers in the sample who had close family ties (which, as will be discussed below, was not all of them), that family members did not see them in a negative light. Paul, for instance, noted that when he was offending (which predominated around his self-reported problems with alcohol) he would not go home as he didn’t want his grandmother to see him “like that”:

She has never seen how I really was like, if I ever got too drunk I would not go to my

nannas, or if I was ever, when I used to smoke weed I never used to go to my nannas stoned. But obviously I have stopped smoking weed and now I am at my nannas, because I am on tag and things at my nannas, she just sees the responsible side to me. (Paul, 21)

It should be noted here that showing his “responsible side” to certain people suggests another form of “situational compliance” as he acts in particular ways in front of particular people. It could also however be seen as Paul evidencing increased subscription to conventional morality. Hiding his behaviour from his grandma also suggests an element of shame in his actions (see King, 2014). When the discussion returned to his grandmother later on in the interview however, Paul suggested that his staying out of trouble, cutting his alcohol intake and actively trying to find work has pleased his grandmother, which is something he has taken considerable pride in:

*She [grandmother] can see the change to be honest because she can see that I am happier in myself. Just seeing how happy she is with me makes me happy as well, you see what I mean just saying it makes me smile, how confident she is in me. That was part of my problem, she would look at me as if to say "you aren't going to go for a job because you are going to drink tonight", like "you are not going to go to that interview tomorrow", but now knowing my nanna knows that he is not going to drink tonight he is going to go to bed, she will smile about it and it makes me smile about it as well. *laughs* (Paul, 21)*

It is interesting to note here that the position of his familial relationships had altered during his initial transitions towards desistance, from people whom he felt the need to hide from, to people he wants to make proud. It is suggested in the available literature that an increase in pro-social capital can greater inform rational choice decision-making. Boeck et al (2008:11) suggests that with increased stocks of pro-social capital “cost-benefit calculations are better informed, and the range of possible futures is extended”. Indeed there is evidence of rational choice in the account provided by Jason, for him, reoffending could potentially result in him losing his daughter, in a sense, he has too much to lose. As such, there is reason here to concur with Farrall (2011: 67) who suggests that “[pro] social capital represents not just a means for desisting, but also a reason for continued reform”.

So far, this chapter has considered the roles of human and pro-social capital in transition. For ease of analysis a clear distinction between the two has been utilised (and will continue to be

used) throughout this chapter as a heuristic device. It needs to be emphasised however that the acquisition of social capital can also lead to the acquisition of human capital (discussed above). Hucklesby (2008: 56) for instance suggests that “the accumulation of human capital often relies upon social capital”. Indeed this was identified in research conducted by Farrall (2011: 65) who suggests that “In many instances, working parents either offered their sons and daughters work (if they were self-employed) or found opportunities for them via contacts they had through their own employment”. While this was not overly evident in the discussions of family in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample (for reasons discussed below), there was evidence of probationers inheriting parental social capital in terms of the social status of their parents. For instance, Tom, who documented a close relationship with his family, discussed his desire to work as a roofer with his father. This avenue was currently closed to him as his father had no vacancies, and he would not fire someone to employ Tom:

I thought I could get in with my dad, he said he would try but he said he won't fire someone to put someone in work because that guy is losing money, that is what he has said to me. He isn't going to fire someone else to give me a job basically, because he is always supporting his family and that is me so. (Tom, 20)

While this does not necessarily support the idea that individuals can utilise the pro-social capital of their parents to develop their own human capital, there is an indication of highly moral pro-social guidance discussed above. Although Tom could not use his father's standing to gain human capital at the time of the interview, his discussion of the high status of his father can be seen to elevate his own pro-social capital as his father's son:

My dad is the top foreman on the site he has got a good reputation and like, other companies have tried to headhunt him offering him more money but he has said no because he is happy where he is. (Tom, 20)

While the available desistance literature evidences a strong link between familial ties and the successful maintenance of desistance for offenders (see for instance, Farrall 2004; Laub, Nagin and Sampson, 1998), in the current research there was evidence of occasions when an abundance of pro-social capital and strong familial relationships actually *facilitated* offending. This was perhaps most evident for Neil (24) who, before committing the offence that resulted in his ICO self-reported being in stable employment which carried with it a degree of responsibility and having a good relationship with his father. His mother left when

he was a child which Neil reported was due to her inability to overcome alcohol problems and he was raised solely by his father. As Neil got older, his father started to develop a range of disabilities and so Neil became responsible for doing the shopping, paying bills, managing finances and generally running the household. Such added responsibility meant that, when Neil started getting in to financial difficulties, he was able to sign cheques over from his father's bank account into his own to clear the debt:

I knew, it was just me and my dad at home, so I knew what kind of finances he had coming into his bank account, he trusted me quite well so I opened his cheque book and started signing his cheques and putting them in my bank and then when they cleared I started making payments against the debt (Neil, 24)

Arguably, without the strong relationship between Neil and his father, the offence in question would not have been possible. While discussing his offence however, Neil suggests that the social network he was involved in at the time of the offence promoted the acquisition of anti-social over pro-social capital. Although he suggests a recognition that he acted agentically when he committed the offence against his father and that he was ultimately responsible for the position he found himself in, his former social network did not help matters:

I made the choices that I made, I made the choice to offend I made the choice to steal the money, I made the choice to get up and go out when I could have said no, but they were also a bad influence because they would be like, oh come on Neil this isn't like you, come and have a night out with us come and get drunk etc. etc. so you know they would make those things sound like it was ok to do when really it probably wasn't. (Neil, 24)

While there is evidence to suggest that a large proportion of Neil's accounts represent "situational compliance", and the above extract furthers this notion, later on in his account he suggests that the blame was actually 50 per cent his and 50 per cent down to his social networks influence on him. As such, Neil, in a similar vein to Kamran in the previous chapter, abandoned his old friendship networks in favour of a new network which he deemed to be inherently "good" and more in line with the desisting identity he presented during the course of the interview:

The people I mix with now are obviously decent people and have supported me throughout everything, they were writing to me in prison, they still support me they

supported me when I got out of court and stuff like that, so those are the people I have kept in my life. (Neil, 24)

While the role of familial relationships in the development of pro-social capital is evidenced to foster a strong link with the ability of probationers to maintain desistance from crime, the pro-social capital created in this relationship alone is not necessarily sufficient to support desistance efforts.

7.4 The impact of liminality on capital acquisition

It was discussed in chapter 4 and again in chapter six that the probationers in the sample can be said to have been experiencing a period of liminality throughout the course of this fieldwork. This liminality was not strictly limited to their burgeoning transitions towards desistance from crime but also in relation to their transition into adulthood and also transitioning between young offender and adult criminal justice provisions. While the last of these was evident throughout their accounts, particularly in their reflections on probation supervision which are discussed later in this chapter and in chapter 8; it is the first two of these which shall be discussed here, as this period of liminality placed restrictions on the availability of avenues for capital acquisition.

The youth transitions literature notes that “it is in the late teens and twenties [the age of the current sample] that many people experience discrimination, socially, legally, and economically as a direct result of their age, and hence their status as being in limbo” (Barry, 2010b: 124), it has been argued that such discrimination, sometimes referred to as “ageism” (Barry, 2010a) towards young people has the potential to restrict the opportunities for development. For instance, young people with a lack of financial support or education may be restricted from accessing higher education, housing or stable employment. Indeed, Barry (2010a: 6) argued that:

“[Social, economic, cultural and symbolic] capital [discussed in more detail below] are [...] difficult to accumulate in transition. Young people have few permanent friendships at that age; limited in opportunities to earn money or respect; are confined to full-time education and are segregated from the adult labour market.”

The fact that the probationers in the sample had, for some, quite a substantial criminal record impacted further upon this liminality and the structural blockages emphasized by it. In

relation to the desistance literature, the social structures most heavily linked to the development of pro-social capital are employment and familial relationships discussed above. While the role of employment in the desistance process has been discussed as part of the discussion of “big structures” in chapters three and four in relation to the positive impact of employment upon the life of the individual; in relation to pro-social capital, it has been suggested that finding stable and *meaningful* employment, while providing a wage which was important to the probationers in the sample, also “provides people with friendship networks and entry into other social entities such as work-based clubs or societies” (Farrall 2011: 65). As such it allows individuals to develop what Putnam (1995) refers to as “bridging capital”, establishing more distant ties other than those in one’s immediate social circle. Given that, according to Bourdieu (1986), the amount of social capital one possesses is directly related to the size of the social network one is able to mobilize, increasing involvement in pro-social networks will increase the amount of pro-social capital one possesses.

With regards to the current research however, of the 14 probationers who returned for the second interview, only two had managed to find work, of those two, one was self-employed and worked alone and the other was only two weeks into his employment and, according to his account, had yet established strong relationships with any of his colleagues. As such the pro-social capital associated with meaningful and stable employment was not overly present in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample.

Neil, for example, notes that he cannot afford to be picky when it comes to finding work as, given his offence (fraud) he did not feel that anyone would want to employ him:

*“I am actually at a position where I will just take any job at the minute because I can't, I know I have had management experience and that but I can't really be picky with my jobs at the minute because of the offence that I have done *laughs* so at the minute it is just really frustrating because I am applying for so many jobs and I am not getting any response from anybody, like you just don't get any replies” (Neil, 24)*

Discussions surrounding the inhibiting nature of the stigma attached to a criminal record predominantly focuses upon formerly incarcerated offenders (see Uggen et al, 2004 and LeBel, 2012 for detailed discussion on the inhibiting nature of perceived stigma), but there is evidence of the inhibiting nature of such stigma for probationers, Durnescu (2010: 8) for instance notes that “despite the fact that probation did not involve imprisonment, a number of probationers stated that they felt the stigmatisation effects of probation”. Although this was a

sentiment echoed by other probationers in the sample, it did not stop them from continuing their search for employment. While the majority of the sample carried on through internet searching and the job club run in the ICO office, for some the frustration of failure through these avenues resulted in them seeking alternative means to find legitimate employment. Jason, for instance, ultimately became fed up of handing in his CV and getting nowhere, he felt his best chance at finding work was knowing someone already working and getting them to put in a good word for him. For others, such as Neil, the frustration surrounding the ability to find work under the shadow of one's criminal record, meant that he started applying for positions without declaring his conviction:

Well this job, I have been so desperate for work that I have not decided to tell them this time, I just didn't submit that I have got a record or that I have been coming here, because I am that desperate for a job because this time I was worried that if I did tell them, because of my background they might not give me a chance, so I thought that because I was near the end of the order as well I didn't tell them because what is the point? Luckily nothing has come back of it, but that is why I didn't tell them this time I was desperate for work. (Neil, 24)

While Neil was aware of the fact that he could lose his job for failing to declare his criminal record to his new employers (indeed I observed his mentor telling him that “all it would take would be for someone to walk in and say ‘don’t I know you from probation?’ for suspicions to be raised and for you to lose your job”), the lack of employment for this period and the fact that he was “going crazy in the house all day” meant that not declaring his record in the hope of finding work was “worth the risk”.

7.4.1 Jason's Story

The narrative provided by Jason is perhaps most indicative of the difficulties experienced by probationers in the sample in relation to the role of capital acquisition in transition. He demonstrated both pro and antisocial capital along with a changing interaction with social structures. He also discusses the impact of being in a liminal position on his continued capital acquisition.

Jason was one of the most prolific offenders in the sample, and, in line with chapter six, presented his involvement in criminal activity as being the result of his social networks:

[It was] petty stuff mate, petty stuff really it is just the people I was with innit, it weren't even really like I was going, like if I was on my own I wouldn't have gone and done it, it just, you roll with everyone and they say let's do it and you just, do it like.

Jason suggests that his offending trajectory was supported by a considerable stock of anti-social capital which facilitated his continued offending. He describes being part of a local gang, while he looked back with negative memories of his involvement with gangs, the stock of anti-social capital which supported his offending is still evident in his account:

I was involved in all that gang shit innit? If you are involved in that obviously, you are committing crime innit to make money that is the only way to make money. It's not good, not good at all man. It is not good, it is not a good way of life you would wish upon anyone anyway. It is not good mate but like, at the time you know when you are living that life you think it is alright innit? But once you move away from it yeah you see like, I think back innit I was an idiot you know what I'm saying? I was dumb man. When I was involved in gangs and that mate, if you asked me how many friends I had I would say hundreds you know what I am saying and not one of those people I would say was my friend now.

He suggests that while he was involved in the “homophilious interactions” with other gang members he felt he had a considerable stock of anti-social capital (or social capital which promotes offending). Upon leaving prison however, he noted that he had come to realise that he could class none of his former gang members as “friends” as none of them had contacted him while he was inside. Of course, this could be due to the rational choice decision by gang members to avoid criminal justice institutions. According to Jason, this caused him to re-evaluate the quality of his social networks and the “kinds of people” he wanted to associate with:

All of them are idiots, untrustworthy people man they are not loyal. That is what sort of people they are that are involved, trust me man, that is what it is like all them people are idiots. Not good man, not a group of friends you want anyway. (Jason, 21)

This anti-social capital, characterised by a (sometimes hidden) lack of trust within its members, hindered the upwards social mobility of those involved. It was not until Jason

broke away from gang culture upon release from prison that he began to see his past life for “what it was”, and began to attach himself to more positive individuals, improving his levels of pro-social capital and his social mobility.

In order for Jason to successfully maintain his initial desistance transitions then, his involvement with social structures and the value of his capital acquisition needed to transition with him. He discusses the formation of prosocial relationships which, although did not last, provided a stock of prosocial capital which allowed him to avoid falling back into old friendship groups:

I got with a girl and that yeah and that's that three year break you get what I am saying? When I got out of jail I was with a girl and that for three years yeah. Sorted my life out, I like sort of, obviously when I was with her I got something to be out here for innit, if I was to do something I would go to jail and lose my girlfriend.

Ultimately this relationship did not last and the disruption is what Jason attributes to his reoffending (discussed in more detail in chapter six). For Jason however, another source of prosocial capital (or relationships which have the potential to be transformative) was soon available for him. He became a father. He suggested that his desire to stay out of trouble was now driven in part by his desire to be with his daughter which, if anything, overrode his commitment to previous anti-social friendship groups, it was also important to Jason that she did not see him as a bad person (see chapter six):

I got a daughter and that to think about, I can't be doing, how is my daughter going to feel if, oh you dad is in jail, what for? Burglary. You know what I am saying? Plus obviously I have got to be there for my daughter innit? If I am in there I can't be there for her, so I have got to be outside, yeah man. . I am a dad for the baby. I have the baby overnight and that, I have the baby overnight a couple of nights a week and that. Obviously that has made me realise innit, like 100% man I need to just fix myself up, for her.

The impact of being a liminar for Jason however impacted upon the further social capital acquisition as he found employment difficult to obtain. Throughout the first interview, Jason adopted an almost fatalistic approach to his job prospects. He assumed the belief that the

severity of his criminal record meant attempting to find employment through traditional means was reasonably futile:

Jason: I would rather get a job mate but with my record I feel like a down and out, I can't get a job, serious, man you need to see my record mate. For me it feels pointless trying to get a job.

Chris: How come?

*Jason *laughs* have a look at my record and then tell me man. These will show you have a look man, I have got like over 30 convictions for over 50 offences on their mate, no one is going to want to employ me with that innit?*

Although he did not identify with his offending past anymore, for Jason, the “ex” in “ex-offender” remained invisible to the outside world, limiting his chances for success in the future. This is evident in an account he provided later in the first interview. His, now ex, girlfriend was sending his CV, along with her own to potential employers, while she was receiving responses and attending interviews, he was largely ignored:

Jason: I have got about over 50 convictions innit, well not convictions but 50 offences.

Chris: Do you think that is going to hold you back?

Jason: Definitely man, definitely bro. Do you think it would?

Chris: I can see how you think that.

Jason: But when I was with my ex and that yeah, she used to always, like every day be on the job sites and that. And she had my CV there yeah in some document thing and hers in it and she would go over the jobs and that and paste my thingy in there yeah, send them off, for the whole basically the whole three years I was with her yeah and not one person come back to me. She used to ring them up and she would have an interview within an hour. But when I send mine off yeah not one person got back to me ever, I am talking ever mate over the space of three years. So in a way I did give up.

However there may be many reasons as to why Jason’s ex-girlfriend was shortlisted for interviews and he was not. She could be more qualified than he was, she could also have more experience. For Jason though, his criminal record, or rather the stigma *he perceived* to be

attached to his criminal record, caused him to feel like a “down and out” and was a major factor in his failing to find employment by the time of the first interview. For Jason, the only way he could see himself getting work was to utilise the social capital he had obtained outside of work, and ask a friend to put in a good word for him:

I don't think I can get a job like go round and hand my CV in, I think I need to like get my way in there some how you get what I am saying? Like knowing someone, obviously I am willing to work innit.

Ultimately Jason successfully completed his ICO and had found work by the end of the fieldwork period. At the time of writing he has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.

So far this chapter has examined how notions of capital acquisition and social structures appeared to be transitioning while probationers in the sample were undertaking desistance transitions. Once the initial separation from an old offending identity had been made and the initial upfront agentic mechanisms had been put into place, a re-evaluation of both capital and interaction with social structures seemed to undertaken. Where an offence focused skill set was suitable for an offending life, separation from this life meant that a new skill set needed to be acquired and developed. Where anti-social friendship networks characterised discussions of offending, familial relationships and parenthood were more closely linked to the burgeoning desisting identity. All of which were still performed in a social context which, *inter alia* owing to the liminal state of the probationer, placed certain restrictions on the extent to which this capital could be acquired. While these “big structures” are discussed throughout the available literature in relation to their ability to promote desistance transitions, it was argued in chapter four that desistance research needs to pay more attention to the smaller social structures (structures which do not receive the same amount of research attention as marriage, employment and family formation) with which an offender in transition interacts on a daily basis in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of desistance. One such structure which, unsurprisingly, featured heavily in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample concerned being “on probation”.

7.5 Experiencing supervision while in transition.

For the probationers in the sample, their supervisory experience during the course of their

ICO performed several different tasks. Firstly, in relation to the discussion in chapter six, the transition between youth and adult offender services was emphasised by the probationers in the sample. This is in part due to the fact that most of the probationers in the sample had experienced both young offender and adult offender provisions over a relatively short time period and, as such, were still experiencing the transition between the two. Interestingly being treated as an adult, even if that was an adult offender, supported an aspect of the discursive tools of desistance utilised by probationers to propel desistance transitions. Probationers in the sample framed part of their initial decision to desist around the notion of maturity, as such, their experience of young offender provisions focused on an aspect of their identity which was incongruous with the identity currently in transition:

Just like I'm not a kid anymore really. YOT they treat you like kids, well you are a kid aren't you. Here they have a bit of time for you. (James, 18)

Not only this but, as an adult identity is one within which many of the aspirations (both overarching and more immediate) demonstrated by probationers are located, being involved in an adult criminal justice service offered access to avenues to achieve these goals in ways which were inaccessible to young offenders:

[YOS] is like probation really but for younger kids really innit? I think probation is better though because obviously they help you out more they do actually help you, if you want help they will help you. They will help you out with stuff and like say I am at the job centre and stuff they will help me out or they will pay for my provisional, or help you with your driving or help you to do stuff to get a lift to community service you know they help you out you know what I mean? (Harry, 21)

Interestingly however, and somewhat against the available literature, when discussing their experience of probation supervision under the ICO, the major theme that emerged concerned pro-social capital. While there were other avenues for such capital acquisition for the probationers in the sample discussed above, the supervisory experience appeared to offer a further avenue that probationers could draw upon if needed.

The available literature on the subject suggests that while the probation service in England and Wales, since the introduction of the “What Works” initiative, has been well placed to tackle issues surrounding the lack of human capital for probationers, it is perhaps not as able to facilitate the acquisition of pro-social capital. King (2014: 178 *emphasis in original*) suggests that the acquisition of pro-social capital is neglected “because probation policy is

designed to produce responsibilised, remoralised prudent citizens *and* because it is designed to manage offenders through centrally prescribed processes”. Research which examined the lack of pro-social capital development in criminal justice processes has called for a re-focus on the development of such capital within offenders. Bosker et al (2013: 81, see also Farrall, 2004) for instance argue that “although the improvement of human capital is important and although having sufficient skills may even be a condition of handling social situations adequately, helping offenders improve their social capital is an important task for the probation service in its own right and must not be forgotten”.

In a marked shift from the available literature, it was evident in the current research that the probation service did in fact offer support in the development of pro-social capital for the probationers in the sample and that probationers recognised such support relatively quickly. If, for instance, we are to take the definition of social capital adopted Boeck et al (2008:88) as “a set of relationships and interactions that have the potential to be transformative”, we are able to see the potential role probation can play in the development of such capital in probationers. It has been noted in the available research on the desistance process for probationers that the relationship formed between a probationer and their supervisory team was valued by the probationers in the study. Simon for instance discussed the bond he had developed with his supervisory team during the course of his order:

You have like a mad bond with them you know what I mean, not like a sexual thing but like friendly you know? I see my mentor out on the street and I'm like "you alright?" you know what I mean it is mad (Simon, 22)

Healy (2012b: 388) for instance noted that “participants believed that the impact of probation depended on the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between them and their supervising officer. A good relationship heightened their commitment to desistance and provided encouragement during difficult times”. Indeed, during the course of the fieldwork it became apparent that a considerable degree of investment by probation staff was being put into facilitating a working relationship with their probationers. For Laura, this investment which, as discussed above, had potentially been absent for the probationers in the sample previously, allowed for the development of pro-social capital within her probationers:

So when they feel that someone is investing in them for the first time, that investment is really strong, social capital is really important so they are not going back to prison every five minutes. For a lot of them their social capital is pro criminal so it is, this is

the first really positive social investment they have really got. (Laura, PSO)

In fact, the most important aspect of probation supervision for probationers centred on the relationship they had formed with their supervisory team. Indeed, the code “probation helps” was recorded in every interview conducted with probationers. Harry notes for instance, that completing a probation order is hard, and, for him, it would have been much harder without the help of his supervisory team:

When you haven't got this help it is very hard you know what I mean I would say it would be hard if I didn't have help. So in that way they do help you out they are alright (Harry, 23)

So far it has been noted that the relationship between probationers and their supervisory team allowed for the accumulation of pro-social capital which could be utilised proactively, increasing probationers stocks of human capital and allowing participants to navigate some of the structural blocks which had the potential to impede upon their desistance transitions. It also allowed for the creation of another avenue of pro-social support in times of crisis, thereby reducing the likelihood that probationers will fall back on iterative forms of agency in the face of setbacks (see Healy, 2012a; 2012b). This was evidenced by the fact that, during the course of the fieldwork, probationers were witnessed on a daily basis reporting to the ICO ‘in crisis’ and requesting an unscheduled appointment with a member of their supervisory team. Laura suggests that the majority of day is spent “firefighting” or finding solutions to the immediate problems that occur on the road to desistance:

*a typical day *laughs* it is a lot of firefighting, I think you know, a lot of them are coming in in crisis, someone is homeless, someone has had a heavy night on booze, someone has been thrown out because they are smoking cannabis, someone has been arrested. It is firefighting and finding out how to solve that situation there and then. (Laura, PSO)*

The freedom to report to the probation office in times of crisis was also evident in the accounts of probationers in the sample. Gary for instance notes that he reported to the Job Centre in order to collect his benefit payments. Due to bureaucratic errors however his payment was not available to collect. As such Gary became aggressive and was verbally abusive to the staff at the centre. Before committing a further offence however Gary decided it would be best to report to his probation office:

I got on the bus to here told my mentor what happened, that I had kicked off in the job centre and she said you best phone the police and hand yourself in, so I handed myself in that day (Gary, 26)

For some, instead of necessarily reporting to the office in crisis, the formation of a pro-social relationship with their supervisory team allowed probationers to discuss aspects of their life which they perhaps were not comfortable discussing with others in their immediate social networks. Neil for instance suggests that there are some things he does not want to discuss with his father but is able to do so to his probation officer:

Because I mean I know my dad cares and stuff but there is only so much you want to discuss with your parents isn't there? Sometimes you don't want to let them on as to how you are feeling sometimes and it is good you can come here and say oh look I am feeling like this but I have not told my dad because of A,B,C. So yeah. (Neil, 24)

Ruth discussed a client of hers who presented as aggressive but after discussion ended up crying in front of her. She suggests that the building a working relationship, and the pro-social capital developed alongside it, allows for the formation of trust between her and her probationers which allows for such disclosures to be forthcoming:

Like one of mine came in last week and he is doing his CSCS and he said Ruth I am not really in the mood, all I had to say is what the matter and he just started crying, and this is a 19 year old lad that you would not expect to do this. It is about building up a trust element because they have never had it, because kids on the street are not going to be stood in front of their mates and start crying, when they are so angry and frustrated, but they feel that they can come here and do it. (Ruth, Mentor)

It was suggested in the above discussion about James and his involvement in gang culture that an element of trust in a relationship has the potential to make that relationship more productive. The account provided by Ruth supports this notion for, without the development of a trusting working relationship, it is possible that such disclosure would not be as prevalent.

The final points to be made in this chapter are in the way of answering predicted criticisms of the role of the probation service as an avenue for pro-social capital acquisition for probationers. Firstly, it is not the intention here to suggest that the development of this working relationship is solely down to the probation staff. The development of network

connections between individuals, and the subsequent development of pro-social capital within these connections, is reciprocal, requiring effort on the part of both parties. As Bourdieu (1986: 248) argues “the existence of a network of connections is not a natural given or even a social given, constituted once and for all by an initial act of institution [...] it is the product of endless effort”. As such, simply receiving a probation order does not automatically guarantee a pro-social relationship with the supervisory team. Indeed to quote Adam, one of the probationers in the sample, “is what you make of it”. It needs to be remembered that the acquisition of pro-social capital is an agentially driven process, probationers need to *want* to access the structural supports offered by the probation service and their wider social networks in order to navigate around the obstacles to desistance discussed at the start of this chapter.

Secondly, and somewhat in line with the above discussion, it is important to remember that the acquisition of capital (both human and cultural) takes a considerable amount of investment and time on behalf of all parties involved in its acquisition. Again, Bourdieu (1986: 244) suggests that acquiring capital “costs time, time which must be invested by the investors. Like the acquisition of muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at second hand”. During the course of an ICO, probationers are required to report for several appointments with their supervisory team every week, the frequency of which is dependent upon the conditions of their order. These lasted approximately one hour per appointment, as such there is the opportunity for a relationship to be built between a probationer and their supervisory team. This potentially offers an explanation as to why previous research has suggested that the probation service is currently unable to facilitate pro-social capital in its probationers and the current research has suggested the opposite. When discussing past experiences of probation with probationers in the sample they suggested that the short appointment times was one of the more negative aspects of the supervision experience:

I was on probation there was just nothing, there was nothing there for me. When I come out like I was saying it was just drop in see you are doing then it was "in a bit"
(Mark, 22)

Anne, an Operations Support Officer who had worked at numerous probation officers throughout the region before working at the ICO reports the frequency with which they see the probationers on their books:

On a generic order you could get unpaid work and say nine months supervision, you go to your supervision and they will talk to you for 40 minutes, maybe about half an

hour about how you are and they will do some offence work and stuff, whereas here, you will come in and you will get about 5 requirements, you are always here. (Anne, OSO)

This is not a criticism of standard offices, or a suggestion that the ICO is the “right” way of conducting supervision with probationers, simply that differences in the fieldwork office, compared to other offices, offers a potential explanation as to why previous research did not identify the development of pro-social capital in probationers and the current research has.

Finally, while the above discussion has suggested that the probation office offers probationers an avenue for the acquisition of pro-social capital, it is not to suggest that such acquisition is unidirectional. Rather, there are benefits of such a working relationship for both the probationer and their supervisory team. Coleman (1988: 104) suggests that “an important form of social capital is the potential for information that inheres in social relations. Information is important in providing a basis for action”. As such for the probation staff, probationers represent an avenue of “information potential” whereby they can improve their knowledge of the probationer and act accordingly. Laura for instance discussed how she used the information she obtained from interaction with her probationers to inform the work she does with them. Firstly she notes how an understanding of how Neil presents to the office, along with the fact that he still offending and his desire to be liked, has caused her to act in certain ways in order to work with him:

Neil needs that reassurance of everyone around him that they think he is the top guy and thumbs up to Neil and what a service user, five star offender that we have had through these doors. It feeds his erm, the grand image he has of himself. It is really hard because, we have a magistrates open evening in a couple of weeks and me and my manager were talking about possibly getting him in to do a piece about the work he has done here, not necessarily about change because there hasn't been that much, but in terms of the services and resources available to service users when they come in. But we thought that actually, he is so egotistical that it would feed his ego and I think he can be quite dangerous like that, so we decided against it for the best. (Laura, PSO)

The information probation staff have on their clients also allows for the identification of warning signs which probation officers need to be aware of in order to prevent potential breach and ensure the probation service remit of public protection is ensured. Laura talks

about how her time with a client has allowed her to pick upon the subtleties of his talk and identify when something is not quite right:

I have got a kidnap on my books, yesterday, which is a possible serious further offence, and he was just talking to me saying I know I am wanted for a kidnap but I am not coming in, hand yourself into the police, well no I don't want to do that, why, I am not ready yet. I am not ready yet insinuates that he is plotting something else really doesn't it so, it is the conversations that you are having with people set little lightbulbs off in your head and you think this doesn't sound right (Laura, PSO).

Indeed, the importance of listening in the supervisory relationship is evidenced in the available literature. Barry (2007b: 413) for instance identified that “the vast majority [of offenders in her sample] suggested that the best approach was for supervising officers to talk and listen to their clients, about the problems, fears and consequences of offending” (see also Healy, 2012a). The importance of face-to-face time with probationers was also recognised by ICO staff in the current research.

You need to see people I can't imagine having someone on an order and never meeting them or never being able to spend any time with them. It's about caring about people really, and listening, if we don't hear someone's cry for help then what are you doing? (Jane, PO)

7.7 Conclusion

Where chapter six expressed the role of agentic action in the initial transitions towards desistance for the probationers in the sample, this chapter has explored the roles of social structures and capital acquisition for probationers in transition. It was suggested that once the up-front cognitive work had been performed by the probationers in the sample, a reappraisal of the value of capital, their available skill sets and their interaction with social structures needed to occur. This was in order to ensure that their new interactions allowed for this tentative desistance transition and desisting narrative to keep going (in the words of Giddens 1991). The notions of both human and social capital in the transition process have been examined and the impact of liminality on the acquisition of both of these has also been considered as this played a part in the ability of the probationers in the sample to successfully maintain their desistance transitions. Finally, and in a break from the available literature, it was suggested that probation supervision served as an additional avenue of pro-social capital

acquisition for the probationers in the sample. This capital was acquired through the development of a pro-social working relationship predicated upon trust and the establishment of a routine. It also allowed probation staff to obtain information about their probationers' desistance transitions and their potential to fall back on iterative forms of agency. The chapter has emphasised the importance of involvement in social structures on the ability of probationers to successfully maintain desistance transitions, and how this involvement in social structures has had to transition with them. However, so far, the discussion of social structures has mostly relied on a discussion of the "big structures" (or those which have received a large proportion of research attention) evident throughout the sociogenic and spatial accounts of desistance. The emphasis of this research, however, is to investigate the importance of smaller social structures (or structures which do not receive the same amount of research attention as marriage, employment and family formation) alongside the big ones. As such this chapter offers some tentative steps towards this by suggesting that certain types of probation supervision, as an aspect of social structure which is not as prevalent in the desistance literature as employment, relationship formation and parenthood, are able to facilitate the forms of capital acquisition in probationers which are required in order for desistance transitions to be maintained. The following chapter, which constitutes the final data chapter in this thesis, examines how these transitions are disrupted when an aspect of social structure that was deemed to be beneficial, and somewhat stable, for the probationers in the sample, began to transition around them.

Chapter 8: Desistance transitions within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

8.1 Introduction

A common theme throughout the previous two data chapters concerns a sense of identity for probationers in the sample. The agentic movements towards desistance and the transitioning involvement in social structures were informed by the perception of an identity or sense of self which was perceived to be fundamentally incongruous with continued offending. While this sense of self was the thing which underpinned the initial transitions towards desistance for probationers in the sample, it was also the aspect which needed the most protection. As evidenced throughout the previous data chapters, challenges to this new identity were met with hostility by probationers in the sample. While these chapters have examined the tools utilised by probationers to form a “protective cocoon” (Giddens, 1991), shielding this fledgling identity from external attack, this chapter shall focus on this sense of self more explicitly, concerning in particular the impact of the initial implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' upon it.

In chapter three it was suggested that research into desistance from crime is beginning to pay more attention to the spatial dynamics at play in the desistance process. Indeed, it was argued that there was utility in examining May and Thrift's (2003) notion of TimeSpace and the idea that an individual's time is perhaps best conceived as being made up of a series of timetables and rhythms. Farrall et al (2014) go on to argue that each of these temporal rhythms also have a spatial dimension which cannot be overlooked, with certain behaviours needing to be enacted in certain places at certain times. This idea of the spatial dynamics of desistance was utilised by Farrall and colleagues in their most recent discussion of their longitudinal desistance research. They suggest that there is some utility in examining how “desistance impacts upon individuals' everyday activities, including the spaces and places in which these take place” (2014: 160). I suggested in chapter three that, although the utility of this discussion is undeniable, it is also rather unilateral in its approach. As such, it was suggested that while we should indeed examine the way in which desistance shapes individuals' everyday activities and the places in which these take place, we should also examine impact of the places and spaces an individual interacts with on a regular basis *on the process of desistance itself*, paying particular attention to those things which do not fall under the “big structures” identified throughout this thesis.

The previous two chapters have examined how agentic action and involvement in social structures needed to be readjusted by probationers in the sample once initial desistance transitions had commenced. The departure point for this final chapter then, lies in this work undertaken by probationers in the sample to maintain initial desistance efforts within the context of transforming supervisory arrangements. It is suggested that the discursive tools of desistance and the agentially driven interaction with pro-social structures created a “protective cocoon” which was able to shield probationers in the sample from the challenges to initial desistance transitions associated with both liminality more generally (as probationers experienced multiple liminalities as discussed in chapters four, six and seven) and the first tentative steps towards breaking away from an offending past. This cocoon, however, was created alongside a relatively familiar and stable supervisory routine. It is argued here that the reforms introduced by 'Transforming Rehabilitation' presented a threat to probationer sense of self which this protective cocoon was not initially designed to shield them from. Utilising notions from existential sociology, most notably “ontological security” (Giddens, 1990, 1991), the chapter examines the impact of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', particularly the risk based reallocation of probationers between the NPS and CRCs, on the ability of probationers to “keep a [desisting] narrative going” (Giddens, 1991: 51) in the context of probation supervision which was searching for a new identity in a similar fashion to those under its charge.

8.2 Adminstrating desistance

The focus of chapter seven concerned how individuals undertaking desistance transitions (within the context of numerous other transitions) had to reorient themselves to new forms of capital and new ways in which to interact with structural supports, along with the impact of liminality on both of these notions. It was suggested that while familial relationships and pro-social friendship networks were the most commonly accessed source of pro-social capital for probationers in the sample, their supervisory team offered another, along with an avenue through which human capital could also be developed.

It became evident during the course of the fieldwork, however, (both in the interviews and observations recorded in the research diary) that the potential for human capital acquisition was hindered by the increased bureaucratic requirements placed upon probation staff. For instance, Sarah notes that the probationers in the office struggled with accredited programmes (a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the office). In order to facilitate increased

engagement with such programmes and subsequently promote capital development, probation officers would accompany their probationers in order to make face to face links with the tutors of these accredited programmes. She notes, however, that such a luxury was no longer permissible owing to the increasing pressures of administrative tasks:

We will go across because it isn't far away, we will walk across and say look, there is no way for my staff to go across there I would have to say to them hang on a minute we have got loads [to do], I am not going to be able to allow them to have that luxury to go over there and do that because it just takes, by the time you have gone across, had the meeting and come back what two hours out of the day? At a time when we are absolutely bursting. (Sarah, SPO)

It was also evident in the interviews with ICO staff that they were experiencing difficulties obtaining the tools required to perform various tasks. In relation to breach proceedings, during the course of the fieldwork it was noted that the breach procedure forms were not available for CRC staff to access as they had been assigned to the NPS systems and therefore inaccessible in the CRC. As such, certain processes and duties (some of which were key performance indicators for the office) were unable to be completed on time. Jane, for instance, noted her frustration with the lack of tools available to her to do her job:

The bug bare is not being able to do your job because things are not there, that is what I found the hardest, [...] so you are sat with someone for 50 minutes or an hour, that is time that you are thinking, this is another 50 minutes worth of work now that I am going to have to, but you can't because the computer is not working or this is not, and that is hard. It is starting to back up a bit now. [...] It is like trying to dig a garden with your hands that is how I feel, like give me the stuff that I need to do what you are asking me to do and I will do it, but they are not. (Jane, PO)

The impact of this in relation to the desistance transitions of the probationers in the sample was that waiting times for appointments began to increase as the bureaucratic requirements of working with offenders needed to be met:

People are now sitting at their desks a lot, lot longer than they are actually out with the lads. It is just little things like that, it makes you think, [we] are employed to mentor people or help people but [we] are sat there doing paper work, and [we] can't avoid it. It is crazy. Rather than you going to see the guy who is finishing his order, you have to sit and write about him instead (Anne, OSO)

Of course, the notion of administrative duties versus time spent with probationers has not simply emerged with 'Transforming Rehabilitation'. Indeed, the available literature on the probation service in England and Wales suggests that “structural and cultural levels of influence point towards the bureaucratic elements of the [probation officer] role as being significant, and the ever increasing workloads [like those discussed above] mean that awkward ethical decisions have to be made regarding the distribution of time available for working directly with people” (Matthews, 2009:66, see also Farrow, 2004a, 2004b and Robinson and McNeill 2016 for a discussion of trends and differences in other jurisdictions). It could, therefore, be argued that the discussions of probation staff highlighted above are perhaps indicative of a probation officer discourse concerning the pressures of administrative tasks. It needs to be remembered, however, that the ICO had only existed for a period of five years. Therefore this was the first administrative remodelling that staff in the ICO template had to implement. It is possible then that this was a factor which contributed to the increased pressure in relation to administrative duties.

The disruptive nature of administrative procedures was noted by probation staff to be a hindrance in their ability to successfully support the maintenance of desistance transitions for the probationers in the sample by impacting upon the *physical experience* of supervision for probationers. While this was certainly a negative outcome of the immediate implementation of the TR reforms, it was also perhaps the most manageable. The reincarnation of the ICO as a CRC, however, produced an undercurrent of identity transformation and ontological concerns for both probation staff and probationers, which arguably, presented a greater threat to the successful maintenance of desistance for probationers than the impact of administrative changes alone. Put simply, it was not just the changes as a result of TR which impacted upon early desistance transitions for probationers, it was the *meaning* taken from these changes which caused both probation staff and probationers to question their ontological security and their sense of self.

8.3 Probation identities in transition: Finding a “wherefore”

The previous two chapters have discussed the upfront agentic work undertaken by probationers in the sample, along with the structural factors involved in order for probationers to undertake, and subsequently maintain desistance transitions. As discussed in chapters six and seven, discursive tools of desistance and agentially driven structural changes allowed for the development of a “protective cocoon” which “allows individuals to deal with life on a

daily basis and *protect the inner self they know* from exposure to outside scrutiny” (Brown, 2000:63, *emphasis added*). While this idea of protecting an inner identity or “desired future self” has been discussed in the previous two chapters (see chapters six and seven and Paternoster and Bushway, 2009), and is a key aspect of ontological security, discussed in more detail below, it is also a fundamental component of what Unamuno’s (1913/2005) notion of a “*telos*” or “wherefore” which, put simply, refers to an “end purpose” (Williams and Gantt, 2013:186). In terms of facilitating action, if we know ultimately our purpose and where we are going, we are able to orient our immediate actions towards this purpose. For the probationers in the sample this “wherefore”, while not identical amongst all members of the sample, revolved around living a pro-social life free from offending (as is evidenced in chapters six and seven). The notion of a “wherefore” however was not simply confined to the narratives provided by the probationers in the sample, in fact, issues of purpose and identity were also evident throughout the data collected from the probation staff. Interestingly, while the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms drew into question this sense of a “wherefore” for probationers in the sample (discussed below), the same could also be said for staff.

As part of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms, the ICO office became a CRC. As a result, and line with the available literature on 'Transforming Rehabilitation', the ‘wherefores’ and occupational identities of probation staff in the sample were in a state of flux during the fieldwork period. As the successful bidders were not announced for the majority of the fieldwork period, probation officers in the sample were unsure of their future direction, all they knew for certain was that they were not “probation” anymore, they were a CRC, not only this, but the name of the order also transformed from Intensive Alternative to Custody to Intensive Community Order:

It was a shame that we were not allowed to keep that [IAC] because it was part of our identity and it feels as well a little bit, potentially like it is going to be easier to say that those five years have been lost to the probation service and now we are CRC now we are ICO. It feels like it is almost been wiped away from the public eye, and it looks like the CRC have set up this fantastic service and we have only been going a year but look what we have done in a year, and it is like hang on a minute we have had five years. (Sarah, PO)

Interestingly, an aspect of the occupational identity of the probation officers in the sample involved their ability to manage high-risk cases. Indeed, the fact that the manipulation of risk and the management of high-risk probationers was the sole responsibility of probation officers meant that such “high risk work” became intertwined with the identities of the probation officers in the sample, the removal of this work from the CRC caused probation officers to begin to question this identity. Sarah, a Probation Officer with 13 years of experience of working with high risk offenders states that, as a “self-confessed data geek” she felt increasingly disillusioned by the fact she was unable to do the work she undertook two years of academic training for:

The reason why probation officers want to be probation officers as opposed to PSOs is because they want to deal with that high risk work and we are academically trained, we are not just NVQ on the job, and I am not dismissing that for a PSO but it is totally different, you go through a university course crammed into two years to be academically trained to be able to understand and analyse risk. So it feels a little bit, unfortunately like someone is saying you can but you can't actually analyse the highest risk because that is an NPS task. It is a bit of a kick in the teeth (Sarah, PO)

This feeling of being increasingly devalued by CRC probation officers is echoed in the only other study on 'Transforming Rehabilitation' which was undertaken during its implementation. Robinson and colleagues conducted a piece of research on the occupational cultures of probation staff during the implementation of TR, during this research it was noted that “status anxiety [was] felt most keenly by [CRC] POs: namely those practitioners who have gained a professional qualification. Among these workers – both recently qualified and experienced – we found the strongest fears about deskilling and the potential ‘death’ or redundancy of their role” (2016: 169).

The distinction made by Sarah between the academically trained probation officers and the vocationally trained probation service officers (PSO) was echoed by probation service officers who took part in the research. Interestingly, however, it was noted by PSOs in the study that, although the changes were not necessarily positive for probation officers, as they were trained in order to manipulate risk statistics, the PSO grade were, if anything relieved to not have to deal with it and were in fact hopeful that the removal of this bureaucratic task would open the door for more rehabilitative, desistance focused efforts:

If I was a PO I would be really pissed at the moment, I wouldn't be happy at the moment at all I would have done my PQF for two years and now I am holding the same cases as a PSO like me who has no previous work in the criminal justice system at all, it is really disheartening. So for them I think they have been sold a really raw deal (Laura, PSO)

Interestingly, while the search for innovation was discussed as a selling point in the early consultation documents for 'Transforming Rehabilitation' (see MoJ, 2010; Fox and Marsh, 2016), the fact that the CRCs were unsure of the direction of their future owners meant that investment in innovative practice was being curtailed in favour of more practical, day to day measures. Indeed, it is noted in the available literature that “without a convincing ‘wherefore’ the self is reduced to a transient phenomenon and choices are determined by short term needs rather than long term goals” (Healy, 2014: 874). Interestingly, while the discussion of a ‘wherefore’ in the available literature is located on the personal level, the probation officers in the current sample suggested that the CRC was experiencing a lack of ‘wherefore’ at the organisational level, drawing into question the sense of security felt by probation staff along with their ability to promote desistance transitions within their probationers while being in a transient position themselves:

“It doesn't feel as, safe is not quite the right word but it doesn't feel as balanced as it did, it just feels very reactive and we will solve every issue and we will try and focus on risk and desistance with each case as opposed to like, having days where you could plan and be creative and what will work [in relation to promoting desistance]”
(Sarah, SPO)

The challenge to the probation staff's “wherefore” seemed to be based, in part, upon the imposition of a drawn-out period of liminality brought on by the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms. Indeed, Healy notes that the quest to understand the “wherefore” of existence “imbues the self with a *sense of continuity* and this provides reassurance that the current actions will achieve desired goals in the future” (2014: 874 *emphasis added*). The fact that the probation office had become a CRC and, to quote Robinson et al (2016: 166), was therefore in a “halfway house” between public and private ownership, meant this consistency was not only drawn into question, but was also evidenced as a source of anxiety for probation staff.

At the minute all the processes and the protocol of what you have to do is set and it is concrete and it is kind of, you do this in house, you do that in HQ or you send that to court. Now, we don't even know who our boss is going to be, we don't even know what company we are going to fall under or who is going to bid for us. The bidding is still open, and we are going to be in a holding company for six months, then after six months the bids will close, so we work basically with no concrete company taken over us, so it is just really crazy, you just think. It does feel like on the first of June it is going to feel like an apocalypse, and like the world as we know it will just be crazy. (Anne, OSO)

The accounts provided so far by probation staff are indicative of identity transformation and a loss of “wherefore”. Probation staff evidenced loss of a former identity (losing their status as part of a probation trust and their Intensive Alternative to Custody identity) and an ever destabilizing “wherefore” as a result of a prolonged period of liminality. It was noted in the interviews with probation staff and the observations collected in the research diary however that they tried wherever possible to protect their probationers from the impact of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms as it was noted how this could provide a stumbling block to desistance efforts:

I mean one of the things that is going to be really important here, they are going to have to make sure that the lads don't get disrupted, because it is going to be huge, I mean, if these lads come 3/4 times a week, if they turn up on a Monday, the building is half like cocked up, they can't sit anywhere, they can't do anything, they are not going to come back on a Thursday/Friday, they just won't do it. It is that thing as well about continuity (Anne, OSO)

Such findings could not have been identified without the mixed methods approach adopted for the present research. While the interviews were able to access the accounts of those experiencing this identity transformation, the research diary allowed for an understanding of the undercurrents of identity transformation that went unspoken. This allowed for a greater understanding of the impact of the early implementation 'Transforming Rehabilitation'.

It is interesting to note here that the probation staff, and indeed the office as a whole, was experiencing a period of identity transformation and liminality at the same time as the

probationers in the sample were experiencing similar transformations. However, while there is an ever-growing body of literature that discusses the impact of these reforms on probation staff and their occupational cultures, there are no studies (other than the one presented here) which engage with the experiences and identities of probationers during the early implementation of TR. One potential reason for this is perhaps evident through an analysis of the consultation papers for the initial TR reforms (MoJ, 2013b, 2013c). The accounts provided in the consultation papers provide a largely top down account of the ways in which 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was to be implemented, with little in the way of discussion of how this would be experienced by probationers or how to mitigate against any potential side effects of its implementation. It would seem that the ripples of these reforms were not meant to go that far. However, as Wood and Brown argue "the disturbances which staff inevitably bring to such roles can filter down through organisational hierarch[ies] impacting upon the relationship between frontline worker and client" (2014: 330). Indeed, this was certainly the case in the present research, the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' created an air of uncertainty in the ICO office, which was unconsciously identified by probationers in the sample to the potential detriment of their tentative steps towards desistance.

8.4 Probation supervision, routine and ontological security.

It has been suggested in the available research that courses of action which centre around involvement in criminal justice agencies are, in fact, more attributable to the narratives of persisting offenders than those undertaking desistance transitions. Indeed, Farrall and colleagues (2014: 175) suggested that "whilst desisters oriented towards getting children to school, themselves to work, or making trips to job centres, persisters' appointments were with probationer officers or drug dealers". While the latter of these two appointments is, perhaps indicative of persistence in offending, the former is perhaps more so down to the time at which the spatial dynamics of desistance in the narrative accounts of the sample were analysed.

The idea that desisters' routines centred more on pro-social structures such as getting children to school and themselves to work, is perhaps more closely linked to the desistance narratives of individuals whose desistance transitions had become relatively stable. Indeed, during the sampling procedure for Farrall and colleagues' fifth sweep of interviews, it was noted that several respondents no longer wanted to be involved because their offending was "a long time ago, they had put it behind them, and felt that they did not want to bring up the past"

(ibid: 87). As such, it is difficult to infer that the same routines would be evident in the desistance narratives of individuals making their first tentative steps towards desistance. Indeed, this was not in fact the case for the probationers in the sample. One potential reason for this could be down to their status as liminal beings (see Turner, 1969) discussed in chapter four and emphasised in chapters six and seven. By separating from old behaviours and networks, old routines were abandoned as these informed behaviours which were now undesirable, and new routines were yet to be fully developed owing to an only partial involvement in the structures associated with the new identity (discussed in chapter seven).

Upon examination of the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample, and in a break from the currently available research, the routines adopted tended in fact to centre around probation supervision. The majority of the sample, as discussed throughout the earlier data chapters, were unemployed, had no children and, before commencing their probation order, expressed little in the way of daily routine or action. As Harry notes:

Normally I was getting up at about 2 in the afternoon and getting up and not doing a thing you know what I mean and then going out, staying up til about 3/4 in the morning, coming home. It is just not the way to be is it? (Harry, 21)

While other routines and rhythms surrounding involvement in pro-social structures such as employment and the formation on pro-social relationships were in a state of flux for probationers making the initial transition towards desistance; the consistency of their probation supervision offered a degree of stability upon which they could scaffold their attempts to develop the new routines and rhythms associated with early desistance transitions (see Giordano et al, 2002). Harry suggested during the course of the interviews that while his current routine was largely based on coming to probation, this routine was preparing him for life beyond supervision, and the development of routines more closely linked to the desistance narratives of the stable desisters discussed in the literature:

It just put me in a routine to get up, to go to community service in the morning, to come here every day you know, I had to come here every day and be in by seven, it just made me straight headed, made me feel more like I need to that I need to do that, and if I had a job I would need to do that. (Harry, 21)

As can be seen in the discussion of the ICO template (see appendix E) probationers undertaking an ICO are required to see both an Offender Manager and a Mentor, not only this but the number of requirements for this particular ICO were higher than any other probation order. As such, probationers in the sample (as compliant probationers) were interacting with their supervisory team on a regular basis. Therefore, a routine for supervision was developed relatively early in an order. The importance of establishing a routine for probationers was also emphasised by Ruth who suggested that:

When they are here, they will have at least an hour with their OM they will have an hour with me and they know when they come in that they are here for a minimum of an hour with me. They get into that routine. (Ruth. Mentor)

This consistency and the development of a routine surrounding probation supervision also allowed for the development of a sense of *ontological security* within the probationers in the sample. This, in turn, allowed them to continue to develop their desisting identity. For Giddens (1991: 39) “the discipline of routine helps constitute a ‘formed framework’ for existence by cultivating a sense of ‘being’ and its separation from ‘non-being’ [of the type identified by Harry above] which is elemental to ontological security”

Ontological security is a term developed by Giddens (1990: 92 *emphasis added*) and “refers to the confidence that most human beings have in the *continuity of their self-identity* and in *the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action*”. It discusses “the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time – as *being* rather than constantly changing – in order to realize a sense of agency” (Mitzen, 2006: 342). In chapter three, the interplay between social structure and agentic action was discussed in relation to desistance and it was suggested that agentic action is mediated by the social contexts and social structures within which it is enacted. However, as Mitzen (2006: 342 *emphasis added*) suggests, “agency requires a *stable* cognitive environment” and that any disruption to this environment has the potential for the agent to draw into question their sense of self (discussed in more detail below). Essentially, it has been suggested that, “to be ontologically secure, the individual must be more or less able to rely on things – people, objects, places, meanings – remaining tomorrow, by and large, as they were today or the day before” (Skey, 2010: 721).

However, for the probationers in the present sample, life in general was very rarely consistent, owing to their liminal status their investment in any form of social structure or environment was generally in flux. As Silverstone (1993: 579) notes “we do often live [...] in a world of broken patterns, non-relational or duplicitous actions, irresolvable conflicts and unpredictable events – in liminal as well as secure environments”. For the probationers in the sample, in order to maintain their desistance transitions they needed to develop a series of ““appropriate” or “acceptable” responses in given situations” (Brown, 2000: 63). These appropriate or acceptable responses then became a framework upon which the tentative desisting identity is based and with which external anxieties are managed. This “protective cocoon” (Giddens, 1991) is evidenced in both the up-front agentic actions outlined in chapter six and the ways in which the probationers in the sample interacted with social structures and capital acquisition in chapter seven. Interestingly, however, for the purposes of this chapter at least, this protective cocoon had been developed by probationers in the sample *alongside a relatively stable and familiar supervisory routine* and utilised in order to withstand certain, almost inevitable, setbacks in the process of their transition towards desistance. Silverstone (1993: 591) suggests that “ontological security is sustained through the familiar and predictable”. Yet interestingly, the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was far from predicted, in fact, the majority of the probationers in the sample, were not even aware of it until it began to change their supervision experience (see Kay, 2016 and the concluding chapter of this thesis). Not only this but, as evidenced above, during the early implementation of TR, the ICO office was experiencing its own phase of identity transformation and liminality which not only raised issues in relation to the identity of the probation office (see above discussion), but also practical issues concerning their ability to supervise high risk probationers.

As such, for the probationers in the sample, some of the measures implemented as a result of TR presented not only a situation which “threatens change” (Hunter, 2010: 225) but a form of change which their protective cocoon was not developed to shield them from. What remains of this final data chapter shall examine the impact of the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' on the sense of ontological security and identity, identified by probationers in the sample.

8.5 Probationer identities in transition – Ontological Security, Trust and Desistance from Crime under TR

As suggested throughout chapters three and seven, the development of a pro-social relationship between a probationer and members of their supervisory team has been documented as providing crucial support in the transition towards desistance. Barry (2007b: 417), for instance found that “respondents comment most favourably [...] on probation and intensive probation. In particular, the rapport that they had established with key workers was a crucial source of support and encouragement for them in the process of desistance”. While Healy (2012: 388) noted that “participants believed that the impact of probation depended on the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between them and their supervising officer. A good relationship heightened their commitment to desistance and provided encouragement during difficult times”.

It is interesting to note here that the discussion of the value of the probation relationship by probationers is almost reminiscent of the welfarist models of probation practice which dominated early probation history (see for instance Mair and Burke, 2011). This is interesting in itself as it would seem to have remained despite the apparent shift to the “new penology” (Feeley and Simon, 1992), which “distances itself from the individual-focussed deterrent-reformist project of the past, rather aiming to identify and incapacitate specific categories and cohorts assorted by levels of dangerousness” (Cheliotis, 2006: 316). However, there are several potential reasons for the apparent survival of welfarist principles in the ICO office as evidenced by probationers. Firstly, it needs to be remembered that throughout its history “despite the processes of [neo-privatisation throughout its history] the traditional autonomy of probation has been hard to kill off” (Fitzgibbon and Lea, 2014: 27). It could arguably be this traditional autonomy of probation staff that has allowed welfarist principles to resurface in the ICO office, which subsequently evidenced themselves in the narratives provided by probationers. It is also highly possible that such principles have been adopted by probation staff who acted agentially to mitigate against the potentially negative effects of the privatisation agenda, protecting the probation relationship. Cheliotis suggests that “professionals incarnate their agentic capabilities and, as a consequence of this, actuarial logics have far from supplanted traditional goals of punishment like rehabilitation” (2006: 321). Throughout the course of the fieldwork probation staff emphasised the importance of the relationship they had built up with their probationers, and this had not changed with the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'. Indeed, it has been suggested that “the

centrality of the encounter between supervisor and client has helped keep probation [until recently] as a ‘bottom heavy’ organisation of professionals who came to their own conclusions about which methods work best, irrespective of management exercises and box-ticking risk assessment procedures” (Fitzgibbon and Lea, 2014: 28). It is highly likely then that probation staff acted agentically to protect this relationship wherever possible, meaning it was still evident in the narratives provided by probationers.

Another potential reason for the apparently positive nature of probation supervision for probationers in the sample, however, is down to the way in which the interview was constructed. The prompts which were utilised as part of the Free Association Narrative Interview (see chapter 5) method with offenders included the prompt “has [being on probation] been a positive experience for you?” The value attached to this prompt means that it is possible that more positive responses may have been elicited from this prompt when used. There is also the potential that, having a question with a neutral value, or asking if being on probation was a negative experience, would have produced a somewhat different account.

As discussed above, the strength of the relationship between a probationer and their supervisory team was evident in the narrative accounts provided by probationers in the current study. I, however, would extend this idea to suggest that it is not just the establishment of a good relationship between the probationer and their supervisory team, it is also the *maintenance* of this relationship. As discussed in chapter six the process of desistance is agentically driven and the probationer is required to commit to the development of this working relationship, this in turn requires the motivation to do so. For the probationers in the current sample, just as it was for the probation staff in maintaining their “wherefore”, *consistency was key*. The incident described by Andy in chapter six concerning the snapping of his tag is a good example of this. After that event, although Andy would engage with other members of staff while waiting for his appointment (with the exception of the probation officer who accused him of snapping his tag), he would only discuss factors related to his probation order to his supervisory team, he suggested the reason for this was that they “understand me”. Neil, who was more open with the ICO staff than Andy suggested the fact that he knew where he could come and who he could talk to should he need help, was important:

I know the staff as well, so I wouldn't have to say ring up a special support agency or

a community worker to get the support I can ring up because I know all the staff here, I have built up a relationship with them, so they understand my situation so it is not a case that I would need to get to know somebody new, they understand me and know who I am so I would be able to talk about it and stuff. (Neil, 24)

The importance of longevity in a relationship is also evident in the literature surrounding the development of pro-social capital, the acquisition of which, as discussed in chapter seven, is important for the successful maintenance of desistance. It is suggested that pro-social capital is created through the development, and maintenance of pro-social relationships. Any changes to these relationships could result in a decreasing stock of pro-social capital, particularly when such changes were out of the control of the individuals involved. Coleman (1990: 316) uses the example of moving homes as a result of changing employment, arguing that although this may be the best option for the worker and his/her family “because social capital consists of relations among persons, others may experience extensive losses due to the severance of relations of members of that [relationship], a severance over which they had no control. Such losses may entail the weakening of norms and sanctions that aid law enforcement and the norms that aid parents and schools in socialising their children”. It was noted that disruptions in past relationships were not managed well by the probationers in the sample. Gary, for instance, notes the breakdown in his relationship resulted in him returning to drug use and subsequently offending:

She just said she didn't love me no more mate. I met her just in the local pub when I was 17 years of age. My offending stopped when I was with her more than it would have done you know what I mean, I was going out less and er thinking about her more than anything and er just calmed down but then, not calmed down enough for her to see and she just got fed up with it. She split up with me mate and my head just fell off because I loved her at the end of the day. Tried to just block it out of my head by getting pissed up I would get pissed up and I would end up taking cocaine and then it just escalates mate you have a drink, cocaine, drink, cocaine, drink, cocaine and you are up all night before you know it you are fucked out of your head. (Gary, 26)

A similar story was presented by Jason who attributed the breakup of his long-term relationship to the “downward spiral” which, he suggested, resulted in him re-offending and receiving an ICO. For others, it was noted that a lack of consistency with other public sector

agencies beyond probation restricted the acquisition of pro-social capital required to support their desire to desist. This point is reiterated in research conducted within the probation service by Partridge (2004: 5) who suggests that “it took time for offenders to gain confidence with new case managers and they became easily disillusioned explaining their offending history and problems to new supervising officers. They raised concerns about the potential for inconsistent treatment and deterioration in supervision quality while a new member of staff became familiar with their case”. While the breakdown of such relationships has the potential to, even temporarily, close down an avenue of pro-social capital acquisition for the probationers in the sample, it also had the potential to impact upon their sense of ontological security.

It is widely noted in the literature that ontological security is bound up in relational dynamics. Mitzen (2006: 342) argues that “individual identity is formed and sustained through relationships. Actors therefore achieve ontological security especially by routinizing their relations with significant others”. Indeed, Phillips (2013: 127) suggests that “the creation of a relationship becomes an iterative process with contingent trust being the operative mechanism” with this contingent trust providing a sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991). In relation to the current research, as discussed in chapter three, this ontological security or, to use the term adopted by Noble (2005) “comfort”, can aid the transition towards desistance as long as the relationships and trust which are developed are pro-social and allow for the facilitation of a pro-social, desisting identity. Disruption to these relationships however has the potential for the desisting identity, which is developed in line with these relationships, to come under scrutiny by the offender.

8.5.1 Tom’s Story

The narrative account provided by Tom is perhaps more indicative of ontological *insecurity*, whereby, to paraphrase Skey (2010: 721), the individual is not able “to rely on things – people, objects, places, meanings – remaining tomorrow [...] as they were today”. As such, his account provides an interesting insight into the impact of disruption and ambiguity on his sense of self and how this impacted upon his early desistance transitions. Tom’s account evidences many of the key themes evidenced throughout the thesis but particularly from this chapter, as such is important to provide a more detailed account of his transitions towards desistance than can be obtained through brief extracts from my discussions with him.

At the time of the first interview Tom was 20 years old and was currently serving a 12-month

ICO for burglary in a dwelling. He was diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 5 and attributed this to the trouble he experienced at school:

A lot of schools said they could cope with my needs, like being ADHD and all of that but they couldn't so they would say like "oh yeah erm" they could just to see if they could, so it was a test for them as well but they would never be able to pass it I'd say (pause). I'd get kicked out of one school and they would send me to [school in the next town over], I went to there, they kicked me out of that school. I was just in and out of school that's why I think I've got into like crime and things, like the way I am today is because of school, I never seen the point of going to school because it has never helped me in any way.

Due to Tom's transition from school to school he was unable to build up stocks of pro-social capital (or relationships that have the potential to be transformative, (see Boeck et al, 2003)) through relationships with peers and teachers. He notes that he got on best at a school that "gave him a chance":

If it wasn't for that school I would probably be in jail now or somewhere else probably, if it wasn't for that school. They did quite a lot of things like they kept on doing stuff like you know like with my ADHD like and colours and papers and they did quite a lot. Instead of not giving me a chance they did give me a chance basically, I was grateful for that. I got on better at that one than all the others.

After leaving school, Tom went to college but, owing to his learning difficulties, he struggled and ultimately did not return for his second year. Instead, he sought employment in a quest to keep him out of trouble as by this time he was already known to the police in his area for low-level anti-social behaviour. It was noted in chapter seven, however, that while employment was a key resource for the acquisition of pro-social capital, such capital was sometimes also required in order to find work. The difficulty for Tom, as it was with many others in the probationer sample (see chapter seven) his stock of social capital at the time of the interview was pro-criminal, which, he suggested, caused him to struggle finding work. He therefore turned to an outside agency in order to help him find work. This agency employed a key worker who would come to see him once a week in order to help him improve his skills and apply for suitable jobs:

They come round and just made the job search, you know the job centre where I can search for a job and then they can say oh well I've searched for jobs. The first day I met him I got a job interview straight away I phoned up this place, he gave me the number and he got me a job interview there within the first day of me meeting him. Just looking for jobs really that's all I am doing with him, just looking for work.

He notes that he developed a link with one of the agency workers when he was in prison as he would come and see him and support his family. He suggested that he was reasonably productive finding work with this particular agency worker, suggesting that he was getting interviews more frequently than he used to. However, he lost this particular agency worker as they moved on to a different service and he was assigned someone else. Tom suggested that, after he lost this first agency worker, his relationship with the agency became increasingly disruptive as, from his perspective, the workers that were sent to him helped him for a couple of weeks before inexplicably quitting. Tom accredits this disruption, and his increased frustration towards this agency to his increased propensity to offend:

When I got to know one worker they would quit their job and they would put someone else and it would be the same with rotation over and over again and we were never getting nowhere. I think that kind of like, pushed me to doing this like being here as well.

While this account could arguably be seen to be an offence justifying narrative (see chapter 6 and 7), such a position is in line with the work of Coleman (1990) who discusses how the disruption of social relationships can inhibit capital acquisition. Not only this but the disruption to his ontological security could also be seen to lead to the activation of iterative forms of agency. As Mitzen (2006: 344) suggests “the consequences of action will always either reproduce or contradict identities”, as this constant influx of different agency workers made Tom question his progress it also, arguably, made him question his “wherefore” and the desisting identity that was being developed with their support. Once this was drawn into question Tom began to activate iterative forms of agency and subsequently returned to offending. Discussion then moved on to Tom’s ICO and he suggested that one of the major differences between his supervisory team and the external agencies which he utilised to help him find employment was the consistency of the approach and the strength of the relationship he was able to foster with them:

Chris: Considering everything we have spoken about earlier with people from different agencies, how is it different now you are here?

Tom: Because these lot don't quit on you, they do a lot for you, they help you. [...] They do help you a lot they are good, I think it is one of the best things I have ever come do even though it is not the thing I want to do, I don't want to come here at 11 o'clock in the morning but it is good, it's a good thing. Just because they help you and the things they do, they are friendly as well they are not rude with you, you know what I mean? It makes me feel pretty good in a way because they know you are just human, everyone makes mistakes. It's good, I think it's good.

Chris: What is your probation officer like?

Tom: She is alright, she is funny. She is alright as well she is a good worker, she does everything she says. Like everything she says she does, she does, she is alright. I can trust her.

The importance of trust in relation to the establishment of ontological security shall be discussed in more detail below. For now however it is important to note that the consistency of Tom's appointments with the ICO and the trust that he developed with his supervisory team began to alter his perception of involvement with social institutions and, as such, Tom began to demonstrate a degree of ontological security in relation to his probation supervision. The role of trust in the development of social capital was also discussed in chapter seven as playing an important role in maintaining compliance. For Tom, the stability of his supervisory team offered an additional avenue for the acquisition of pro-social capital, where previously, such avenues had been disrupted. This capital acquisition, which can be mobilised in times of need, was evident by the fact that on one occasion during the course of the fieldwork, Tom reported to the office in "crisis" requesting an unscheduled appointment with his mentor (evidencing this protective cocoon in action). It was noted in chapter six by Ruth that such reporting would be less likely without the element of trust that exists in the probationer/supervisor relationship. This stability, however, came to a relatively abrupt end as Tom committed a further offence and, as such, his risk status was elevated and he was reallocated to a National Probation Service caseload, as such he also became uncontactable for the remainder of the research. While it is possible to argue that this is not the best example for a study on desistance as Tom ultimately reoffended, to do so would be to ascribe

to a narrow conception of desistance that does not acknowledge the fluid nature of the desistance process, particularly when this process is in its initial stages. As we have seen, there are numerous factors that could result in the reactivation of iterative forms of agency and subsequent reoffending. As Tom was no longer contactable for the research, it is difficult to know what caused him to reoffend (if a causal link could in fact be established). The fact that he did reoffend does not diminish the utility of his story however. It is still able to evidence the value of a consistent approach in the development of ontological security and how this can *support* burgeoning desistance transitions. It also serves as a reminder that each of the processes discussed in the findings chapters of this thesis, represent notions which can either *support* or *hinder* desistance efforts, they cannot achieve desistance for the individual, they can simply inform agentic action.

While the relationships developed between a probationer and their supervisory team were perhaps not as emotional as the ones discussed above concerning probationers families and romantic partners, the relationship developed was still reasonably strong, evidenced by the fact that former probationers who had completed their orders were regularly seen reporting into the probation office to inform members of their old supervisory team that they had found work. Indeed, probation officers themselves reported that they were always on the lookout for jobs which might suit their probationers, even if their order had finished.

But even my lads now, if a job comes up that I know they are suitable for, even though they have finished their order, I will send them a text or phone them and say phone this job up, because that is what it is all about. (Ruth, Mentor)

The argument to be made here, however, concerns the division of work between the NPS and CRCs. It is argued that the development and maintenance of a pro-social relationship between a motivated probationer and his supervisory team allows for the development of pro-social capital, and a sense of ontological security which, to a certain extent, is dependent upon the *consistency* of that relationship. It was noted at the start of the chapter that, upon the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', high risk probationers were to be re-allocated to an NPS caseload, in practice this meant that probationers were moved around during the course of their community order. While, in an office that had both an NPS and a CRC presence, this meant that probationers were having to adapt to a new supervisor, in the case of the ICO which, as discussed above did not have an NPS officer in house, high-risk probationers (such as the one Ruth described earlier in this chapter) had to report to a different

office, meaning that they not only had to adjust to a new supervisor but also to completely new surroundings. While this is perhaps common for probationers on standard community orders, as all of the conditions of an ICO (with the exceptions of unpaid work and the attendance centre) were held in situ, moving to a different office was somewhat of a culture shock for probationers in the sample. The evidence presented above and in previous chapters concerning the importance of pro-social capital in the successful maintenance of desistance for probationers along with previous research findings, suggest that disruption in pro-social relationships can hinder progress. It is therefore suggested that, by moving probationers between the NPS and the CRCs there is an evident risk of impacting upon the ontological security of probationers, subsequently hindering compliance and the ability of probationers to maintain initial desistance transitions. Probation staff reported being able to spend less time with their probationers building a working relationship (and subsequent pro-social capital) given the increased levels of administrative duties associated with changing systems, which was somewhat compounded by the extra layer of bureaucracy that is created through the re-allocation of probationers between NPS and CRC caseloads. It was also argued that, through an analysis of both the available literature and historic accounts of structural changes from probationers in the sample, the reallocation of probationers between NPS and CRC caseloads can also disrupt the acquisition of capital for probationers. Therefore, by transforming the social relationships between probationers and probation staff through the division of work between agencies, 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was arguably inhibiting the potential for capital acquisition and ontological security for probationers which, as the available literature shows, are vital for the successful maintenance of desistance.

The implementation of TR has been discussed as disrupting the consistency of approach which was evidenced by the probationers in the sample as beneficial both in terms of capital acquisition and increased feelings of ontological security. However, one final concern which was evidenced throughout the data related to the reallocation of high risk offenders to the new National Probation service. The concern in this regard centred upon notions of trust, the occupational competences of CRC staff and probationers sense of self.

8.5.2 Trust in Transition

The importance of trust in identity transformation is evident throughout the available desistance literature. For instance, Maruna (2001: 87) suggests that although desistance transitions come from within, the catalyst for change was an outside force “someone who

‘believed in’ the ex-offender”. However, if this belief is not valued by the change agent, it will have little influence on their ability to desist and subsequently maintain their desistance. In relation to ontological security, it has been noted that “a sense of reliability of persons and things, so central to the notion of trust, is basic to feelings of ontological security” (Giddens, 1990:92). For Giddens trust is “confidence in the reliability of a person or system regarding a given set of outcomes or events where that confidence expresses a faith in [...] the correctness of abstract principles” (1990: 34). Indeed, this confidence in the reliability of a system was evidenced in the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. Neil, for instance, suggested that his faith in his supervisory team's ability to help him maintain desistance was based on the longevity of the existence of the office:

These people they wouldn't be in a job if they didn't know what they are talking about, and my offender manager says it has been here for quite a while now this ICO place, and I don't think, if this place wasn't successful I don't think it would still be here. So even though you are saying to me like how does it stop you from re-offending, they obviously know what they are talking about and the sessions that we do with the clients obviously must work because ultimately they wouldn't be in jobs still and they wouldn't still be here. I think it is that, that helps you to not re-offend. (Neil, 24)

However, notions of trust are highly relational (Phillips, 2013) and are developed through “active engagement in the world [and through] active engagement in events and patterns and relationships of everyday life [...] our relationships to material objects, to other people and to symbols are grounded in unconscious processes, but can only be sustained through a confidence born of experience, in the certainty of the world – that is, in a kind of faith” (Silverstone, 1993: 578). These notions of trust are evident throughout not only the data collected for the current research but also in the previous chapters in this thesis. The notion of trust was also evident in the case of Tom (discussed above), for Tom, his ontological security, his “wherefore” and his ability to get on with his life was, in part, aided by his probation supervision which “did not quit on [him]”. This allowed him to focus more attention on achieving the things he wanted to achieve in the long term and subsequently stay out of trouble. This notion is supported in the available literature which suggests that “where there is ontological insecurity [just as where there is a lack of a convincing “wherefore”], the individual’s energy is consumed meeting immediate needs. [They] cannot relate ends

systematically to means in the present, much less plan ahead. In short [they] cannot realise a sense of agency” (Mitzen, 2006: 345).

In relation to the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' in the ICO, as a result of the reallocation of probationers from the CRC to the NPS, the devaluing of this trust on the part of probationers towards their supervisory team began to appear. As there was no NPS presence in the ICO at the time of the fieldwork, if a probationer was reallocated to an NPS workload they were not only reallocated to a different supervisory team, they were also required to attend a different office. During the course of the fieldwork I was witness to numerous conversations between probation staff and probationers whose risk had been elevated to high and they were now answerable to an NPS officer thereby changing the dynamics of their supervisory relationships. Such conversations tended to go along the lines of “why am I high risk?” “Why do I have to go and see someone else?” and “why can’t you do it?” Sarah suggested that telling a probationer that they are being moved owing to a risk assessment has the potential to send a series of messages to the probationer in question, each of which have the potential to draw into question the legitimacy of the role of CRC probation staff:

I think that can only be interpreted in one of two ways, you are saying I am risky and you don't care so you are sending me somewhere else, or you are saying you are risky and I disagree, why aren't you doing this then why are you passing it on to someone else? Why are you passing the buck? Can't you do it? Aren't you equipped to do it? Who is this person? Where have I got to go? Why have I got to do that? Where has this come from? (Sarah, PO)

This idea is echoed in the available literature on the ability of probation to facilitate desistance. Healy (2012b: 389), for instance, notes that “harsh judgements made by supervising officers about their clients may reduce the likelihood of desistance since offenders sometimes cope with negative social labels by retreating further into criminality”. Farrall et al (2010: 560), go further by arguing that “by categorising an individual as ‘high risk’, one sends various messages. [One of which] is sent to the classified offender. Without wishing to completely accept labelling theories, we view the communication to individuals that they are ‘high risk’ of re-offending as essentially equivalent to saying to them ‘you can’t change’. In some cases, this may motivate the individual to prove the system wrong but in many cases, given the obstacles to desistance such individuals may already face (lack of

qualifications, lack of employment record [discussed in chapter seven] etc.) we suspect that this message may lead to a fatalistic outlook”. It is suggested here, however, that this argument can be extended further, while probation officers are informing high risk probationers of their risk status they may, as Farrall suggests, be implying that the probationer is unable to change, by extension however, by suggesting that their status as high risk means that they are required to report elsewhere to be supervised, that even if they can change, their current supervisory team is unable to help them do so. Not only this, but the suggested assertion that one cannot change has the potential to draw into question the “wherefore” of the individual on the threshold of change. It could, therefore, be argued that, transforming the roles of probation staff by dictating which probationers can be supervised where, 'Transforming Rehabilitation' has the potential to draw into question the legitimacy of CRC staff's ability to manage offenders. This, in turn, has the potential to impact upon compliance and probationers sense of ontological security as it was suggested above that one of the motivators for complying with an order was the belief, and indeed *trust*, that probation staff were able to help them, as they would not still be there if they could not.

8.5.3 Good Cop, Bad Cop, Both?

Finally, it is worth noting that those individuals who were reallocated to the NPS were still required to complete an Intensive Community Order and, as such, while they were reporting to the NPS office to see their offender manager, they also had to report to the ICO office in order to complete the requirements of their community order. For those offenders who needed to navigate their way through two separate organisations, a degree of dissonance between the two began to appear. While the CRC office focused on proactive programmes aimed to tackle “criminogenic needs”, such as employment and accommodation issues, the NPS office, by virtue of its public protection remit, was discussed as being more offence focused. It was suggested in chapter six that the probationers in the sample attempted in their desistance narratives to distance themselves from their offending past, and that this was synonymous with the available literature on the agentically driven up front cognitive processes required to initiate early desistance transitions (see Giordano et al 2002 and Vaughan, 2007) and the example of the case of Andy snapping his tag was demonstrative of the reaction to challenges to this process, also Gary's future oriented writing of goals on the blackboard in his bedroom (chapter six). The available literature on the effectiveness of probation for probationers has suggested that a focus on past behaviour was considered to be the least productive aspect of the supervision experience for probationers. Durnescu (2010:

8), for instance, noted that “a significant number of probationers complained that during the meetings, or when participating in probation programmes, they had to discuss their offence and that this *forced return to the offence* hurt them”. Such a notion was evident in the discussions I had with high risk probationers during the course of the fieldwork who were required to complete several conditions. Some suggested that whilst they understood that they were required to report to their NPS officer, the fact that they saw their meetings at the NPS as purely punitive whereas the programmes they undertook at the ICO office were more proactive (see Kay, 2016) meant that some probationers began to look more favourably on the ICO than their NPS office. Indeed, as such, they preferred coming to the ICO. Sarah suggests that, she fears this distinction may result in a degree of favouritism for CRC in favour of the NPS even though they are both working towards the same goal:

Does that create a good cop bad cop? Say you have got Joe at the NPS and [he] can only do risk focused work with the client and they can't do any of the other bit because that is their role to just manage that case, and that person has got three other requirements, to see a mentor, unpaid work and do some victim work with a PSO, all of them other people are going to be doing, in the clients eyes, meaningful activity, positive, solution focused, desistance focused activity, it is going to, I am concerned, create a real distinction between Joe, doesn't really care about me he only really wants to talk about my offending he is only ever bothered about what I have done wrong, and all the other people who are trying to move that person out of offending, everyone is trying to work towards the same goal but the focus is going to be slightly different, I am not certain, whether that might start to happen that good cop bad cop thing (Sarah, PO).

While it is important to remember that the changes introduced as part of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda were in the process of being implemented during the course of the fieldwork, meaning that the above discussion highlights the *immediate* impact of such changes, it is worth highlighting the burgeoning dissonance between the services as a result of their differing focus as this has the potential to impact upon offender compliance in the long term.

8.6 Conclusion

Whereas the previous two chapters have examined how agentic action and involvement in social structures have had to alter once initial desistance transitions have commenced, this

chapter has focused upon how these transitions have the potential to be disrupted when an aspect of the individual's social context, that being their probation supervision, is transitioning around them. It was suggested at the outset of the chapter that the stability offered through probation supervision represented an opportunity to develop a sense of ontological security for the probationers in the sample, upon which they could scaffold the development of their desisting identity (see Giordano et al, 2002). This ontological security was predicated on both the consistency of approach in the ICO so that probationers in the sample were able to establish a sense of routine, and also trust in the organization on the part of probationers.

The chapter goes on to discuss the ways in which the implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms began to draw this ontological security into question. It was suggested that the transformation of administrative procedures was a contentious issue for probation staff, who noted that this provided less time for them to spend on desistance focused activity with the probationers in the sample. While this was a source of aggravation for the staff in the sample, an undercurrent of identity transformation and an ever destabilizing "wherefore" represented a greater concern in relation to the ability of the probation service to facilitate early desistance transitions for probationers in the sample during the initial implementation of the TR reforms. Probation staff in the sample exhibited a loss of identity as a former member of a probation trust and had yet to be assigned an owner under the CRC, as such they exhibited the "statuslessness" commonly associated with periods of liminality. This liminality and a lack of a credible "wherefore" meant that immediate needs were, during the course of the fieldwork, prioritized over the longer term, desistance focused approaches, which were hoped to come out of the CRC. It was also recognised that, the reallocation of probationers to an NPS caseload due to risk escalation had the potential to jeopardise the sense of ontological security felt by probationers, which, according to the available literature, is related to identity transformation. Finally, the notion of trust, which is central to that of ontological security, was discussed. It was acknowledged that the division of probation work between the NPS and the CRC drew into question the occupational competences of CRC probation officers, particularly for probationers who were reallocated to an NPS caseload but were still required to attend the ICO to complete their order. For some of the probationers in the sample, their faith in the ICOs ability to support their desistance transitions was based, at least in part, upon the length of time the service had been operating. The reallocation of probationers to another supervisory team caused probationers to question whether the ICO staff were, in fact, ever in

a position to support their burgeoning desistance transitions in the first place while also creating a sense of dissonance between the two services. The ontological literature states that “confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events where that confidence expresses a faith in the probability of [...] the correctness of abstract principles” (Giddens, 1990:34) and “that confidence in turn implies the ability to manage, counteract or minimize the various threats and dangers that appear to challenge us, both as individuals and collectives” (Silverstone, 1993: 578). When this confidence in a particular institution is shaken, as was done in part by the implementation of TR, the desistance transitions of probationers, and the identities which are being developed in line with these transitions (which were aided through probation supervision), came under threat. While this is not to suggest that probation supervision offered the only routine or avenue of trust in the lives of probationers, it certainly offered an avenue for the development of such factors and, as such, disruption to probation supervision as a result of the implementation of TR had the potential to draw desistance transitions into question.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

“One *goes* legit. One does not talk about having *turned* legit or having *become* legit. The “going” is the thing” (Maruna, 2001: 26)

The previous eight chapters have documented a tale of transitions, charting the ways in which early desistance transitions are undertaken by intensive probationers in a newly formed Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). In order to do so the following research questions were created to structure the research:

- How do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions?
- To what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?

While these will be answered more directly in the following section, it is important here to discuss the key findings of the research and the underlying context behind them.

While there is an increasing amount of literature that purports to consider “desistance transitions” and the spatial dynamics of desistance, this area of research still remains underdeveloped. Indeed during the preparatory phase of the research it became apparent that discussions of desistance transitions tended to highlight such transitions in relation to the key social structures which have been identified in the available literature, namely marriage (or at least relationship formation), employment and family formation. Also discussions of the spatial dynamics of desistance focussed on the ways in which successful desistance influenced the places and spaces in which the desisters inhabited. Yet, as has been discussed in the available literature, engagement with social structures, places and spaces are not set in stone. Social structures change, as do our perspectives on the environments in which we inhabit, sometimes on a daily basis. It is undoubtedly important to examine how changes in “big” structures such as marriage, employment and family formation impact upon the desistance transitions of individuals attempting change. It is argued here, however, that attention should also be paid to the ways in which changing involvement in smaller social structures (those that do not receive the same amount of research attention as marriage, employment and family formation), and the minutiae of daily routines and habits which are

undertaken alongside desistance transitions have an impact upon this change.

Not only this, but numerous studies of desistance transitions have separated their samples into both “desisters” and “persisters” (see Maruna, 2001; Farrall et al, 2014; King, 2014). As such, the desisters in the sample are generally set within their desisting trajectories. With this in mind, it was argued that the information obtained regarding desistance transitions from such studies are not able to offer as much in the way of insight relating to *early desistance transitions* as they perhaps could.

The target population considered in order to obtain a better understanding of initial desistance transitions were 18-25 year olds, as ontogenic theories of desistance (discussed in chapter two) and the well-known age crime curve (appendix A) attest to, this is the period during which initial desistance transitions begin to occur for most offenders. Not only this, but it was also noted in the available literature that it is during this protracted adolescence (Barry, 2010a; 2010b) that individuals were experiencing numerous transitions simultaneously, while also experiencing multiple liminalities (the notion of being “betwixt and between” states of being (Van Gennep, 1960; Healy, 2010)). For instance, the individuals in the current sample were in the process of transitioning between young adult and adult identities, young adult and adult criminal justice institutions, and offender to non-offender identities. They were also doing this within a social context which the literature suggests is particularly exclusionary for both young adults and offenders alike (see Barry, 2010a; 2010b). While the “big” structures identified throughout this thesis were ones to work towards for probationers in transition, most of them were yet to attain any of these. As such, the routines and rhythms that made up their daily activities were centred on other factors, one of which was their probation supervision. Yet while the probationers in the sample were undertaking these numerous transitions, they were trying to do so while interacting with a probation service that, due to the coalition governments ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ reforms, was transitioning around them. The present research aimed to explore how probationers within the context of a transitioning probation service can maintain burgeoning desistance transitions.

9.2 Key research findings

The key empirical findings for the present research have focussed on three distinguishable notions which, admittedly, all interacted with each other producing the context and methods within which desistance transitions were maintained and disrupted. However for the sake of clarity here, the distinction between notions as made by the three results chapters in the thesis

shall be maintained before synthesizing them to fully answer the research questions outlined in chapter one.

9.2.1 The decision to desist.

Desistance, as the available literature attests to, is an agentic process, while structural factors and social contexts impact upon one's ability to successfully maintain desistance, the decision to desist is, ultimately, the responsibility of the person doing the desisting. Indeed, to once again quote Adams (1997: 334) "substantial and lasting changes in criminal behaviour rarely come about only as a result of passive experience, and such changes are best conceptualised as the outcome of a process that involves significant participation by the offender, who, in many respects, acts as his own change agent" (see also, Rex, 1999 and Shapland and Bottoms, 2011). Indeed, the narratives offered by probationers in the sample, stressed the fact that they had made the decision to desist, a decision that, albeit perhaps related to wider social factors, was recognised as a decision that only they could make. While this decision to desist could be seen as a positive step, it did have negative connotations for the probationer who made the decision. As the majority of probationers in the sample had spent a good portion of their adolescence in contact with the criminal justice system, by making the decision to desist probationers were intentionally turning their back on forms of action that dominated their recent history. Not only this, but by beginning to associate with conventional society, they were aligning themselves with a collective conscience (to borrow Durkheimian phraseology) which they had been separated from a considerable period and, at the time of the initial decision to desist, had very little in common with. As such, probationers found themselves in a state of "multiple liminality". On the one hand, they were liminal owing to their status as "young persons", and the limited opportunities afforded to young people on limited income, on the other they were liminal owing to their status as an "offender" and the structural impediments placed upon them as a result of their criminal record (stigma, limited employment opportunities etc.). Faced with such a situation, it was evident in the narratives of the probationers in the sample that motivation alone was simply not sufficient to successfully maintain desistance from crime. However, in line with research conducted by Maruna (1999) probationers in the sample suggested that they were in control of their desire to desist and were, at the time, motivated to maintain this initial decision to do so. So much so that, through the use of a range of "discursive tools of desistance" and diachronic self-control they began to distance themselves from their offending past and those associated with it. Again though it needs to be remembered that an initial motivation to desist

and removal from former social networks alone were not sufficient in order to successfully maintain desistance in the face of the many obstacles on the road to desistance. A notion which is recognised in the definition of agency which suggests that agency is “the dynamic interaction between the person and their social world that is directed towards the achievement of a meaningful credible new self” (Healy, 2013: 874). Indeed, to paraphrase LeBel et al (2008: 136) the ability to act agentically requires both the “will and the ways: the desire for a particular outcome and also the perceived ability and means of achieving the outcome”. In order to act agentically towards desistance then, probationers needed a combination of individual motivation and structural support while also reorienting their involvement in such structures according to their desisting identity in transition. Social structures however, have the potential to be both enabling and disabling, and there was evidence of both in the desisting narratives of the probationers in the sample.

9.2.2 Social Structures in Transition

In line with the available literature, it was noted by probationers in the sample that their desistance transition did have an end point, in the sense that there was an identity which they wished to transition into. This desired future self generally centred on what Bottoms and Shapland (2016) refer to as “normatively conventional aspirations”, sometimes also referred to as the British dream (Bottoms et al, 2004). Essentially these revolved around “a not-too-onerous but safe job as an employee of a stable company, enough money, some consumer luxuries, a steady girl-friend and (possibly) kids” (ibid: 384). Interestingly however, while these aspirations were the ultimate goal, they did not necessarily inform the day to day decisions which were made by probationers in the sample. In line with Maslow’s (1954) “hierarchy of needs”, probationers in the sample were, at the time of interview, happy to take on “any old job” as the benefits in relation to ontological security, and the continued development of a desisting identity in line with conventional society were sufficient, with larger aspirations coming later.

However, it was recognised by probationers in the sample that even these temporary aspirations were not as amenable as hoped. It was clear from the discussions with probationers during the interviews that, at first, they lacked the tools to be able to obtain such aspirations. Bottoms and Shapland (2014a: 7) postulate “desistance is the process of learning to live a non-criminal life when one has been leading a largely criminal one”. By actively separating themselves from previous social networks and abandoning their former skill sets

that were largely criminogenic as part of the agentially driven initial transition towards desistance, probationers in the sample now had to learn (some for the first time) how to be a citizen or, as Farrall et al (2010: 548) put it “a mainstream member of civil society”. For many of the probationers in the sample however, their previous avenues for obtaining human capital (school, social networks etc.) were either no longer available or simply not in a position to advise. As such, initiating desistance transitions meant not only an active separation from a past identity associated with offending, but also a re-evaluation of both capital acquisition and the ways in which they interacted with social structures. This was evident in the accounts provided by probationers who noted working towards the development of pro-social and human capital, replacing the criminogenic forms of capital which dominated their discussions of offending.

This capital acquisition however was once again hindered by liminality, with probationers experiencing discrimination both in relation to their status as liminal desisters but also as young adults in transition, particularly in relation to finding employment. Probationers adopted a range of tools to be able to deal with such exclusion, from continuing along with conventional methods to find work to simply not declaring their criminal record and eliminating one aspect of liminality before it could cause a problem. While involvement in social structures in relation to the desistance transitions of the sample were anchored towards the “big” structures, particularly employment, it was noted however that being on probation offered another avenue for capital acquisition for those who wished to utilize it.

Indeed, in a marked shift from the available literature, it was suggested that the supervisory arrangements for probationers undertaking an ICO allowed for the acquisition of social capital. Something that the literature has suggested that probation supervision is not equipped to do. This is a significant finding as it challenges the received wisdom that penal policy and penal practice more specifically has become more punitive (discussed in chapter eight). It is also significant as it challenges the conception that the probation service is not able to facilitate social capital within probationers, which has dominated the available literature of late (see for instance Farrall et al, 2014; King, 2013a, the implications of this are discussed in more detail below).

It was suggested, that the relationship developed between a probationer and members of their supervisory team reaffirmed certain discursive tools of desistance employed by probationers. It also allowed for the development of trust and investment which, according to the

desistance literature and existential sociology literature, is fundamental for identity change. This avenue of pro-social capital, was also seen to aid in the acquisition of human capital by allowing probationers the opportunity to request enrolment in probation led programmes, thereby allowing them to navigate some of the structural impediments to desistance outlined above. In fear of falling foul of the idea of offenders as “super dupes” – or individuals “who react to wider social forces and situations rather than helping to create these situations through their own actions” (Farrall and Bowling, 1999: 258) – it is important to remember that the acquisition of capital, be it human or social, is an *agentially driven process*, predicated upon the involvement of probationers pro-social structures and the development and maintenance of pro-social relationships. Indeed, probationers in the sample were aware of what was required in order to avoid falling back into iterative forms of agency and successfully maintaining desistance, and they evidenced responsibility in achieving those things.

9.2.3 Desistance transitions in the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

While numerous accounts of desistance have been presented throughout this thesis, at the core of these accounts has been the notion of a sense of self. Indeed the use of discursive tools of desistance and diachronic self-control outlined in chapter six allowed for probationers to separate themselves from their offending past, orienting themselves towards a desired futures self which offending was incongruous with. The transitioning of involvement with social structures documented throughout chapter seven concerned the ways in which this desired future self, albeit not always the primary concern, was at least partially acquired in the face of multiple liminalities. It has been suggested throughout that the ICO offered an extra avenue of support in the development of this fledgling desisting identity. Indeed this sense of self remained under examination throughout the final data chapter which suggested that the initial implementation of the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' reforms began to challenge this sense of self for not only the probationers in the sample, but also the probation staff, to the potential detriment of desistance efforts for probationers.

The division of probation work between the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) caused bureaucratic difficulties which impacted upon the physical experience of working in and being “on probation”, to the potential detriment of capital acquisition (known to be important in aiding desistance transitions). However, and perhaps more importantly, it also resulted in a period of an ever

declining “wherefore” (end purpose) in probation staff and weakened ontological security for probationers.

Probation staff in the sample noted that, as a newly formed CRC who had yet to be allocated a contracted provider, they were caught in what Robinson and colleagues (2016) refer to as a “halfway house” between public and private ownership. This liminality caused them to question their sense of self, end purpose or “wherefore”, whereas previously this had been relatively stable under the probation trust. This, coupled with the implementation of new administrative systems, meant that less long term, desistance focused innovation was undertaken in favour of the more immediate concerns. Interestingly the probation staff in the sample evidenced notions of identity transformation in a similar fashion to the probationers. The initial implementation of the ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ reforms impacted upon both sets of participants sense of who they were and their future trajectories. Yet while there is an ever-growing body of literature examining the impact of change on organisation staff, there remains little in the way of information examining the ways in which those on the receiving end of this organisation experience change.

The literature on the acquisition of pro-social capital (and indeed ontological security) suggests that a consistent approach is key to the maintenance of such capital acquisition. It also suggests that separation from the relationships which facilitated this acquisition having the potential to be disruptive to future capital development. Indeed, a positive aspect of being “on probation” as discussed by the probationers in the sample was the consistency of approach adopted by the ICO. Probationers had the same members of their supervisory team seeing them on the same day each week. This consistency allowed for the development of a routine in probationers' lives, adding structure which the available literature suggests also plays a role in the facilitation of desistance. It also made the acquisition of pro-social capital more forthcoming as time could then be spent building up a relationship with the same people. The fact that, owing to their risk status, some probationers were relocated to a different probation office (as there was no NPS presence in the ICO building) meant that the relationships which had been developed between the probationer and their supervisory team were broken down, and new relationships with different members of probation staff needed to be formed. It also became apparent that the division in workloads between the NPS and the CRC was beginning to draw into question the occupational legitimacy of the CRC probation staff.

The dichotomy between the risk based NPS and the criminogenic need focused CRC, began to present a degree of dissonance between the services. Probationers reporting to the ICO for certain programmes which operated out of the ICO office reacted negatively to the fact that their NPS probation officer focused only upon their offending past. Their involvement with the ICO, however, was seen as more productive. Not only this, but the reallocation of offenders based on risk began to draw into question the ability of CRC probation officers to manage offenders, by informing clients that they were deemed too risky to be supervised under the CRC. The literature suggests that a message that could be incumbent in that statement is “you cannot change”, or, at the very least “I cannot change you”. This in turn had the potential to call into question the fledgling desisting identities of the probationers in the sample. When such discussion were being undertaken, there was a clear sense of disagreement from the probationer who also questioned why their current probation team were not able to supervise them, and if they were in fact ever capable of supervising them at all?

9.3 Research questions – finding answers

As a discussion of the results chapters is provided above, the following discussion shall focus purely on answering the research questions outlined in the introduction.

9.3.1 How do intensive probationers talk about their ability to maintain early desistance transitions? To what extent can the disruption to probation supervision impact upon the desistance narratives of intensive probationers?

For the probationers in the sample, the initial decision to desist was theirs to make. They noted that they had either become increasingly disenfranchised from their past-self (who offended) or, if this was their first offence, they were not prepared to go through the experience again. Probationers in the sample deployed a range of tools to make sure that they did not “do something stupid”, or put themselves in a position where they were likely to get into trouble again. These tools, both cognitive and physical acted as stopgap preventative measures while they adapted to a crime free life. These included mentally separating themselves from their offending past through the discursive tools of desistance discussed above, by physically removing themselves from offending areas and peer groups, or by acknowledging their weaknesses and conducting behaviours to counteract them. When asked what they aspired to, the probationers in the sample all suggested they wanted stable

employment and, for those who did not already have them, the formation of stable relationships with family and significant others. Employment, while providing a financial income with none of the risk associated with offending for financial gain, also provided routine and reduced the time available for offenders to mix with the previous environment which, arguably, contributed to their offending. It was also noted, however, owing to their multiple liminalities, particularly their age and offence status, that no matter how motivated they were, achieving these goals would be difficult, if not impossible, without help. While there were a few avenues of support that probationers in the sample could access, one such source of help that was perhaps unsurprisingly, evident in their accounts was their probation office.

The acquisition of human capital in the form of qualifications and probation driven courses was seen to be an important aspect of probation supervision which aided their ability to successfully maintain desistance transitions. The most important aspect of the supervision experience, however, was the trusting relationship developed between the probationers and members of their supervisory team. It was noted by probationers that attempting desistance, and obtaining the things they felt were required to maintain desistance, was hard. Not only this, but the previous social networks were largely pro-criminal, and therefore unable to support the probationer in their desire to change. While a number of probationers also had support from their family or newly formed pro-social friendship groups, it was noted that there were only certain things probationers were prepared to discuss with such individuals. Their supervisory team represented a source of support who had already seen them “at their worst” and as such, probationers felt able to report to the ICO in “crisis” when stumbling blocks on the road to desistance proved too great to manage alone. As such, the consistency of supervision requirements for probationers in the sample created an additional scaffold upon which a “protective cocoon” could be developed which was able to “protect the inner self they know from exposure to outside scrutiny” (Brown, 2000:63).

The probation office represented an *additional* source of support, both in terms of supporting the development of human capital through the referral to probation driven programmes, and the development of pro-social capital in terms of supporting the general process of keeping out of trouble. Such support however, could not be provided without the development of a co-productive working relationship between the probationer and their supervisory team. By supporting the transition from offending to non-offending states, probationers suggested that

their supervisory team offered an additional avenue for the facilitation of agentic potential within probationers, supporting their motivation to change while also helping to relieve the structural impediments surrounding the ability to do so.

The main aspect of the implementation of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’, which had the potential to impact upon the desistance narratives of the intensive probationers within the sample, concerned the division of probation workloads between the National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Companies. This division disrupted not only the supervisory experience of probationers in the sample, which was deemed to be facilitative of emerging desistance transitions; but also caused the disruption of an aspect of the rhythms and routines which probationers had adopted in order to continue along their transition towards desistance.

On a purely administrative level, the increased bureaucracy created through the division of probation workloads meant that more time was spent by probation staff undertaking administrative duties and less was spent with the probationers in the sample. The administrative workload saw a reduction in both the frequency and longevity of work with probationers both in terms of face-to-face appointments and the more “behind the scenes” work contacting outside agencies who may be able to further support the acquisition of capital for their probationers. It is noted in the available literature that time was a valuable resource in the acquisition of capital through the development of social relationships. By impacting upon the amount of time that can be spent developing such relationships, even initially, it could be argued that capital acquisition will suffer as a result.

Secondly, the reallocation of probationers from the CRC to the NPS has the potential to disrupt the ontological security of probationers undertaking early desistance transitions by disrupting the routines incumbent in ICO probation supervision, and also the trust developed between a probationer and their supervisory team. It is suggested throughout the literature on ontological security, that routine is vital in order for an individual to perceive and subsequently maintain a sense of self. Indeed Mitzen (2006: 347) suggests that “routinized social relations stabilize our identities, individuals become attached to the self-conceptions their routines support”, a point reiterated by Silverstone who argues that “ontological security is sustained through the familiar and predictable” (1993: 591). The disruption to supervision routines brought about by the reallocation of probationers based upon risk had the potential to

draw this ontological security, and the desisting identity being developed within it, into question.

Finally, the reallocation of probationers to the NPS based upon risk also had the potential to jeopardise the ontological security of probationers, along with their ability to act agentially towards their desired future self, as it caused them to question the trust they had placed in their supervisory team. For Giddens, trust is “confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events where that confidence expresses a faith in the [...] correctness of abstract principles” (1990: 34). By reallocating probationers to a different supervisory team, the probationers in the sample who had been upscalled to the NPS caseload could no longer trust that “things – people, objects, places, meanings – [would remain] tomorrow, by and large, as they were today or the day before” (Skey, 2010: 721) which is essential to notions of ontological security and identity formation. This had the potential to draw into question the transitions towards desistance that had been made by the probationer thus far as they started to question the occupational legitimacy of CRC staff and their ability to support probationers burgeoning desistance transitions.

9.4 Implications and Impact of the Research

In relation to the implications and impact of the current research, for the sake of clarity the implications and impact of the research shall be broken down into the implications and impact of the research in relation to the development of knowledge, and in relation to policy and practice.

9.4.1 Developing knowledge

Firstly, in terms of developing academic knowledge, the research has added to our understanding of the role of community sanctions, such as the probation service, in the facilitation of desistance within probationer. It is important to note from the outset that the research documented here was one of the first studies to be conducted in the United Kingdom on the implementation of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ (TR), with the fieldwork being undertaken while TR was being implemented, and the only study to be conducted with probationers during this time. As such it offers, not only an understanding how change in organisations impacts upon the ability for probationers to maintain desistance from crime, but also an indication of how ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ was received and subsequently interpreted by those attempting to maintain desistance.

Secondly, the research challenges current notions surrounding the work of the probation service in relation to the recognition of its work by probationers. Research conducted by Farrall, (2002) for instance suggested that an appreciation of the ways in which the probation service supported the maintenance of desistance for probationers was not recognised by probationers until much later, after their probation order had finished. The present research found that the probationers in the sample recognised the immediate help that their supervisory team offered in relation to providing support and offering avenues for the development of human capital. Another area of dissonance concerns the available evidence which suggests that the probation service is perhaps, not best placed to develop the acquisition of pro-social capital within probationers, suggesting that the focus on criminogenic needs and risk management has left the wider social contexts within which desistance is managed, largely neglected. The current research suggests that this was not the case for the probation office utilised in the fieldwork. While the programmes undertaken by the probationers as part of their ICO were directly related to criminogenic needs, and reducing the risk of reoffending, the time spent with their supervisory team allowed for the facilitation of pro-social capital acquisition for probationers in the sample. One potential reason for the dissonance in findings is the amount of time that probationers spent with their supervisory team under the ICO paradigm compared to a standard Community Order. Farrall (2002) notes that the probationers in his sample did not spend a lot of time with their probation officer, it was suggested that probationers on standard community orders spend perhaps 20 hours per year with their probation officer. Under the ICO paradigm, probationers would spend roughly 48 hours with their supervisory team over the course of the first three months of their order (as the first three months were the most intensive). As such, there is more time for probationers to ask for, and recognise the help the probation service is able to offer them.

It is also argued here that, while the available literature stresses the importance of considering the wider social context in which desistance attempts are made, such discussions of context tend to centre around particular social structures, employment, family, housing and social networks (see for instance Farrall, 2002; 2012; McCulloch, 2005). The notion that undertaking a community order is also an aspect of the social context within which desistance transitions are attempted is largely neglected, the suggestion seems to be that the probation service, and probation orders need to pay more attention to, yet are separate from, the broader contextual issues within which desistance takes place. Yet a change in the supervision

experience, as discussed above, also signifies a change in the social context within which the maintenance of desistance for probationers is attempted and, as such, has the potential to impact upon a probationer's ability to maintain desistance efforts. Finally, the research outlined above adds to the available knowledge surrounding the importance of agency, social structure and capital acquisition in the desistance process.

The current research also adds to the knowledge surrounding the impact of liminality on desistance transitions. By utilising the notion of a third, intermediary stage (as opposed to the more binary understanding of "primary" and "secondary desistance"), the research has been able to examine the impact of being *in transition* on the desistance process. As opposed to discussing desistance transitions in isolation, the research has also allowed for an examination of multiple liminalities upon the desistance process. The present research has added to the literature on liminality and the ways in which being in transition may impact upon desistance from crime. It has also provided a discussion of the impact of social context on desistance transitions that focuses on factors other than those that are central to a sociogenic paradigm.

Finally, this research has discussed the importance of understanding desistance transitions when they are just beginning to flourish. While the wider research literature suggests an examination of desistance transitions, care should be taken when examining such accounts. While there have been movements towards examining initial desistance transitions while they are being undertaken (see for instance Healy, 2012a and King, 2013), some accounts remain largely retrospective, from individuals who have been undertaking this transition for a period of time. As such their accounts of their initial movements towards desistance transitions can only be of limited use. While we can only speculate as to the exact moment that desistance transitions begin, the available research evidence offers an idea as to when desisting ideas may start to come into view for offenders contemplating change. An examination of these tentative steps towards desistance could further our understanding of the interplay between social contexts and the ways in which they can support burgeoning desistance efforts.

9.4.2 Policy and Practice Implications

In terms of the policy and practice implications of the research it is first important to remember that the findings presented in the research are projective in the sense that the research examined the factors deemed to be most important to probationers in order to

successfully maintain desistance along with the impact of change on service delivery. Through a combination of this analysis and engagement with the wider literature, inferences were made concerning the potential impact of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' on the successful maintenance of desistance from crime for probationers. As such, without concrete evidence of the *actual* impact of change upon desistance (as such data was impossible to collect during the implementation of change) the utility of the research in relation to policy application is slightly more limited.

That being said there are factors of the research which can, and have, been put into practice in the ICO office in which the fieldwork was conducted. It was identified during the research that some participants adopted a somewhat fatalistic approach to their chances of securing work owing to their criminal record and lack of human capital. While this pessimism did not indicate that these probationers were "doomed to deviance" (Maruna, 2001), as they remained active in attempting to find work, it did provide an opportunity for development within the ICO. Upon discussing this finding with the operations manager of the office it was recognised that more could be done to promote employment programmes and reassure probationers that others in their position had gone on to find work. A range of promotional materials with this in mind were published and staff were asked to engage with their probationers concerning their future job prospects in an attempt to reduce the size of this perceived stumbling block.

While the research is not able to offer any solid implications of the impact of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' on the maintenance of desistance for probationers, it is able to offer some perhaps more tentative ones. As noted throughout this chapter, the division of probationers between NPS and CRC offices was the main cause of concern for probation officers and, in line with the analysis of the available literature, was the factor recognised as having the largest potential impact upon the desistance process for the probationers in the sample. Indeed, the sudden move from one probation office and supervisory team to another was deemed as somewhat of a culture shock for the high-risk probationers in the sample. Although the numbers of probationers who have been from the NPS to the CRC is not publically available, should changes in risk status require the elevation of a probationer from a CRC to an NPS case, the transition between the two should, it is suggested here, be completed gradually. This would allow the probationer to access the social capital created through the relationship with his previous supervisory team, until the working relationship

with their new team is well established and capital acquisition can continue to develop. Secondly, in relation to the administrative duties performed by probation staff, it was evident that the new systems, lack of training on these systems, and the added layer of bureaucracy created by the NPS/CRC split increased stress levels in the office and reduced the face-to-face time that could be spent with probationers, as one Operational Support Officer, once put it “rather than you going to see the guy who is finishing his order, you have to sit and write about him instead”. As such it is suggested that, should new systems be introduced, probation staff should undertake training on the implementation of these new systems in an attempt to minimise the disruption caused when they “go live”.

It was suggested in chapter four that the speed of the implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' was a cause for concern amongst both practitioners and academics. The present research has added to the body of literature that suggests that the speed at which structural change is implemented has an impact upon the initial success of this implementation. The speed at which TR was implemented caused considerable difficulties for the probation staff and created an undertone of uncertainty during the course of the fieldwork. This subsequently impacted upon the ontological security of the probationers in the sample. It is suggested here that large-scale structural changes should not be rushed. The more time these changes are given to develop, the more time there is to mitigate against the potential issues which can arise as a result of their implementation.

One final concern is related to the finding that the probationers in the sample valued the relationship they had developed with their probation officer. It was suggested, against the available literature, that this relationship offered a further avenue for social capital acquisition, particularly when traditional avenues were not available. It was argued that the implementation of TR meant that less time could be spent developing a relationship between probation staff and those they worked with. Not only this but the strength of the relationship was based upon a consistent approach. This relationship offered additional support for individuals attempting initial transitions towards desistance. It could be argued here that probation caseload numbers need to be effectively managed and administrative duties slimmed down in order to maximise time which can be spent with probationers. While such an idea is grounded in the data, it would seem however that to suggest this would simply be an exercise in ‘blue sky thinking’. The available research literature suggests that caseloads have increased across both the NPS and the CRC (NAPO, 2015b). Not only this, but the

added administrative duties created by the division of probation work has, if anything, made the situation more complicated.

Outside of criminal justice interventions, the research stressed the impact of liminality on desistance transitions for young adult offenders. This liminality placed structural blocks on access to avenues of capital acquisition (both human and pro-social), which the available literature suggests are vital in order for desistance transitions to progress. The opening up of opportunities for individuals caught “betwixt and between” identities (Healy, 2010) would allow for a smoother transition from one identity to the other, potentially aiding desistance transitions in the process (see also Maruna, 2011). While it is suggested here that opportunities need to be “opened up” to liminars, it is also important to note that it is sometimes more a case of making pre-existing opportunities more visible. As discussed above, the ICO office in which the fieldwork was conducted had a high success rate in finding employment for their probationers. Yet probationers in the sample still presented fatalistic accounts surrounding employment prospects (see chapter seven). The task for the ICO office then was to promote these structural opportunities so that probationers were aware of them. Without altering opportunity structures for liminars, there is the potential for these liminal states to continue to protract, making the “horrors of identity nakedness” (Lofland, 1969: 288) an increasingly prevalent possibility.

9.5 Limitations and Future Research

The research outlined in this thesis was by no means perfect, the limitations of this research concern the sample size and demographic, the type of probation office examined during the course of the fieldwork and the time in which the research was conducted.

As the sample size consisted of just 18 offenders, the ability to generalise the findings is somewhat limited. Indeed, it was not the aim of the research to identify how change impacts upon the maintenance of desistance for probationers everywhere, indeed, given the fluid and highly personal nature of the desistance process, any such generalisations are, arguably, misguided. The second limitation relates to the demographic of the probationer sample, while indicative of the general ICO population (male offenders between the ages of 18 and 25), the sampling procedure did not account for differences in ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or a range of other demographic factors. Largely due to the fact that the sampling procedure consisted of talking to offenders who reported into the office on the day of the fieldwork. As

such, there are a range of factors that undoubtedly impact upon the successful maintenance of desistance for probationers that were overlooked in the current research.

The fieldwork office itself created another limitation for the research. As the fieldwork was undertaken in an Intensive Community Order office, the work conducted with probationers was not necessarily typical of that conducted with probationers in other Community Order offices. As such, the findings identified through the course of the research apply to Intensive Community Orders only, not only this, but as each Intensive Community Order pilot target a slightly different demographic, the findings from the current research are applicable to the ICO office in which the fieldwork was conducted alone. Finally, the time at which the fieldwork was conducted, while beneficial in the sense that it allowed for an examination of the impact of change as such change was being implemented, also created a limitation with regards to assessing the full impact of that change. The operations manager of the ICO highlights this limitation rather succinctly, suggesting that in order to understand the impact of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ on the desistance process for probationers “*we almost need the first set of [probationers] to go through*” (Sarah, PO). As probationers were only just experiencing the changes in the office as part of the implementation of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’, the full impact of these developments will be unknown for the foreseeable future.

The methodological approach adopted for the research also imposed limitations on the research. As discussed in chapter five, there were implicit power relations that needed to be remembered throughout the fieldwork process. The interviews with probationers were undertaken in their probation office, in the same rooms in which they had their supervisions. Not only this but they were recounting their previous offences and their experiences of supervision to the point where, for all intents and purposes, the interview was perhaps strikingly similar to discussions they have with their supervisory team. The power relations between the probationer and me as a researcher could also be seen to be similar to those evident in the probation officer/probationer dynamic. There are also limitations to the narrative method, concerning the notion of a universal truth, presenting a version of the world that is not necessarily the same with each telling. While it was important to reflexively engage with these notions throughout the research, they still provided limitations to the study.

Finally there were some aspects of probation supervision that the research, by design, was not able to examine. For instance, it would have been interesting to obtain the perspectives of probation staff concerning the top down implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', and if their perceptions of change differs depending on who is imposing said change. It would also have been interesting to discuss the numerous different periods of probation work (from social work to risk management), to obtain a more detailed understanding of the "identity" of the probation officer. However, while this would have provided more scope for discussion, the research project was fundamentally about desistance transitions within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' and, as such, these notions fell slightly beyond the remit of the current project.

Ultimately, the limitations of the current research however open doors to potential future research on the impact of change on the maintenance of desistance of crime for probationers. For instance, research could be conducted which investigates the impact of change across several conventional community order offices, with a larger cohort of probationers. Research investigating the impact of change on the successful maintenance of desistance for probationers from different cultural backgrounds could also provide an insight in to the wider cultural factors which impact upon the desistance process, and the role of probation within this dynamic. Finally, this research has identified the (potential) survival of welfare attitudes to probation supervision and the ability of such supervision to facilitate social capital within probationers. While further research can investigate the potential for probation to facilitate social capital, there is also potential for an examination of welfarist principles and resistance to change within organisational settings. As suggested in chapter eight there was a possibility that the welfarist principles within probation evidenced by the probationers in the sample could be down to the agentic action and resistance from probation staff. This in itself is an area for further research, examining probation the probation ethos and its occupational cultures, along with its ability to withstand change. It would be interesting, for instance, to go back into the ICO office some two years after the completion of the fieldwork to see if this welfare ethos has survived, or if managerialism and risk management have become the dominant factors in practice.

The main area I would suggest holds considerable potential however involves conducting a longitudinal study on the impact of change on the desistance narratives of probationers. Such a study would be able to establish the actual consequences of change on the desistance

process through continued contact with probationers throughout the duration of their probation order and beyond. It would also allow for a more detailed exploration of the wider social contexts within which desistance is maintained. Increasing the size of the catchment area for the fieldwork by including several offices would also allow for a degree of generalisation that the current research is lacking.

9.6 Conclusion

Finally, and perhaps a little anecdotally, a word of caution surrounding the rushed implementation of public sector reforms. Roughly two years ago I was approached by a representative from the Ministry of Justice who, having heard about the subject matter my research, was keen to inquire on its progress. Perhaps this was particularly pertinent as ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ had been “live” for a period of only three months and there was little in the way of information as to how it had been received by probation staff, with the exception of some frankly rather distressing blog posts and anonymous social media postings from unsettled probation officers. I distinctly remember this official adopting the belief that probationers were in no way aware of the changes that had occurred to their surroundings and that, as such, ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ would not have impacted upon their desistance transitions in the slightest. While we discussed my research and the tentative conclusions that were being drawn from it at the time, it seems pertinent to discuss, some two years later, the implications of this research in more depth here.

At first glance, it could be argued that this is an accurate assessment. The probationers in the sample were not aware of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ per se; any communications that were sent to them which were not either timetables or breach letters were largely ignored. The desistance narrative provided by probationers in the sample discussed their supervision experience in relation to the rhythms of supervision, their relationships with their supervisory team, and the ebbs and flows of being “on probation”. They were not overly concerned with the politics of public sector transformation. Yet while this may be an accurate assessment, it is not sufficient to simply leave it there, indeed the fact that probationers were unaware of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ is perhaps indicative of a wider problem concerning the transformation of public sector agencies, and how this transformation impacts upon those involved.

As has been noted earlier, an analysis of the consultation documentation for 'Transforming Rehabilitation' presents an almost exclusively top down approach to these reforms. In fact, the very title of the first consultation paper “Transforming Rehabilitation: A revolution in the way *we manage offenders*” (MoJ, 2013b *emphasis added*), suggests that the offenders themselves were not the primary focus of these reforms. Not only this, but the opinions of probationers on the implementation of TR are not considered until the second early implementation report (HMPI, 2015a), some twelve months after TR was implemented. Indeed, it seemed that the ripples of change in the probation service were not supposed flow so far.

As was noted throughout chapter eight however, probationers in the sample experienced the early implementation of ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ in numerous ways, impacting upon their physical experience of supervision and, perhaps more worryingly, their ontological security and newly developing sense of self. All of which had the potential to impact upon early desistance transitions. It is arguably the case that this impact was experienced more substantially as probationers were unaware of the transformation of the probation service until it was upon them. Had they been aware of what was about to happen *before* it happened, it is possible that their protective cocoon could have been strengthened to withstand changes to their experience of supervision.

The present study has identified, what has been referred to in discussion surrounding it as, the “unintended outcomes of the early implementation of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'”. Indeed, while the findings of this research are perhaps indicative of the unintended consequences of probation reforms, it stands to reason that it also highlights potential pitfalls in the early implementation of reforms throughout the public sector. While it is important to ensure the reforms are undertaken and done so as accurately as possible, there is still the need for recognition of the emotionality of the change process; both for those who work in an organisation, and those who are on the receiving end of it. As Carr argues “rationality has become so endogenous in our modelling of the change process that it is all too easy to overlook emotion and emotionality [...] the problem of this style of thinking is that, at best, we get only a partial appreciation of the behaviour of the players in the change process” (1999: 574). If anything, it was this emotionality, which impacted most strongly on the desistance narratives of the probationers in the sample. It was not the administrative changes introduced as part of TR, but how these changes made them *feel* about their experience of

supervision, and how this impacted upon their fledgling desistance identities. Waring and Bishop (2011:662) argue that “work is recognized as a significant source of identity”, and accordingly it can be argued that transitions in work organisations can have profound implications for identity. While this was certainly the case for probation staff in the sample, the same was also true for probationers.

On the face of it, all ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ did to probationers was require some of them to see a different supervisory team. This itself might not seem to be as strong a structural influence on desistance transitions as marriage, having children or finally securing paid employment. Essentially, ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ resulted in a change in the day-to-day realities of being “on probation”. However, the evidence suggests that this seemingly minor change to the routines and rhythms of probationers in the sample brought with it an undercurrent of ontological insecurity and identity transformations. Such factors called into question both probationers sense of self and their trust in their supervisory team to support their burgeoning desistance transitions. While the results suggest that the reforms introduced by ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ could potentially harm probationers, at the time of writing the effects have not been wholly negative as positives surrounding the supervision experience remained. Those offenders who have been escalated from the CRC to the NPS perhaps feel the issues discussed in relation to the division of probation workloads most strongly. As it stands however, the numbers of such offenders are unknown.

It is suggested here that more needs to be done to consider the impact of change in the public sector on those on the receiving end of its services, and the impact this may have on them. The history of probation in England and Wales is perhaps best characterised by change rather than continuity (Mair and Burke, 2012), it is therefore unlikely that ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ represents the final changes to the probation service. The findings of the present research call for a more detailed analysis of the way reforms in such services have the potential to impact upon the lived experience of probation (and indeed desistance) for probationers, before the next reforms receive national implementation.

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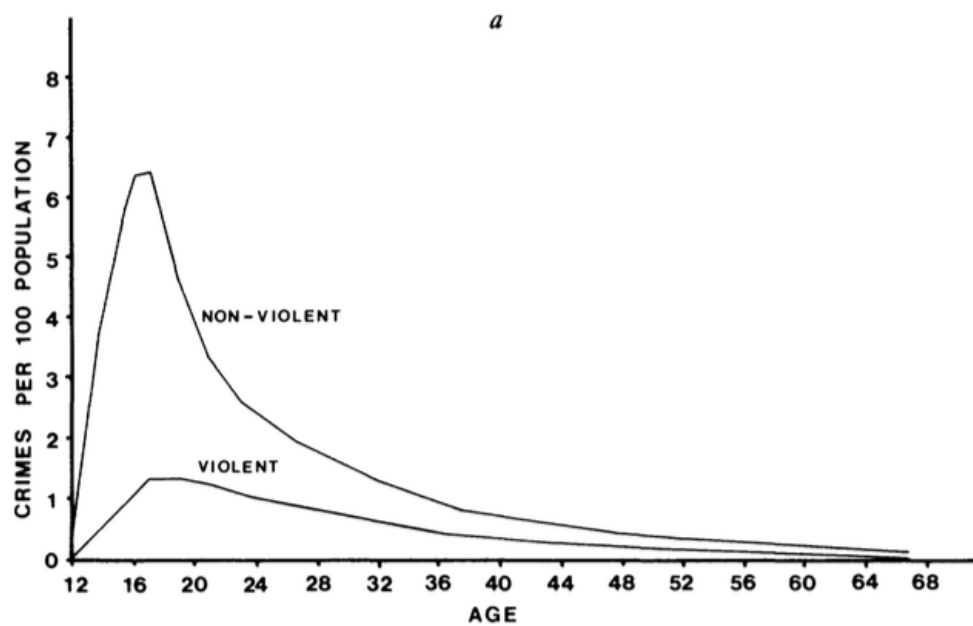
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Appendix A: Age Crime Curve



Taken from Farrington (1986)

Appendix B: Successful CRC bidders

The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme

18/12/2014

The new owners of the Community Rehabilitation Companies

Community Rehabilitation Company	New Owner	New Owner Composition
Northumbria	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity
Cumbria & Lancashire	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity
Durham Tees Valley	ARCC	ARCC (Achieving Real Change in Communities Community Interest Company), a Joint Venture involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing Lives in Durham Tees Valley CIC, a Probation Staff CIC • Thirteen (formerly Fabrick Housing Group), a Registered Social Landlord • The Wise Group, a Social Enterprise • Safe in Tees Valley, a Charity • Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), a Public Organisation • The Vardy Foundation, a Charity • Stockton Borough Council, a Public Organisation • Darlington Borough Council, a Public Organisation
Humberside, Lincolnshire & North Yorkshire	Purple Futures	Purple Futures, an Interserve-led partnership formed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interserve plc, a private organisation • 3SC, a Social Enterprise • Addaction, a Charity • P3, a Charity • Shelter, a Charity
West Yorkshire	Purple Futures	Purple Futures, an Interserve-led partnership formed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interserve plc, a private organisation • 3SC, a Social Enterprise • Addaction, a Charity • P3, a Charity • Shelter, a Charity
Cheshire & Greater Manchester	Purple Futures	Purple Futures, an Interserve-led partnership formed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interserve plc, a private organisation • 3SC, a Social Enterprise • Addaction, a Charity • P3, a Charity • Shelter, a Charity
Merseyside	Purple Futures	Purple Futures, an Interserve-led partnership formed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interserve plc, a private organisation • 3SC, a Social Enterprise • Addaction, a Charity • P3, a Charity • Shelter, a Charity
South Yorkshire	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity.

The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme

18/12/2014

The new owners of the Community Rehabilitation Companies

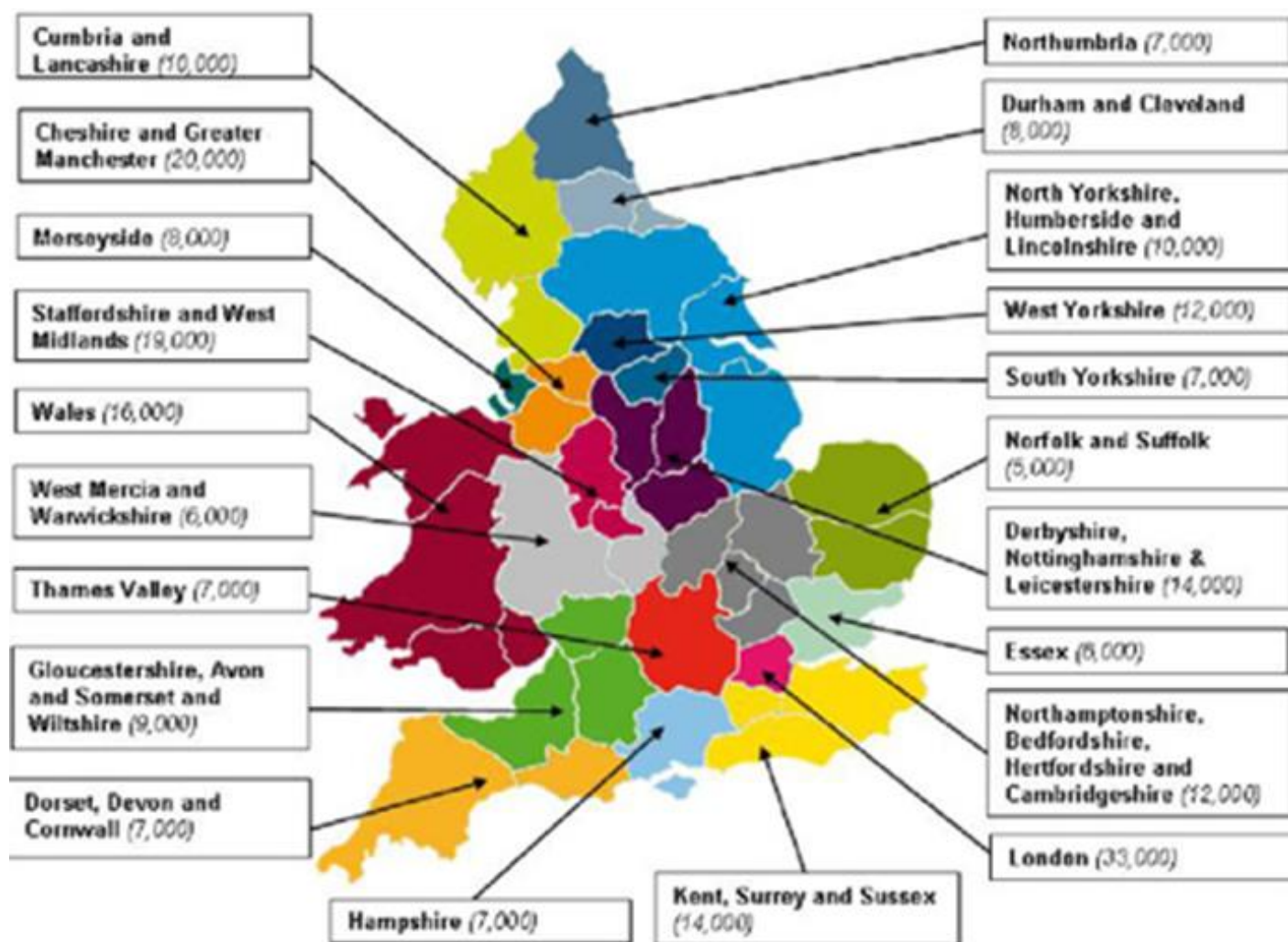
Community Rehabilitation Company	New Owner	New Owner Composition
Staffordshire & West Midlands	The Reducing Reoffending Partnership	The Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP – an Equity Joint Venture) brings together the experience, capabilities and values of 3 leading mission driven organisations which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingeus UK, a private organisation; • St Giles Trust, a Charity; and • Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI) a Charity.
Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland	The Reducing Reoffending Partnership	The Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP – an Equity Joint Venture) brings together the experience, capabilities and values of 3 leading mission driven organisations which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ingeus UK, a private organisation; • St Giles Trust, a Charity; and • Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI) a Charity.
Wales	Working Links	Working Links, a public, private and voluntary company, in strategic partnership with Innovation Wessex, a Probation staff mutual.
Warwickshire & West Mercia	EOS Works Ltd	EOS Works Ltd, a private organisation – part of the Staffline Group. Willowdene Rehabilitation Ltd, a social enterprise, will be an integral part of their supply chain.
Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset & Wiltshire	Working Links	Working Links, a public, private and voluntary company, in strategic partnership with Innovation Wessex, a Probation staff mutual.
Dorset, Devon & Cornwall	Working Links	Working Links, a public, private and voluntary company, in strategic partnership with Innovation Wessex, a Probation staff mutual.
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	Purple Futures	Purple Futures, an Interserve-led partnership formed of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interserve plc, a private organisation • 3SC, a Social Enterprise • Addaction, a Charity • P3, a Charity • Shelter, a Charity
Thames Valley	MTCNovo	MTCNovo, a Joint Venture involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTC (Management Training Corporation) – a private company • novo a consortium with a number of public, private and third sector shareholders including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o RISE – a probation staff community interest company o A Band of Brothers - a charity o The Manchester College (TMC) – a public sector education provider o Thames Valley Partnership (TVP) - a charity o Amey – a private company
Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity.
Norfolk & Suffolk	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity.

The Transforming Rehabilitation Programme
The new owners of the Community Rehabilitation Companies

18/12/2014

Community Rehabilitation Company	New Owner	New Owner Composition
Essex	Sodexo Justice Services in partnership with Nacro	Sodexo Justice Services, a private organisation, in partnership with Nacro, a Charity.
London	MTCNovo	<p>MTCNovo, a Joint Venture involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTC (Management Training Corporation) – a private company • novo a consortium with a number of public, private and third sector shareholders including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o RISE – a probation staff community interest company o A Band of Brothers - a charity o The Manchester College (TMC) – a public sector education provider o Thames Valley Partnership (TVP) - a charity o Amey – a private company
Kent, Surrey & Sussex	Seetec	Seetec Business Technology Centre, a private limited company

Appendix C: Contract Package Areas



Appendix D: Research Tools

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

Participant Information Sheet: Offenders

You are being invited to take part in a research study investigating individual involvement in crime over time. Please read the following information carefully and remember you are more than welcome to discuss any issues you have with me at any time.

What is the research for?

The research is being conducted for my PhD (an 80,000 word research report which will be examined upon completion) in Criminology from the University of Manchester.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by Christopher Kay. I am a research student at the University of Manchester and am in no way affiliated with the police, probation service or local authority.

What is the research called?

The research is titled “Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of Transforming Rehabilitation”. In other words it is looking at the impact of changing the nature of the work performed by the probation service on an individual’s own offending behaviour.

What is the point in the research?

The nature of probation work has been regularly revised since its beginning in the late 19th century. Recently however there have been a number of high profile changes in criminal justice and probation in particular, such its integration into the National Offender Management Service and (most recently) plans to outsource probation work to the private sector and charities. Through obtaining an understanding of your (and other participants) experiences of criminal activity and being on probation, the research will be able to assess the impact of change within the probation service, on your involvement in crime. I am interested

in any and all of the life experiences you wish to discuss; they are not all required to be *directly linked* to your previous involvement in criminal activity.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in the research as you have been/are involved with the probation service. There are 9 other participants in this research

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

Your involvement in the interview would involve taking part in two interviews. These interviews are an opportunity for you to tell your stories about your involvement in crime (from the first time you got in trouble with the police, to now). Involvement in this instance can be anything from offences you have actually committed, through to thoughts of committing crime, witnessing criminal activity and anything in between. Although there are questions in the interviews, you are free to discuss whatever you feel is important at the time. Each interview will last roughly one hour, this however is dependent upon how much you want to discuss.

With your permission I would like to record the interview.

What happens to the data collected?

Once the interview is completed, I will transfer the recording onto my computer and securely encrypt the file with a password only I know. When the interview is being written up, your name and all other identifiable information will be removed and an identification number will be attached to it. Once this transcription (write-up) has been completed, it will be read through and analysed. Your consent form and this information sheet will be scanned into the same computer and encrypted in the same way. The hard copies of these sheets will then be securely destroyed. The results from the interviews may be used in journal articles and presentations but *you will not be identifiable from the information used in these instances.*

How is confidentiality maintained?

The information you provide in the interview is strictly confidential. Once the recording of the interview has been transferred onto my computer, encoded and checked to ensure the transfer has been successful, the original recording will be securely destroyed. *Your real name will never be used in the research*, when the interview is being written up you will be given a unique identification number and a related pseudonym (fake name). These

identification numbers and pseudonyms will be stored on an encrypted file on my computer. Any information you provide which might allow people you know to identify you will be either changed or removed during the transcription (write-up) of the interview. I will be the only person who will listen to the interview recording and, once the research has been completed in September 2015 these too will be securely destroyed. Please remember that, although I am interested in your experiences of criminal activity, *as a researcher I have an ethical obligation to report any current or future criminal involvement you tell me (along with any activity which may result in the harm to either you or others) to the police* so please do not do this.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

The decision to take part in the research is completely up to you. If you choose not to take part in the research that is fine and I thank you for your time. If you agree to take part in the interview but then, during or after the interview, you decide that you do not want to be involved, again that is fine and any information obtained up to that point will be securely destroyed. You do not need to provide a reason for not wanting to be involved in the research.

Will I be paid for participating in this research?

Upon completion of your involvement in the research (including the second interview), you will be given a £10 high street voucher as a thank you for your time and involvement in the research.

Where will the research be conducted?

In order to make the interview as comfortable for you as possible, the research will be conducted in your local probation office, at a time of your choosing.

What is the duration of the research?

Your involvement in the research will consist of two interviews of around one hour each. This however is dependent upon how much you wish to discuss during the interview. If, for example, after an hour there is still information you wish to discuss, you are more than welcome to do so.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Some of what you say may be used, in quotation form, as part of my PhD write up and again for conference presentations or published academic journals. These quotes will be chosen by me and at no point will you be identifiable from the information chosen.

What happens if something goes wrong?

It is highly unlikely that anything should go wrong during your involvement in the research. If however this is the case or you wish to complain about your involvement in the research, the university complaints procedures and names of contacts will be made available to you. To make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

Contact for further information

If you have any further questions concerning the research or would like a copy of the final research report. Please feel free to contact me:

Christopher Kay on Tel. 07903309755 e-mail: Christopher.kay-2@manchester.ac.uk

You can also contact my supervisor Dr Jo Deakin

Tel. 0161 275-5783 e-mail: jo.deakin@manchester.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

If you are happy to take part in this study we would like you to complete the research consent form.

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

Participant Information Sheet: Senior/Probation officers

You are being invited to take part in a research study investigating individual involvement in crime over time. Please read the following information carefully and remember you are more than welcome to discuss any issues you have with me at any time.

What is the research for?

The research is being conducted for my PhD (an 80,000 word research report which will be examined upon completion) in Criminology from the University of Manchester.

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by Christopher Kay. I am a research student at the University of Manchester and am in no way affiliated with the police, probation service or local authority.

What is the research called?

The research is titled “Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'”. In other words it is looking at the impact of changing the nature of the work performed by the probation service on an individual’s own offending behaviour.

What is the point in the research?

The nature of probation work has been regularly revised since its beginning in the late 19th century. Recently however there have been a number of high profile changes in criminal justice and probation in particular, such its integration into the National Offender Management Service and (most recently) plans to outsource probation work to the private sector and charities. Through obtaining an understanding of your experiences of working in probation and with individuals involved in criminal activity, the research will be able to assess the impact of changing nature of your work, on involvement in crime.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in the research as you work for Greater Manchester Probation Trust which has been chosen to be involved in the research.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

Your involvement in the research would consist of a single interview discussing your experience working for the Probation service. This will include a discussion of your current and previous roles in the service, why you chose a career in probation, how you feel the service has developed in recent years and how you feel the changes to the service may impact upon the offenders with whom you work. The interview will last no longer than an hour.

With your permission I would like to record the interview.

What happens to the data collected?

Once the interview is completed, I will transfer the recording onto my computer and securely encrypt the file with a password only I know. When the interview is being written up, your name and all other identifiable information will be removed and an identification number will be attached to it. Once this transcription (write-up) has been completed, it will be read through and analysed. Your consent form and this information sheet will be scanned into the same computer and encrypted in the same way. The hard copies of these sheets will then be securely destroyed. The results from the interviews may be used in journal articles and presentations but *you will not be identifiable from the information used in these instances.*

How is confidentiality maintained?

The information you provide in the interview is strictly confidential. Once the recording of the interview has been transferred onto my computer, encoded and checked to ensure the transfer has been successful, the original recording will be securely destroyed. *Your real name will never be used in the research*, when the interview is being written up you will be given a unique identification number and a related pseudonym (fake name). These identification numbers and pseudonyms will be stored on an encrypted file on my computer. Any information you provide which might allow people you know to identify you will be either changed or removed during the transcription (write-up) of the interview. I will be the only person who will listen to the interview recording and, once the research has been completed in September 2015 these too will be securely destroyed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

The decision to take part in the research is completely up to you. If you choose not to take part in the research that is fine and I thank you for your time. If you agree to take part in the interview but then, during or after the interview, you decide that you do not want to be involved, again that is fine and any information obtained up to that point will be securely destroyed. You do not need to provide a reason for not wanting to be involved in the research.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Unfortunately there is no payment for taking part in the research.

Where will the research be conducted?

In order to be convenient for you as possible, the interview will be conducted at a time of your choosing either in your place or work or, should this be uncomfortable for you, at the University of Manchester.

What is the duration of the research?

Your involvement in the research will consist of one interview lasting up to one hour.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Some of what you say may be used, in quotation form, as part of my PhD write up and again for conference presentations or published academic journals. These quotes will be chosen by me and at no point will you be identifiable from the information chosen.

What happens if something goes wrong?

It is highly unlikely that anything should go wrong during your involvement in the research. If however this is the case or you wish to complain about your involvement in the research, the university complaints procedures and names of contacts will be made available to you. To make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

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If you have any further questions concerning the research or would like a copy of the final research report. Please feel free to contact me:

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Tel. 0161 275-5783 e-mail: jo.deakin@manchester.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

If you are happy to take part in this study we would like you to complete the research consent form.

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign this consent form:

Please tick.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service.	
3. I understand that all information is treated with strict confidentiality unless I disclose any planned or current involvement in criminal activity.	
4. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.	
5. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes when the research is written up.	
6. I agree that any data collected may be passed as anonymous data to other researchers/ research supervisors.	

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of Participant Date Signature

Name of person taking consent Date Signature

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation'

Initial agreement to contact.

Having been informed of the above research, I am interested in obtaining more information and request the research contact me via the below means. I understand that, all personal information documented below is treated with strict confidentiality.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
---------------------	------	-----------

Preferred method of contact:

Please Tick

By post

☐

If yes please provide postal address:

By Phone

If yes please provide telephone number and state best time to contact
Morning/Afternoon/Evening after 6pm:

☐

By e-mail

If yes please provide e-mail address:

☐

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' Interview Topics for Senior/Offender Managers

Section One: First role in probation

- **Why probation?**
- **What was your first job in probation?**
 - **What did this job involve?**
- **What were your opinions of what the probation service did when you applied/started working for probation**
- **Can you give me an example of a memorable event which occurred during your first role within probation?**
- **Is there anything else you would like to discuss concerning your first role with probation that we have not talked about so far?**

Section Two: Current work in probation

- **What is your current position in the probation service?**
 - **What type of jobs does this position involve?**
- **Can you give me an example of a memorable event/experience/case which has occurred while you have been performing this role?**
- **Is there anything else you would like to discuss concerning your current role with probation that we have not talked about so far?**

Section Three: Changing nature of probation

- **Do you feel that the probation service has changed since you began to work for it?**
 - **If so how?**
- **How has this change impacted upon your role as Offender Manager?**
- **How do you think the outsourcing of Offender Management to private/voluntary sector for low level offenders will impact upon those under its care?**

- **Finally, is there anything else you would like to talk about concerning your time with the probation service or opinions on its future that we have not discussed so far?**

Research Title: Desistance in Transition: Exploring the Desistance Narratives of Intensive Probationers within the context of 'Transforming Rehabilitation' Interview schedule, Offending population.

Section one: Background

- **“Tell me a little bit about yourself”**
 - **Home town (Where are you from?)**
 - **Family/relationship with family (How about your family, how was your relationship with your family?)**
 - **Hobbies**
 - **Growing up**
 - **Key figures/role models in your life**
 - **Key moments in life (are there any particular moments/events in your life which you feel were particularly important to you?)**
 - **What would you consider to be the most important things in your life?**

Section two: Delinquency/Anti-social behaviour

- **Tell me about the first time you did something considered by others to be “bad”?**
 - **What was it?**
 - **What happened?**
 - **How did you feel about it before/during/afterwards?**
- **Tell me about the first time you got in trouble with the police if this is a different time?**
 - **What was it?**
 - **What happened?**
 - **How did you feel about it when/after you got caught?**
 - **What happened next?**
- **Tell me about how you ended up in prison? (if applicable)**
 - **When was it/how old were you?**
 - **What happened?**
 - **How did you feel about the experience?**
 - **How do you feel about it now?**

- What happened when you got out?
- Follow up with prompts such as “then what happened?” remembering to use participants own phrasing of events. Remember to refer to the information discussed in the background section if relevant

Section Three: Probation

- Tell me about your experience of being on probation
 - Has it been a positive experience for you?
 - If yes/no why is this?
- Tell me about how being on probation has impacted upon your life?
 - What programmes have you been on during your time with the probation service?
 - What did they involve/ How long for?
 - How regularly are you in contact with the probation service?
 - How do your family feel about your interaction with the probation service?
 - Would you say that being on probation has helped you change? If so how?
- Tell me about your first probation officer?
- Tell me about your current probation officer?
- How do you feel about your previous offences knowing what you now know/have experienced?
- How, in your opinion has the probation service changed since you began to interact with it?

Section Four: The future

- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
 - Prompt for further information (why that in particular? How confident are they of getting there? What do they need to achieve this goal? What support will they have?)

Appendix E: The Intensive Community Order (ICO) (formerly Intensive Alternative to Custody)

In 2008 the National Offender Management Service commissioned the pilot of seven intensive community order pilots (known as “Intensive Alternative to Custody orders”) which were designed with the intention of diverting offenders from short prison sentences (that is, a sentence of 12 months or less) onto a community order. The initial pilots ran from 2008/9 and then again from 2010/11. The IACs were piloted in Derbyshire, West Yorkshire, South Wales, Dyfed-Powys, Manchester and Salford, Merseyside and Humberside (see Taylor et al 2014). Clark et al (2012: 2) note that “the Intensive Alternative to Custody (IAC) order was introduced to provide a credible alternative to a short custodial sentence. The order, based on emerging desistance and compliance theories [see chapter 3], was designed to punish and rehabilitate through the application of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA) order requirements alongside additional services”. It also “enable[s] courts to use existing community sentencing options in new ways by combining intensive probation supervision with a mix of demanding requirements and interventions delivered by partner agencies” (Khan and Hansbury, 2012: 2). In line with the Ministry of Justices intention to use public and voluntary sector organisations for service delivery, the IAC adopted a coordinated approach for service delivery, which included the input from partner staff including mentors who were responsible for assisting probationers in finding employment, family workers, and a Group 4 Security (G4S) presence in order to support compliance. While the mentors were initially tasked purely with aiding probationers sentenced to an IAC find employment, as the number of probationers sentenced to an IAC grew, the work conducted by Offender Managers and Mentors became more intertwined to the point where supervisory duties are split between the two roles. As the name implies, the IAC was designed to be more intensive than the other form of community order. In a recent evaluation of the IAC pilot schemes, Clark et al (2012: 2) identified that “offenders sentenced to a 12 month IAC order received a 12 month community order with between 3-5 requirements. During the first three months of the order, contact between the offender and the offender manager was intensive with up to four appointments a week”. The potential requirements imposed on an offender as part of their ICO included supervision, curfew, community payback (referred throughout the interviews with staff and probationers as “unpaid work”), offending behaviour programmes, attendance centre and an activity requirement which usually involved employment skills or victim awareness programmes (ibid). The intensity of the IAC was evident throughout the

evaluations of all seven pilots, Taylor et al (2014: 46) for instance notes that “reflecting the intensity of the order, across the seven demonstrator projects, an IAC had, on average, 3.4 requirements compared to 1.7 requirements per offender sentenced to a standard community order”. Clarke et al (2012: 5) identified the importance and subsequent impact of relationships on compliance in the ICO pilots, suggesting that “as the order progressed, the potential for mentors to assist offenders in securing employment attracted self-interest, and positive relationships with staff established a normative compliance” (discussed in more detail in chapter 7). The results of the initial pilot studies were promising, suggesting that there was “evidence of a positive impact of [ICO] compared to short term custody at the 10% significance level” (Khan et al, 2012: 4)

It is important to note that each of the pilot areas catered to offender groups who exhibited needs and offence types characteristic of the offender profile in each of those areas. The IAC order which was the main focus of the current research for instance only included male offenders between the ages of 18 and 25 whose offence history, or level of seriousness would otherwise have warranted a short custodial sentence of 12 months or less. Interestingly, it has been suggested that this particular IAC was perhaps more intensive than the others in the pilot, it was identified that “the average number of requirements on [this] ICO was 3.75; more than double the average 1.8 requirements on standard community orders [in the area, as discussed above] and higher than the overall average of 3.4 requirements per order across the ICO pilots” (Taylor et al, 2014: 46). In terms of the level of seriousness of offence, the evaluations of the pilots identified that “48% of suitable offenders had an Offender Group Reconviction Score (OGRS) of 75% or above, with index offences such as summary or burglary offences, or who had breached their sentences [...] there were also offenders convicted for one serious offence, for example 14% of those assessed as suitable had an OGRS score below 75% with index offences such as violence or robbery”. (Clarke et al, 2012: 3). Indeed, an examination of the probationers involved in the current research has identified a similar trend, with the majority of probationers in the sample (see and appendix F) having a history of minor offences such as burglary, with a minority of probationers serving an IAC order for their first offence. In 2015, as part of the introduction of 'Transforming Rehabilitation', the Intensive Alternative to Custody was rebranded as an “Intensive Community Order” (ICO) although the contents of the order, in the fieldwork office, remained the same.

Appendix F: Participant histories

In order to understand the desisting narratives of the offenders making up the sample for the research, it is important to understand the context within which the offending behaviour occurred, as this will allow for a closer examination of how the participants see themselves and where their attempts to desist from crime are located within this. The majority of the sample grew up in economically disadvantaged suburbs of the research area with a reputation for violence and anti-social behaviour, *“all the kids were fucking crazy anyway (laughs) *names estate* type it in on the internet mate it will tell you all sorts about it” (Gary)*. A theme consistent with that of Maruna’s (2001) research sample in particular and the wider knowledge concerning characteristics of offenders is that the majority of the sample (66%) did not finish school, in fact, only 16% of the sample had any qualifications before starting their probation order. Although some suggested their rebelliousness at school was reactionary, due to the fact that they wanted to see their families, the majority suggested that while at school they “fell in with the wrong crowd” and this led to an increase in offending behaviour. The average age of first offence for the sample was just over 13, while the average age of the participants at the time of interview was 21, so, by the time they began their ICO their offence history had spanned on average 8 years. Among the most common offence types committed by the sample were theft (72%), burglary (61%) and assault (55%). Drug offences were noted by just over a third of the sample (33%) although drug use was considerably more prevalent (77%) and it was suggested in the first series of interviews that this was the driving force behind the majority of acquisitive offences. Just over half of the sample (55%) had some experience of prison, with the average time spent in prison being 13 months, although this is exaggerated by the fact that a couple of participants had served sentences adding up to over three years, removing these from the sample the average time spent in prison dropped to 8 months. The following provides a brief account of each participant’s background.

James

At the time of the first interview (December 2013) James was 18 and was living in the local area with his grandparents as, he did not get on particularly well with his mother or her partner. By the time of the second interview (June 2014) this had changed thanks to a repaired relationship with his mother and, significantly, her partner no longer being around. James had been sentenced to a 12 month ICO for robbery and assault with intent to rob, for which he had been ordered to complete 120 hours of unpaid work, a victim awareness course, Education, Training and Employment (ETE), 3 month curfew and 24 hours of sessions at an

attendance centre. The offence in question involved him stealing a mobile phone from a taxi driver whom, along with a friend, he also assaulted. Before his order had commenced however he was also charged with being carried in a TWOC, however, this received a two year conditional discharge owing to his ICO due to start at the time of trial. During the course of his order James was required to undertake a Breach Activity Requirement (BAR) as he breached his order for tampering with his curfew equipment. Before coming to ICO, James had been charged five times from the age of 11 for offences including assault, threatening and abusive behaviour, criminal damage and theft from a dwelling. James completed his order in late 2014 and, at the time of writing, has not been in contact with the criminal justice system.

Mark

Mark was 22 when he agreed to be interviewed at the start of the fieldwork (December 2013). Mark was serving a 24 month supervision order for malicious wounding for which he was required to complete a Victim Awareness course, ETE and a 3 month curfew. This sentence however, Mark saw as somewhat of a let off as, during the fight in question he intentionally bit his victim's nose "almost clean off" however, due to a lack of DNA evidence he could not be charged. Mark's history with the criminal justice system was predominantly due to violent offences. He had two convictions before the age of 18 for fighting. Although his first conviction was at 17 his first warning was at age 11 for breaking into a pub with a friend and stealing some beer. One of his violent offences involved the use of a firearm and this resulted in a two and a half year prison sentence. Mark puts his offending down to the anger and hostility he feels as a result of the physical abuse he received from his father at a young age. He joined the army at 16 for four years, although he feels that, if anything, it made him worse as it did nothing to help him deal with his anger issues. Mark did not present for his the second interview, however, he successfully completed his order and, according to his OASys report, has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.

Stephen

Stephen (18) received his ICO for a non-dwelling burglary, for which he was required to complete 9 months supervision, 100 hours of unpaid work, a 3 month curfew, an exclusion zone of the area in which the offence took place, ETE, a thinking skills programme, victim awareness and 20 hours at an attendance centre. His only previous conviction was for theft of several motorcycles with his brother for which he received a 14 month sentence with the Youth Offending Team. Stephen suggested his offending was down to him being easily led

and has attempted to become more independent during the course of his ICO. By the time of the second interview (June 2014) Stephen had launched his own gardening business. Although, at the time, he was confined to his local area owing to the fact he did not possess a driving license and had to push his equipment around in a wheelbarrow, he planned on learning to drive to expand this business. He received an early revocation of his order and, at the time of writing, has managed to stay out of trouble.

Paul

Paul (21) was serving a 12 month community order with 12 months supervision, 80 hours unpaid work, victim awareness, ETE and a 3 month curfew for a burglary in a dwelling. Although he had no convictions before the age of 18, between his age of onset (19) and the time of the interview he had amassed 5 convictions, four of which were for violence when drunk. Paul notes the breakup of his parents' marriage caused him to begin to rebel at which point, with his father's permission, he began to drink. The offence in question involved him breaking into a house with a friend, as the friend had been locked out and it was perceived to be the only way he could get his possessions back. Paul admitted that the majority of his offences were due to drinking which, with the help of the probation staff, he was actively trying to control. He successfully completed his order and has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.

Simon

At the time of the first interview Simon was 22 and was currently serving a 12 month ICO for possession of MDMA (ecstasy) with intent to supply. He was required to complete 12 months supervision, victim awareness, ETE and a 3 month curfew. Simon spent three years in the army before being medically discharged following a knee injury playing football. Leaving the army, coupled with his injury preventing him gaining employment, led to the financial hardship which, he claims, resulted in his decision to sell MDMA with a friend. Simon had one previous conviction for being drunk and disorderly and had also received a caution for trespassing after he and some friends broke into a school. Simon has a strong relationship with his family. Throughout my discussions with him he stressed how he kept his offending to himself as his mum "would go mad" if she ever found out. At the time of the second interview, Simon had started working, although he was limited in his movements by his knee injury, he received an early revocation of his order and has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.

Andy

At the time of the first interview, Andy (24) was near the end of his 12 month ICO with 12 months supervision for a public order offence including fear/provocation of violence. He was required to complete 100 hours of unpaid work and had an exclusion zone from the area in which the offence took place. Andy received his first warning at the age of 16 but noted himself how this warning did nothing but provided a sense of bravado, echoed in the fact that his first conviction was also at the age of 16. Although 2 out of the four convictions he received after 18 were for violence he admitted that alcohol played its part, he was also keen to point out that this was his first offence in five years. Although he has a strong relationship with his mother, he notes that his father was absent throughout his childhood and, because of this, he has no relationship with him now. As a father himself, Andy stressed his desire to be there for his daughter in a way his father wasn't, this drove his desire to stay out of trouble. By the second interview Andy had completed his order, he had found work and had stayed out of contact with the criminal justice system.

Tom

At the time of the first interview Tom was 20 years old and was currently serving a 12 month ICO with 9 months supervision, 3 month curfew, ETE and a substance misuse programme for a burglary in a dwelling. During the course of his ICO however he was breached for violating his curfew and was required to complete the BAR programme. He also received a 12 month conditional discharge for a public order offence. Tom's history with the criminal justice system spanned five years, with his first offence being at the age of 15 for theft. He had 5 convictions before the age of 18 and another three after for threatening and abusive behaviour, violence and the burglary for which he was serving his ICO after being on remand for three weeks. Tom suffers from ADHD and suggested that this condition and his inability to concentrate for long periods meant he attended and was excluded from numerous schools in his area. He was actively trying to obtain employment during the course of both interviews and was seeking help from an agency to achieve this. Tom looks up to his parents whom he sees as "grafters". During the second interview, Tom disclosed that while he was on remand for his current offence, his father told him that he had been in prison on and off for 25 years and this was not something Tom wanted for himself. Although Tom successfully completed his ICO he struggled to maintain his desistance, as is evident by the fact that he is currently

serving a prison sentence. However, as his case has now been passed to the National Probation Service, the details surrounding this are not clear.

Harry

Harry (21) was sentenced to an 18 month ICO for a burglary in a dwelling for which he was required to complete 12 month supervision, 240 hours of unpaid work, 3 month curfew and BAR as he breached his curfew following an argument with his grandparents, with whom he was living with at the time. Before being sentenced to an ICO however, Harry spent 3 months on remand and his desire to avoid going back shaped the narrative he provided across both interviews. Although Harry took ownership of his offending, stating that he made mistakes and bad choices, he also suggested that he was generally an unlucky person and this contributed to him being caught. Harry expressed a desire to join the army, but was aware that his offending history reduced the possibility of him being able to sign up. During the second interview, Harry stated that he had so far managed to stay out of trouble and was planning on finding work and “settling down”. However, after the final interview Harry was breached for committing common assault for which he received another community order, this was then revoked as he committed another violent offence, for which he received 4 months in custody. He was released in January but is now an NPS case so his current offending status is unknown.

Gary

Gary was 26 when he presented for the first interview. He had received a 12 month ICO with 9 month supervision and a three month curfew and was required to complete a thinking skills programme to help him with his anger issues. Gary was charged with a public order offence for verbally abusing an employee at the job centre in a dispute over benefit payments. Gary discussed an unsettled childhood, his father left home when he was three and, along with his siblings, he was removed from his mother’s care and placed with his grandmother. His grandmother however was dependent on alcohol and was physically abusive to her partner, all of which was witnessed by Gary. He suggested that he began to rebel in the hope that social services would take him away from his grandmother and reunite him with his mother. Eventually he was reunited with his mother but a few years later she walked out on him and his younger siblings, causing Gary to live on the street for a few months. Throughout his late teenage years Gary had issues with alcohol, cocaine and cannabis and this was also linked to

his offending. Gary had 2 convictions under 18 years old, the first of which coming at age 17 although he received his first warning at 12. He then had another five convictions as an adult, the majority of which were violent outbursts owing to his inability to control his anger. Gary successfully completed his order and started working as a kitchen fitter with a friend. Unfortunately he was not able to successfully maintain his desistance and, at the time of writing, he is due back in court in two weeks for possession with intent to supply class A drugs, an offence which he committed within three months of completing his order.

Tony

Tony (24) was the most prolific offender in the sample, having amassed 28 previous convictions by the time of the first interview, 12 of which occurred before he was 18. He received his first caution at the age of 11 and first conviction at age 12. His offences included assault, actual bodily harm, failure to surrender, battery, possession of a weapon, burglary, shoplifting, breach of ASBO, breach of curfew, threatening behaviour, attempting to supply HMP with class A substances (for which he spent 22 months in prison), assaulting a police officer, malicious wounding and racially aggravated distress. The final three of resulted in his most recent sentence. Tony was required to complete an 18 month ICO with 18 month supervision, 3 month curfew and the completion of a thinking skills programme to tackle his anger issues. Tony had a disrupted childhood, noting that his parents were habitual amphetamine users. When he was five his grandmother took him and his siblings away from his parents, he lived with his grandmother until he was 16. Tony spent his youth in and out of detention centres, having served three different jail terms, the longest of which being the incident described above, and he frames his desistance within the context of not wanting to go back to prison. Tony complied with his order and received an early revocation, at the point of writing Tony has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since he completed his ICO.

Henry

Henry was 23 at the time of the interview, and had moved to England from the Ukraine in 2012 in an attempt to find work as a contractor. He received an 18 month suspended sentence with 12 month supervision with ICO, along with 180 hours of unpaid work and an ETE requirement for the production of a class B substance. This was Henry's first offence. Interestingly, Henry refused to accept responsibility for his offence, maintaining throughout the interview that he knew nothing about the cannabis farm being cultivated in the loft in his

house. For Henry, it was discovered when he and his wife were assaulted by burglars in his home, when he called the police to report this, the cannabis was found and he was arrested. Instead of discussing his offence with me during the interview, as he was adamant he had not committed one, he instead was interested in demonstrating his political standing in the Ukraine and how he aimed to emulate this in England. As he refused to accept responsibility for his offending, it was down to his supervisory team to utilise other methods to safeguard against the potential for future offending, along with the use of vignettes to ensure he completed his victim awareness work. Henry declined to be involved in the second round of interviews but he successfully completed his ICO and an analysis of his OASys report suggests he has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since completion.

Kamran

Kamran (20) received a 12 month ICO for aggravated TWOC, he took his grandmothers car without permission and crashed it into another parked vehicle, and he then fled the scene of the offence. He was required to complete 250 hours of unpaid work, 3 month curfew and ETE. He had two previous convictions for theft and for conspiring to supply class C substances, the first of which was before the age of 18. Kamran has a close relationship with his mother who raised him as a single parent. Although he admits to “pushing his luck” with her on occasion, he recognises that ultimately, she “calls the shots”. The narrative accounts presented by Kamran during the course of the two interviews suggested that apathy was a major factor in Kamran’s behaviour. He did not attend school or college because he “could not be bothered” and he routinely suggested that he exited social situations on account that he was not bothered by the drama created by his friendship groups. Indeed this was also evident in Kamran’s discussion of his desistance, suggesting that he could not be bothered with constantly getting into trouble anymore. He was also aware of the increasingly unsavoury attention his offending was bringing and this was something he wanted to avoid. At the time of writing Kamran was still completing his ICO owing to outstanding unpaid work which he has yet to complete.

Jason

Jason (21) was the second most prolific offender in the sample, having amassed 13 convictions before the age of 18 and 15 convictions by the time of the first interview. He had received convictions for *inter alia* burglary, handling stolen goods, theft, shoplifting, criminal damage, using threatening words, attempted robbery and robbery. His first conviction was for

robbery at the age of 14, although he had previously received a caution at the age of 13. He was jailed for 12 months (of which he served 7) for a burglary in a dwelling. At the time of the first interview he was serving a 12 ICO for a non-dwelling burglary. He was required to complete 12 months of supervision, 125 hours of unpaid work, 3 month curfew and a thinking skills programme, although he was also given the BAR requirement twice for two separate breaches of his order for non-compliance. The majority of Jason's offending occurred during his time as a member of a local gang. It was during his time in prison, and his relocation to Wales upon release that made him reconsider his involvement in gangs and the birth of his daughter a few years later strengthened his desire to desist. Jason successfully completed his order and, at the time of writing, has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since completing his ICO.

Neil

Neil was 24 at the time of the first interview; he was serving a 12 month ICO with 9 month supervision, 3 month curfew, 18 hours at an attendance centre and ETE. He also had to undertake BAR as he breached his order half way through for non-compliance. The offence for which he was sentenced to an ICO was fraud, he was signing cheques from his father's bank account into his own in order to pay spiralling loan and credit card debt. Neil presented as a "charmer" and, although he provided a very clear sense of how he planned to turn his life around, a discussion with his probation officer revealed that, the more time she spent with him, the more she realised that his version of events was increasingly inconsistent. This was made further evident when it was identified that he continued to offend against his father, who refused to report this further offending. As Neil would not disclose this further offending to the ICO team and continued to present as desisting, the ICO team instead focused on safeguarding his father from Neil's offending by attempting to find him accommodation of his own. Neil successfully completed his order, however his offending status is currently unknown, although he has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since completion of his ICO.

Lee

Lee (22) had been on ICO longer than any of the other participants in the research, having been on a series of ICOs for three years. At the time of the first interview, Lee was serving a 24 month suspended sentence with 9 month ICO supervision for intimidating a witness, he was required to complete a substance misuse programme and ETE. Lee has 25 convictions in

total, 10 of which were before the age of 18, most of which were for acquisitive offences. Of the 15 convictions amassed between the ages of 18 and the time of the first interview, 10 were for violent offences, he has served a total of three years in prison, although this was not all in one go. Lee described his disruptive childhood, his mother was dependent on alcohol and had a series of partners, most of whom Lee did not get on with. This tension ultimately resulted in Lee being intentionally homeless from the age of 16. In between spells in prison Lee moved between temporary accommodation blocks. Lee admitted to being easily led and it was this, coupled with his being “in the wrong place at the wrong time” which resulted in the bulk of his offending. In terms of his desistance Lee discussed his desire to avoid going back to prison but also the increased responsibility he has been given by his sister to look after her son. Unfortunately Lee has not been able to maintain his desistance and has received another ICO for being carried in a TWOC.

Adam

At the time of the interview, Adam (21) was serving a 12 month ICO for his first offence (aggravated TWOC) for which he was required to complete 9 month supervision, 3 month curfew, 80 hours unpaid work, victim awareness and ETE. Although this was his first conviction he received a warning at age 10 for a violent offence. Adam’s family was reasonably notorious in his local area with several of his siblings serving long prison sentences, because of this he was particularly private during the interview and refused to discuss his family life. Although he would not talk about his family’s involvement in crime, he admitted a sense of remorse for his offence and stated that he had no intention of getting into trouble again. He successfully completed his ICO and, at the time of writing, has not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.

Frank

Frank (20) was serving a 12 month ICO for burglary in a dwelling, for which he was required to complete 9 months supervision, 3 month curfew, 120 hours unpaid work, a substance misuse programme and ETE. Frank had four convictions before the age of 18, three of which were for theft; the fourth was for a violent offence. Frank suggested that the bulk of his offending was committed with friends in order to feed his addiction to cocaine, for which he was actively seeking help with the drug treatment team at the ICO office. Frank declined participation in the second interview but his Probation Officer stated that he successfully

completed his ICO and, at the time of writing, has not been involved with the criminal justice system since.

Max

Max (22) was serving a 12 month ICO for possession with intent to supply a class B substance (cannabis). He was required to complete 12 months supervision, 3 month curfew, 100 hours unpaid work, victim awareness, substance misuse programme and ETE. Although this was Max's first conviction he had received several cautions before the age of 18 for threatening and abusive language. Max had an unstable relationship with his parents, who he stated were both addicted to alcohol and physically abusive towards each other, leading to Max leaving home at the age of 15 and moving between friends' houses and hostels. He stated that he got into selling drugs with a friend as a way to get extra money for himself so he could go out and buy "nice things". At the time of the second interview, Max had been able to obtain full time work, was renting a flat and was involved in a stable relationship. His stated the fact that he had a regular wage and was settled meant he had no intention of getting in trouble again. Max successfully completed his order and he had not been in contact with the criminal justice system since.