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**What happens to persistent young offenders when  
they grow up? A longitudinal study of the first  
recipients of intensive supervision**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Part 1: Approaching persistent and serious young offenders through an intimate and longitudinal lens .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</i>	<i>11</i>
1.1 Fresh eyes .....	11
1.2 Political context and establishment of intensive supervision.....	12
1.3 Intensive supervision on a statutory footing .....	15
1.4 Theoretical promiscuity: the range of penal discourses associated with intensive programmes.....	17
1.5 ISSP: The research background.....	19
1.6 Research objectives .....	20
1.7 Research methods.....	21
1.8 Structure of the thesis.....	22
<i>Chapter 2: Literature Review: Exploring empirical and theoretical sensibilities towards persistent young offenders and intensive interventions .....</i>	<i>25</i>
2.1 Introduction .....	25
2.2 <i>The longevity of the notorious young offender.....</i>	<i>26</i>
2.3 Youth crime and youth justice: theoretical reflections .....	28
2.4 The cultural and emotional U-turn .....	30
2.5 Searching for an evidence base: The seduction of facts.....	32
2.6 Desistance and the revival of subjectivity.....	34
2.7 New directions in research on young people and crime .....	36
2.8 The turn to intensity .....	37
2.9 Catch him! Identifying persistent offenders .....	41
2.9 Shifts in the youth justice framework.....	44
2.10 Policing and surveillance.....	45
2.11 A political culture of fear and anxiety.....	48
2.12 Connecting structure and agency: employing the work of Pierre Bourdieu .....	51
2.13 A reflexive approach .....	56
<i>Chapter 3: Research design, a cross-methodological framework in search of trust, meaning and validity.....</i>	<i>60</i>
3.1 Introduction .....	60

3.2 The starting point – ISSP .....	61
3.3 The rationale .....	63
3.4 Quantitative research methodology .....	74
3.5 Qualitative research methodology .....	89
<i>Chapter 4: Ethics, the search for trust, meaning and validity .....</i>	<i>96</i>
4.1 Introduction .....	96
4.2 The rationale .....	99
4.3 Retracing and making contact with the sample .....	101
4.4 Incentives .....	102
4.5 Researcher safety .....	103
4.6 Approaching the interviews as a collaborative exercise .....	104
4.7 Renegotiating confidentiality .....	106
4.8 Disclosure and management of sensitive data .....	107
4.9 The politics of representation .....	109
4.10 Quantitative data security .....	112
4.11 Funding .....	113
4.12 Final thoughts .....	113
<b>Part 2 The long-term trajectories of ISSP: Results from the quantitative data ....</b>	<b>118</b>
<i>Chapter 5: a preface to the sample and data .....</i>	<i>118</i>
5.1 Introduction .....	118
5.2 The ISSP Sample: a quantitative introduction .....	120
5.3 <i>Previous involvement in the criminal justice system .....</i>	<i>122</i>
5.4 Exploring Asset .....	124
5.5 Persistence and seriousness .....	135
5.6 Methodological and theoretical blind spots .....	139
5.7 Multiple Deprivation .....	141
6.1 Frequency of offending .....	145
6.2 Seriousness of offending .....	152
6.3 Reconviction .....	157
6.4 Summary .....	162
<i>Chapter 7: Viewing long-term offending trajectories through latent growth curve and mixture models .....</i>	<i>166</i>
7.1 Latent growth modelling: Incorporating temporal processes .....	166
7.2 Modelling strategy .....	171

7.3 Exploring variation within the sample: Mixture modelling .....	186
7.4 Summary .....	195
7.5 Discussion.....	198
<b>Part 3: Yesterday's rebels: A narrative account of persistent offending from childhood to young adulthood in Liverpool .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<i>Chapter 8: Introduction .....</i>	<i>210</i>
8.1 Structure and analytical orientation .....	211
8.2 Presentation of the data: Two notable reminders .....	212
8.3 Note on text .....	215
8.4 'Gang' Terminology .....	215
<i>Chapter: 9 Liverpool: a brief socio-cultural history .....</i>	<i>217</i>
9.1 The story of a seaport .....	217
9.2 20 <sup>th</sup> century: economic downturn and public protests .....	219
9.3 Regional politics .....	223
9.4 James Bulger and the rise of popular punitivism.....	224
9.5 Criminal networks and the underground drugs economy.....	227
9.6 Police 'disruption' .....	232
9.7 2011 riots .....	235
9.8 Deprivation in 21 <sup>st</sup> century Liverpool.....	236
9.9 Redressing the spatial stereotype: deprivation to 'Merseypride' .....	238
<i>Chapter 10: What happened to yesterday's rebels? A thematic account of narratives from formerly persistent and serious young offenders. ....</i>	<i>245</i>
10.1 Memories and legacies of ISSP .....	246
10.2 Growing up outside civil structures .....	255
10.3 Growing up in the criminal justice system.....	262
10.4 Everyday life as a persistent young offender.....	273
10.5 The cycle of persistence and desistance.....	289
10.6 Desistance: A painful rite of passage .....	296
10.7 Discussion.....	305
<i>Chapter 11: The pleasure and the pain: intimate stories of capital accumulation and loss from two historic ISSP cases. ....</i>	<i>313</i>
11.1 Sampling and methodology .....	314
11.2 Case study 1: Amos, a story of persistence and desistance .....	315
11.3 Case study 2: Mark, a story of persistence. ....	338

11.4 Two sides of the same coin: Comparing narratives of persistence and desistance. .....	360
<b>Part Four: What happens to persistent young offenders when they grow up?</b>	
<b>Youth, crime and society through a cross-methodological lens .....</b>	<b>379</b>
<i>Chapter 12: Conclusions .....</i>	<i>379</i>
12.1 Introduction .....	379
12.2 Summary .....	381
12.3 Remaining shadows .....	387
12.4 No difference - where now? .....	390
12.5 Persistent young offenders: Someone else’s problem .....	393
12.6 Symbolic violence: the hidden high costs of making good .....	398
12.7 Symbolic violence: the demoralising process of growing up.....	402
12.8 Evaluation and learning from policy implementation: Cross-methodological research .....	404
<b>Bibilography .....</b>	<b>409</b>
<b>Appendix A: Extraction of reconviction data from the Police National Computer .....</b>	<b>496</b>
<b>Appendix B: Ethical applications .....</b>	<b>499</b>
<i>B.1 Application for ethical clearance of quantitative data – Keele Ethics Committee. 499</i>	
<i>B.2 Application for ethical clearance of qualitative data – Keele Ethics Committee ... 503</i>	
<i>B.3 Request to Home Office for PNC data .....</i>	<i>509</i>
<b>Appendix C: Offence categories and offences by seriousness scores .....</b>	<b>513</b>
<b>Appendix D: Mixture modelling estimates: Mean number of offences and mean gravity score of the four identified groups.....</b>	<b>523</b>
<b>Appendix E: Sample sizes of key variables – by domain. ....</b>	<b>525</b>

## Abstract

In 2001 the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) was introduced by the Youth Justice Board. It was politically drafted to attend to New Labour's desire to be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. ISSP provided the ubiquitous 'persistent young offender' with a range of community-based resources and espoused a plethora of often contradictory theoretical and practice aims. Employing a cross-methodological framework this study has sought to understand the long-term impact of intensive supervision on the lives of (formerly) serious and persistent young offenders as they grow up.

Using a large cohort of 1789 ISSP cases and 704 comparison cases it has built up a longitudinal picture of which young people persisted with or desisted from crime, together with measures of the nature of their subsequent offending and exposure to criminal sanctions. While the inevitable result of 'no difference' emerges, the role of more sophisticated statistical analyses and longitudinal models is advised to answer a broader set of substantive questions.

In-depth life-history interviews also gave voice to the young people themselves. How did they relate to the melange of penal discourses? Did they want to be rehabilitated? What did offending represent to them in their everyday lives? The results suggest that a childhood of persistent offending was often experienced as

wild flight of hedonism and capital advantage. However, frequently and swiftly, it translated into a complex and demoralising poverty trap in early adulthood.

Despite the epistemological, theoretical and logistical gaps between quantitative and qualitative methods, their combination has the potential to address the sort of 'what works' questions but also to the wider intellectual terrain of the impact of punishment on offender's subjectivities and the broader position of young offenders in society.

**Keywords:** Youth justice; cultural identities; desistance; case-study; longitudinal analysis; intensive interventions, emotions.

## List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 3.1: Sample Sizes	79
Table 3.2: Percentage of young people involved in offending prior to order	80
Table 3.3: Percentage of cases who remain in the sample following adjustments for time spent in custody post-intervention	83
Table 3.4: Socio-demographic characteristics - ISSP and Comparison Groups	86
Table 5.1: Recorded offending frequency within the ISSP sample prior to the intervention	121
Table 5.2: Average lengths of custodial sentences (in days) prior to ISSP	122
Table 5.3: Proportions of 'high risk'/ 'high need'† cases for ISSP sample and national sample	127
Table 5.4: Comparison of criminal histories and personal characteristics by offender categories	138
Table 5.5: Average rankings for IMD 2004 domains (percentiles)	143
Table 6.1: Frequency of offending three years prior and four years post - ISSP and Comparison groups	147
Table 6.2: Linear regression analysis of frequency of reoffending over four years	151
Table 6.3: Gravity scores of offending three years prior and four years post – ISSP and Comparison groups	155
Table 6.4: Linear regression analysis of gravity of subsequent offending over four years	156
Table 6.5: Reconviction rates four years post order	159
Table 6.6: Binary logistic regression analysis of reconvictions over four years	161
Table 7.1: LGC parameter estimates for the frequency of offending four years post ISSP (ISSP sample only)	174
Table 7.2: LGC parameter estimates for the gravity of the most serious offence four years post ISSP (ISSP sample only)	175
Table 7.3: LGC parameter estimates - frequency of offending, four years post intervention	181
Table 7.4: LGC Parameter estimates - gravity of subsequent offending, four years post intervention	184
Table: D.1 Mixture modelling estimates: Mean number of offences and mean gravity score of the four identified groups	520
Table E.1 Sample sizes by domain	523

## List of Figures

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 5.1: Distribution of sentencing outcomes among active offenders prior to ISSP	124
Figure 5.2: Total Asset score bands for ISSP and national samples	133
Figure 5.3: Boxplot deprivation within the ISSP sample (low scores = high levels of deprivation)	144
Figure 6.1: Mean offending frequency - three years prior and four years post	146
Figure 6.2: Mean gravity score - three years prior and four years post	153
Figure 7.1: Path diagram of LGC multivariate model	178
Figure 7.2: Mixture modelling - distributions of offending frequency, four groups	192
Figure 7.3: Mixture modelling - distributions of offending seriousness, four groups	192

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This study is dedicated to the cherished memories of Pip, Dorothy, Anna and Ben.

# **Part 1: Approaching persistent and serious young offenders through an intimate and longitudinal lens**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Fresh eyes**

This study is about exploring what happens to persistent and serious young offenders when they grow up, with specific reference to the impact of intensive supervision. Each stage of this statement is important. The project has aimed to investigate the empirical and theoretical meaning of persistent offending in childhood; the role of intensive supervision in the young people's lives as well as its wider contribution to youth justice; the simultaneous role of alternative interventions, bringing with them as they do a melange of penal discourses; the various developmental trajectories persistent young offenders experience as they grow up. Examining the participant's maturation has been concerned with - but not limited to – the impact on their offending behaviour. The study was also committed to eliciting data about the broader domains of adult life. Approaching the study with the prefix "what happens?" underlines the exploratory nature of this project. Despite a history of conducting research on persistent and serious young offenders, at the outset of this doctorate I could not predict what I might discover in the 'field' or what the data would reveal. Associated with this exploratory direction is an exercise in epistemology - towards critically assessing the ways in which our research tools shape our understanding, and what that understanding represents in terms of our sensibilities towards crime, youth offending and justice. Lastly, there is

also a genuine interest in producing a study which has relevance at the policy and practice level, in addition to making an empirical and theoretical contribution.

## **1.2 Political context and establishment of intensive supervision**

After 1997, 'New Labour' invested substantial resources into countering childhood poverty and promoting inclusion through the principle of social justice (Young and Matthews 2003). Initiatives spearheaded by the Social Exclusion Unit included policies to tackle drug dependency, neighbourhood degeneration, school exclusion and unemployment (Social Exclusion Unit 2001). The first New Labour Crime and Disorder Act (1998) created the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to oversee the development and management of a reformed youth justice system. Educational, training and employment programmes, as well as early intervention strategies were quickly established by the Board (Newburn, 2002). Delivery of these holistic programmes – intended to address the 'causes of offending' - was to be overseen by multi-agency youth offending teams (YOTs), which included representatives from the police, probation, education, health and social services.

More than fifteen years have passed since these significant changes to the youth justice system, and as several policy analysts have argued (Levitas, 1998; Byrne 1999; Gray, 2005; France et al, 2012), the conceptualisation of social justice in these initiatives has been undermined by an emphasis on creating *individual* opportunities – to return to education, to work or to repair harm done. Beyond the veil of 'social justice' there has been widespread criticism that insufficient attention

has been paid to the unequal distribution of socio-economic resources (Levitas, 1998; Byrne 1999; Gray, 2005; France et al, 2012). The suppression of the cultural, social and economic antecedents of youth offending has been further compounded by the promotion of evidenced-based research which has typically assessed youth justice interventions, almost exclusively by the impact on young people's subsequent offending behaviour (Klein, 2000; Naughton, 2005; Moore et al, 2006). In sum, the lived reality of young people, marginalisation, social justice and economic arrangements has been sidelined, politically, theoretically and empirically.

It was in this political context that the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) was introduced as the Board's flagship programme to rigorously address the 'underlying causes of offending, while at the same time delivering a robust and demanding punishment in the community. The ISSP pilot began in 2001, it was based on a forerunner in Kent (Little et al, 2004), which was itself modelled on a scheme in Groningen, the Netherlands. Unlike many previous intensive community-based programmes, it targeted young offenders at both pre and post-custody stages; introduced as a condition of a Supervision or Community Rehabilitation Order and could also be part of post-release licence or bail conditions. The programme was targeted initially at persistent young offenders (aged 10-17), but in April 2002, this was extended to include those committing serious offences. The revised eligibility criteria encompassed offenders who:

- had been charged with, warned over or convicted of offences committed on four or more separate occasions within the last 12 months, and had received at least one community or custodial disposal (*the 'persistence' criterion*) or
- were at risk of custody because the current charge or sentence related to an offence serious enough that an adult would have received a custodial sentence of 14 years or more (*the 'seriousness' criterion*)
- were at risk of custody because they had a history of repeat offending on bail, and were at risk of a secure remand (*the 'repeat offending on bail shortcut'*) (Moore et al, 2004).

The Youth Justice Board specified the requirements for ISSP and invited Youth Offending Teams to bid for funds to develop local versions. The specification included a multi-modal supervision programme requiring 25 hours attendance per week, and surveillance by electronic tag or other methods. For those on six-month community programmes, the first three months were to involve at least five hours supervision a day during the week and access to support during the evenings and at weekends, with surveillance by electronic tag or other methods. After three months, there was to be a less intensive period of supervision with at least one hour each weekday. The programme's five 'core modules' were: education; restorative justice; offending behaviour; inter-personal skills; family support.

Soon after the pilot schemes were established, the programme was rolled out nationally and has continued to attract significant numbers. From the start of the pilot in July 2001 until the end of March 2009, 34,235 young people were made subject to ISSP, and the disposal frequently exceeded its yearly target. This is notable because programmes intended to provide alternatives to custody often lose their appeal after the initial furore of the pilot subsides (Moore et al, 2006). On the other hand, ISSP's popularity with sentencers might indicate unintended net-widening, whereby more young people are propelled further into the criminal justice system following the introduction of a new programme<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.3 Intensive supervision on a statutory footing

In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act put ISSP on a statutory footing<sup>2</sup> as one of a package of interventions that could be attached in a 'bolt-on' fashion to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. To reflect this change, ISSP was renamed ISS. The remit and scope of the new ISS programme was transformed in two critical ways. Firstly, instead of a nationally applied and explicit offending qualification, the new referral criteria were based on a series of subjective qualifications. The accompanying sentencing guidance for ISS was a matter of local interpretation; for example, the custody threshold could be variously applied<sup>3</sup> depending on the age, criminal

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<sup>1</sup> Net-widening occurs where offenders within the system are subjected to increased "levels of intervention which they might not have previously received" (Cohen, 1985:44).

<sup>2</sup> Section 1 (3) (a) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 provides for a *Youth Rehabilitation Order* with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) as an alternative to custody.

<sup>3</sup> A study by Barnardo's examined custody thresholds for 12 to 14-year-olds and concluded that "Parliament's clear intention of making custody for such young children genuinely a last resort is not reflected in sentencing practice" (Glover and Hibbert, 2009:4). Likewise, Jacobson et al, (2010)

history of the offender and circumstances of the offence (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009)<sup>4</sup>. Similarly, the guidance on ‘persistence’ declared there was no legally recognised definition of persistence, but that a young person was “likely to be found to be persistent where the offender has been convicted of, or made subject to, a pre-court disposal that involves an admission or finding of guilt in relation to imprisonable offences on at least three occasions in the past 12 months” (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11)<sup>5</sup>.

The second significant variation from the original ISSP model that was detailed in the Youth Justice Board guidance (Youth Justice Board, 2009) involved three new levels of supervision intensiveness. As a replacement for the previous universal structure of ISSP, two six-month versions of ISS with different levels of intensiveness were introduced, as well as an extended 12-month programme for young people with significant individual and social needs (with an Asset<sup>6</sup> score above 33) or where there was a risk of serious harm<sup>7</sup>. The relevance of these amendments was a movement towards increasing localism; expansion of the ‘intensive’ style

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concluded that, of 3,283 children who received custody in the second half of 2008, as many as 35% were sentenced for offences that were neither violent nor in the more serious gravity range: only 29% were sentenced for offences that were both violent and more serious.

<sup>4</sup> See sections 11.5 –11.18 (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See section 6 for discussion of the various methods for testing the persistence criterion (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> In youth justice practice the ‘Asset’ tool is the main standardised risk/needs assessment used to guide intervention and justify professional decision-making. It is scored 0-40 and represents an evaluation of the young person’s underlying needs and risk of reoffending (Baker et al, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Band 1 ISS is based on the previous ISSP model. It includes three months at high intensiveness of 25 hours per week, followed by five hours per week in the second three-month phase. Band 2 ISS includes three stages: months one and two involve 20 hours per week, month three is 10 hours per week and months four to six are five hours per week. The extended ISS requires young people to attend for 25 hours per week for months one to four, 15 hours per week in months five and six and five hours per week from month seven onwards (Youth Justice Board, 2009).

interventions to meet the various needs of a wider group of young people in the criminal justice system and investment in the notion that intensive community programmes might fulfil multiple functions in the youth justice arena without contradiction (c.f. Gendreau et al, 2000; Merrington 2006; Moore et al, 2006).

#### **1.4 Theoretical promiscuity: the range of penal discourses associated with intensive programmes**

The political impetus behind the introduction of intensive programmes is often associated with the need to tackle prison overcrowding while at the same time being seen to be strengthening community provision and appearing ‘tough on crime’ (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006). Consistent with this, the Youth Justice Board stated that its aim for the ISSP pilot was “to simultaneously tackle the underlying needs of young people; [and] reduce reoffending; while reassuring the community and sentencers” (Youth Justice Board, 2000). However, there are obvious and immediate tensions between these theoretical rationales and political aims (Pitts, 2003; Moore et al, 2006). Welfares and punitive agendas make uncomfortable bedfellows – the former prioritising the needs of the individual before punishment. An emphasis on ‘just deserts’ or proportionality potentially conflicts with the political desire for programmes to be viewed as ‘robust’ genuine alternatives to custody, as well the ‘What Works’ principle of risk classification which focuses upon the risk of re-offending rather than the seriousness of the current offence (McGuire, 1995). Indeed, the theoretical foundations of intensive community programmes are multi-faceted, attempting to fuse consequentialist

forward-looking rationales of deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation with backward-looking retribution and a promotion of 'just deserts'. Consequently, the programmes can be promoted as welfare-based interventions, proportionate interventions, risk management interventions and/or authoritarian interventions (Moore et al, 2006). Given these theoretical uncertainties the need for empirical and theoretical analysis is clear.

These matters are particularly important bearing in mind that intensive community programmes are now firmly established in the United States of America and are becoming an increasingly integral part of penal policy in other jurisdictions (Moore et al, 2006). In England and Wales, after ISSP was rolled out, an Intensive Control and Change Programme (ICCP) was piloted with young adult offenders (aged 18-20) in 11 probation areas in 2003 (Partridge et al, 2005). More recently, the 'Intensive Alternatives to Custody' pilot programme for young adult and adult offenders ran from 2008/09 to 2010/11 to test the use of intensive probation in diverting adult offenders from short-term custodial sentences (Hansbury, 2011). Finally, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 made 'Intensive Fostering' (c.f. Behalf et al, 2010) one of two community sentences that could be an alternative to custody as part of the Youth Rehabilitation Order for children and young people whose home-life is believed to have contributed significantly to their offending behaviour. While the expectations for these programmes are high, the research evidence regarding their effectiveness is mixed and a number of critical concerns remain (Gendreau et al, 2000; Pitts, 2003; Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006).

### 1.5 ISSP: The research background

Two evaluations of ISSP have been published so far. The first involved a broad and detailed investigation of the implementation, process and short-term outcomes of the ISSP pilot (Moore et al, 2004). The second report extended the reconviction study to two years (Gray et al, 2005), as well as exploring the impact of ISSP on custodial sentencing. These two studies form the basis of the 'original evaluation' of ISSP and are referred to as such throughout the thesis. These reports were conducted by Oxford University, commissioned by the Youth Justice Board, and were intended to provide evidenced-based feedback.

It should be noted that I was employed as a 'Regional Evaluator' and Lead Researcher on the above mentioned studies (see Section 3.2). This follow-up exercise represents a departure from the original evaluation; its inception has been directly informed by the marked limitations of conducting high-profile, short-term public policy research<sup>8</sup>.

Ten years on from the start of the pilot, this follow-up study has revisited the ISSP cohort. The project has provided a unique opportunity to explore the long-term offending trajectories of those subject to ISSP. It has capitalised on the potential for

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<sup>8</sup> The original evaluation of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004) included a broad range of research priorities and was a highly resourced project involving a multi-disciplinary staff compliment. Nevertheless, given the political pressure on 'law and order' (Farrall et al, 2009) its public reception was controversial and inevitably the report was understood in terms of its reconviction study (see Section 3.3).

applying advanced quantitative methods to longitudinal statistical data sets, and has retraced a subsample of the original cohort to conduct life-history interviews now they are adults. Through a combination of methods the study has aimed to attend to the kind of evaluative 'what works?' questions, but also to the wider intellectual terrain of the impact of punishment on offender's subjectivities and the ways in which those subject to ISSP came to consider themselves excluded, stigmatised, responsabilised, or rehabilitated by the youth justice system. It is hoped that the study will connect a consideration of (ex) offender's subjectivities, with an exploration of the impact of youth justice interventions, their family and community relations, as well more quantifiable measures of offending behaviour, deprivation and socio-demographics.

### **1.6 Research objectives**

The intention is to deliver a doctorate that is both theoretically interesting as well as of immediate political significance. Its specific aims have been to:

- Shed light on the broad and longer-term impacts of criminal justice interventions on persistent and serious young offenders through a combination of quantitative statistical analyses and an interpretive set of qualitative approaches.
- Examine whether ISSP outperforms (or not) alternative youth justice interventions in terms of its impact on reoffending.

- Investigate the long-term offending trajectories of the ISSP sample.
- Explore the signs of change that were self-evident in the qualitative data collected by the original ISSP evaluators, but proved too subtle to be captured by the quantitative thrust of the evaluation (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005).
- Unpack how the combination of penal discourses (social welfare, actuarial, and authoritarian) used to justify the intensive supervision of young offenders are rendered meaningful by these same offenders as they enter adulthood.
- Illustrate how the outcomes of long-term evaluations of multi-modal programmes (such as the ISSP) are shaped by the methodological and interpretive tools brought to evaluation research, including the choice of data (conviction, self-report survey, biographical-narrative) used to assess change.

### 1.7 Research methods

A mixed methods approach has been adopted encompassing life-history interviewing and longitudinal statistical analysis of a large cohort of 1,789 ISSP cases and 704<sup>9</sup> comparison cases already collated by the Youth Justice Board.

- Long-term criminal history searches for all individuals in the ‘original’ ISSP study (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) were conducted. The

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<sup>9</sup> The sample in the ‘original’ ISSP study counted ‘cases’ as each occasion a young person received an ISSP disposal. Hence, young people might be counted multiple times, depending how often they were subject to the programme. This study however, counts individuals only, and consequently the sample size has reduced from the original 3,884 ISSP cases and 1,393 comparison cases.

data was examined to build up a statistical picture of which young people persisted with or desisted from crime, and what shape those developmental changes took.

- The offending trajectories of the ISSP group were compared with a matched comparison group. The principal measures involved an exploration of the frequency and seriousness of reoffending in a repeated measures longitudinal design.
- A mixture modelling exercise was conducted to explore the marked variance in offending patterns within the ISSP sample.
- Detailed life-history interviews were carried out with a subset of the original ISSP cohort (n=9). The data was analysed using narrative case-study methods.
- The sampling frame in the qualitative study was limited to one regional area (Liverpool) in order to consider the local culture and social context of crime and desistance.
- This study benefited from exclusive access to a combination of historical ISSP datasets that were subject to secondary analysis, including qualitative data from interviews with young people, members of staff and family members, Asset and supervision monitoring data.

### **1.8 Structure of the thesis**

There are four parts to this thesis. Part 1 is very much an organising and marshalling of the core arguments and methodological considerations. Chapter 2 outlines the

relevant literature from a multi-disciplinary perspective, with an obvious slant on contemporary youth justice debates; an appraisal of evaluation techniques and related methodological and epistemological reflections, as well as a brief outline of germane theoretical frameworks. The rationale of the current study is underlined in Chapter 3 as a reflexive response to the original evaluation of ISSP. Details of the specific methodological decisions, strengths and weaknesses of the data and research design are also expanded on here. The relevance of ethics to methodological rigour is considered in Chapter 4. Part 1 aims to provide an outline of the key debates surrounding the topic at hand, as well as a justification of the research framework.

Part 2 commences upon the 'real work', turning first to the quantitative data. Chapter 5 examines what we know about the sample from a quantitative perspective and introduces the inclusion of some new independent variables, most prominently the Index of Multiple Deprivation and 'age at first offence'. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the long term patterns in the offending trajectories of the ISSP sample against a matched comparison group. Chapter 7 also includes a finite mixture modelling exercise to inspect the substantial variance within the ISSP group's offending behaviour. The interest is both substantive and methodological; as such consideration of the results involves an appraisal of the validity and reliability of the statistical techniques employed.

Part 3 continues the empirical investigation using qualitative data with a more theoretical and detailed lens. Chapter 8 reintroduces some of the methodological considerations, while Chapter 9 introduces the research site - Liverpool - providing a history of the political, cultural and economic foundations. Chapter 10 explores the 'bulk' of the qualitative data thematically, while Chapter 11 explores portions of the same data, this time through the use of two detailed case studies.

Part 4 contains just one chapter; it recaps what has been learnt from the investigations, drawing together the sometimes disaggregated results from the various arms of this mixed methods study. The emerging lessons for future penal policy are presented, and wider theoretical issues considered. In so doing, this thesis hopes to offer an empirically informed, theoretically grounded account of intensive community programmes and persistent youth offending, filling a gap in the current literature which "tends either to focus upon policy pronouncements, often from a critical perspective, with little regard to their operation in practice or to describe the evaluation of practical developments with little regard to theory" (Crawford and Newburn 2003:1).

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review: Exploring empirical and theoretical sensibilities towards persistent young offenders and intensive interventions**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This review provides an outline of the many and various factors associated with intensive interventions for persistent and serious young offenders in the UK. While youth crime has long been a high profile issue across Europe, America and elsewhere (Muncie and Goldson, 2006; Newburn, 2002), technical problems have also dogged this field of enquiry (Tilley, 2000; Smith and McVie, 2003; Lane et al, 2005; Haapanen et al, 2007; Raynor, 2008). Some criminologists believe that methodological limitations have posed serious implications for the validity of the body of knowledge that public policy relies upon (Goldson, 1997; Bottoms et al, 2004; Gray, 2005; Raynor, 2008). Others argue that disproportionate public concerns about young offenders and related matters such as anti-social behaviour have restricted the breadth and depth of definition and explanation (Gadd and Jefferson, 2004; Burney, 2005; Hogeveen, 2005; Barry, 2006; France, 2007; Green, 2008). Indeed, current research methods and concepts regarding young offenders disguise the complex and multi-faceted nature of the topic at hand.

Due to the cross-methodological structure of this study there were vast literatures to cover, and some subjects are delved into more deeply than others. Additionally it

should be noted that there is critical engagement within each chapter with the relevant corpus of work.

This chapter begins by addressing the how the identity of the persistent young offender has been established over time, before reviewing the vast literature and theoretical positions adopted to account for, and challenge, youth criminality. Towards the end of the chapter, a justification for the theoretical approach of this study is presented.

## **2.2 The longevity of the notorious young offender**

As a 'folk devil' (Cohen, 1973), the 'young offender' has a long and vivid history. Historians have recognised that for at least two centuries there has been repeated public anxieties about an increasingly 'out of control' youth offender population (Radzinowicz and Hood 1990; Shore, 1999; Wills, 2005). Specifically, Pearson (1983) has argued that historical debates about youth crime in the UK have involved notions of generational decline of family, community, authority, tradition and morality, so that young offenders symbolise a kind of modern emptiness. Comparable descriptions of this malaise can be identified in public documents from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pearson, 2006). More recently, high profile cases, such as the murder of James Bulger by two ten year olds in Liverpool in 1993 (Smith, 1994); the teenage burglar who lived in the heating ducts of flats in Newcastle prosaically nicknamed 'Rat-boy' in the same year (The Independent, 1993), and the

2011 English riots that erupted in London, Liverpool, Manchester Birmingham and Bristol, have provoked a litany of articles and editorials on how modern children – colloquially described as ‘chavs’ , ‘hoodies’ and ‘yobs’ are out of control. Then, as now, these sentiments are linked directly to problems of moral decline, crime and criminal justice (Burney, 2005; Farrall et al, 2009). Pearson (1983) condemns the type of government and media responses which amplify the idea we are living in a dangerous ‘crime wave’, neglecting the statistical and historical roots of the problem. Indeed, recent evidence suggests that rather than witnessing a ‘youth crime wave’ there has been a decline in youth crime since the mid 1990’s<sup>10</sup> (France, 2007; Ministry of Justice 2013).

Interestingly, not only is there longevity in public anxieties about young offenders, but the presence of stereotypical representations has been common since in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Shore (1999) notes how historical analyses of crime and criminals was often influenced by famous works of fiction<sup>11</sup> and typically involved hackneyed accounts of gangs and lurid descriptions of dangerous criminal ‘underworlds’. Such descriptions, she maintains, were not representative and served to sustain fear about the existence of a “criminal class, a breed of criminals who inhabited their own world with their own codes and language” (1999:11) (c.f. Emsley, 1996).

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<sup>10</sup> Overall there were 137,335 proven offences by young people in 2011/12, down 22% from 2010/11 and down 47 per cent since 2001/02 (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Charles Dickens’ novels in particular provided fierce social commentary of the poverty and social stratification of Victorian society. ‘*Oliver Twist*’ (1837-9) shocked readers with its images of deprivation and crime. Dickens’ work was often serialised in magazines and newspapers and quickly became absorbed into the imaginations of the public and philanthropists (Shore, 1999).

The above texts indicate political and public sensibilities about youth crime have potent historical roots, which include a host of assumptions about offender motivations and appropriate responses to young people. How and why these notions have been established and maintained will be a key part of this thesis. As well as contributing knowledge, critically examining categories, labels and discourses provides a more complete understanding of the research topic and avoids further contributing to unhelpful 'folk concepts' (Wacquant, 2008). With this in mind, the review begins to explore some more contemporary and specific fields of work.

### **2.3 Youth crime and youth justice: theoretical reflections**

Criminological literature has long since explored theories of offending in young people. This might be because of their age (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Farrington, 1986); poor self control (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990); inadequate socialisation (Park, 1925); 'rational choice' (Becker, 1968); problems in realising aspirations in a conventional manner (Merton, 1957); the influence of peers (Sutherland, 1925); pursuing excitement (Katz, 1988); lack of important social bonds (Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson et al, 1999); poverty and inequality (Taylor et al, 1973, 1975) and the negative effects of labelling (Hall et al, 1978). A further line of enquiry suggests offending is a common aspect of youth development which young people invariably 'drift' in and out of (Matza, 1964). Despite the breadth and depth of these theories, the literature remains sparse in certain key areas. For example, Barry (2006) stresses that research on the onset and

maintenance of offending behaviour is very limited. Moreover, she argues desistance theories are rarely compatible with those that address the reasons why people may begin offending. Few theories are applicable to female offending (Gelsthorpe and Sharp, 2006) and changes in rates, seriousness and frequency of offending are rarely acknowledged (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006). Neither do we have research knowledge regarding people who fail to stop offending (Moffitt, 1997). Developmental perspective and 'risk factor' research has failed to take on board the social and political aspects of youth offending, focusing solely on quantifiable individual-level variables (Wikström, 2002; Wikström and Sampson, 2003; France 2007).

While some theories emphasise individual characteristics, cognitions and experiences, others explore the role of culture and the environment. But it is also highly likely that a combination of factors influence patterns of youth crime (Wikström and Butterworth, 2006). However, while researchers working in broader camps of criminology recognise the importance of interaction effects, multilevel or hierarchical structures and complex recursive relationships (Nagin and Tremblay, 1999; Nagin, 2005; Gray, 2011) few studies have taken a multi-dimensional approach to youth crime (Wikström and Butterworth, 2006). Notably, two recent studies have broken the mould and begun to explore these topics from an integrated and cross-methodological perspective. Drawing upon a range of individual and ecological approaches, the longitudinal mixed methods 'Edinburgh Youth Transitions' study explores individual offending histories in relation to the

social and physical structure of neighbourhoods, and the dynamics of local communities (Smith and McVie, 2003; Smith and Ecob, 2007; McAra and McVie, 2010a; 2010b; 2012). Meanwhile researchers at Cambridge University have developed a general theory of moral action - Situational Action Theory, which examines how personal and environmental characteristics interact to influence acts of crime (Wikström, 2004, 2005; Wikström and Sampson, 2003; Wikström et al, 2012). While this thesis does not have the scope (or presumption) to replicate these challenging and inventive studies it does aim to follow their leads and incorporate, where possible, a more integrated analytical framework.

#### **2.4 The cultural and emotional U-turn**

It is worth noting that there has been a revived interest in some of the classic cornerstones of cultural and sociological criminology more recently, with particular emphasis on youth offenders and criminal identity. For instance, the process of 'labelling' 'criminal embeddedness' and 'social interaction' have been usefully employed to complement empirical studies and other theories of deviant behaviour (Hagan, 1993; Bernburg et al, 2006). Indeed, while these traditions have their detractors (Goode, 1975; Hirschi, 1980; O'Brien, 2005) researchers have pointed out that modification of these ideas can shed light on important socio-structural and cultural influences on crime which are often missed in 'administrative' criminology or evidence-based research (Presdee, 2004). Specifically, Bernburg and colleagues (2006) have demonstrated the consequences labelling can trigger by prompting movement towards deviant groups. Likewise Warr (2002) has underscored the

importance of the principle of 'homophily' (people associating with others who are similar to them on a number of different dimensions) in friendship formation. Researchers have also documented negative effects of official labelling on structured opportunities (Bernburg 2003; Bernburg and Krohn 2003), parental bonding (Stewart et al. 2002) and studied the effects of labelling on the police surveillance of repeat youth offenders (McAra and McVie, 2005).

The strength of these new works is that they apply novel and sophisticated empirical tests to their data, while drawing on classic roots of sociological criminology to address the conditions of late modernity. Many of these topics, from phenomenological sociology to sub-cultural theory, are relevant to the subject herein and highlight the importance of capturing socio-cultural influences in the data collection process. Moreover, in calling upon this literature, we resist what Rock (2005) calls the 'chronocentrism' in criminology – and its reluctance to utilise intellectual contributions from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or earlier.

Meanwhile, although criminology has a rich history of analysing the relationship between human emotions and crime, punishment and social control (Durkheim and Elias), it is only more recently, as Karstedt (2002) insists, that there has been a "return of emotions" through the "emotionalisation of law" (2002:299) (c.f. Wouters, 1986; Williams, 2001). There is also an increasingly rich and diverse understanding of 'everyday emotions' outside the criminological field; one of the

largest studies of real-life emotions involved a series of surveys which focused on describing the probabilities of experiencing certain emotions in everyday life and on the socio-demographic and situational factors that influence these probabilities (Scherer et al, 2002). This body of work has also encompassed a number of ethnographic studies concerned with 'how emotions work' (Katz, 1999) how emotions are 'managed' across the settings of everyday life (Hochschild, 1983) and the development of a diverse 'sociology of emotions' (Kemper, 1990; Wouters, 1992; Williams and Bendelow, 1998). These contributions are noteworthy; not least because they offer a conceptual vocabulary that may well have much to offer criminological research, but also because they address pertinent methodological questions concerning ecological and external validity.

### **2.5 Searching for an evidence base: The seduction of facts**

Meanwhile there has been a proliferation of 'administrative' or 'evidenced-based' research in the youth crime field (France, 2007). Concerned with the development of 'what works' evidence, these studies have focused on understanding how 'effective' and 'efficient' youth justice interventions can be (Tierney, 1996; MacKenzie, 2000; Pitts, 2003). The results are typically drawn from meta-analyses (McGuire, 1995) and measure effectiveness by reductions in re-offending (post intervention).

The on-set of the 'evidence-based-policy' movement began in the health service field, before expanding to other areas of public policy. In particular this style of policy development was embraced by Tony Blair's 'New Labour' party, who signalled what was termed as a 'post-ideological' approach, in which evidence, based on 'scientific' 'facts' would drive decision making processes (Davies et al., 1999; Burton, 2001). Wide-ranging reforms under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 were underpinned by evidenced based research (Naughton, 2005). However, writers have argued that the political desire for government-funded 'what works' research has frustrated the provision of robust, theoretically informed policy-relevant research, leaving in its wake one-dimensional management statistics that ignore important micro and macro factors (MacKenzie, 2000; Pitts, 2003; Moore et al, 2006). Indeed, the methodological rigour of much of this research has been criticised (MacKenzie, 2000; Tilley, 2000; Tilley, 2002; Friendship et al., 2005) and studies that claim to find positive signs of change tend to occur when samples are small or there is not a suitable comparison group (Merrington, 2006).

Theoretically, Naughton (2005) laments the role of evidenced based research, claiming that "critical evidence that questioned the wisdom of many of the planned reforms... was completely disregarded" (2005:47) and concluded that this type of research acted as a governmental Foucauldian technique to provide legitimate means to force through preferred political agendas (c.f. Klein, 2000; Dopson et al, 2003). Similarly, Klein (2000) has argued that the idea of evidence based research presents a "seductive" and "self-evident proposition" (Klein, 2000:65) for policy

makers, but is based on an overly simplistic desire to secure concrete answers, when scientific causality is in fact a highly complex process. Moreover, Klein (2000) makes the eloquent point that professionals on the ground are already basing decisions on a more nuanced style of 'evidence' that is presented before them on a daily basis<sup>12</sup>. Finally, despite the impact that policy developments can have in the everyday lives of children and families, some writers claim that insufficient care has been paid to the ethical responsibilities of this body of work (Shapland, 2000a; 2000b; Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Munro, 2007).

## 2.6 Desistance and the revival of subjectivity

In the academic field, after the 1980's, theories that focused more specifically on the *process* of desistance became popular (Farrall, 2000, 2002; Maruna, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Farrall et al, 2010). These studies typically utilised longitudinal qualitative interviews with offenders, and explored the fragmented and unpredictable pathways of change. Non-criminal justice interventions, such as securing a long-term partner, employment or becoming a parent were said to inspire motivation to desist from offending. Initially, a series of significant debates concerning the validity and reliability of qualitative longitudinal research took place, most prominently between Hirschi and Gottfredson in the 1980's. Nevertheless, since then, the contribution desistance research and the employment of the case study method has made has been widely accepted (Farrall, 2002; Maruna and

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<sup>12</sup> There have been various debates concerning the de-professionalisation of social work and other welfare occupations for a number of years; writers suggest that professional discretion and autonomy have been undermined by prescriptive, top-down policies, which have prevented them in their capacity to act in the best interests of their client (Specht, 1972, Chenoweth and McAuliffe, 2005) (c.f. Burnett, R. and McNeill, F. 2005).

Matravers, 2007). Indeed, one of the significant developments from the desistance field has been the methodological innovations and the “revival of complex subjectivity” (Smith, 2006a) via the case study (Holland et al., 2004; Farrall, 2006; Maruna and Matravers, 2007). Psychosocial criminology also places the case study at the hub of its research enterprise (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). As Smith (2006a) has noted, “one of the most striking developments in recent criminology is the revival of attention to the individual biographies of people who offend, to their inner, sometimes unconscious, experiences, and to the importance of emotion as a source of action” (2006a: 361).

Despite the sophistication of this corpus of work, Barry (2006) has argued that the desistance literature emphasised personal factors at the expense of social factors. Indeed what is increasingly recognised is that social theories need to be embedded *within* the narratives of offenders (Clark, 2003; Bottoms et al, 2008). Moreover, several key issues have proved problematic for academics in the desistance field as it is not an easily measurable phenomenon. Desistance is not an event, and relapses are common (Leibrich, 1993). For these reasons Worrall (2004) has warned that desistance research remains a largely academic exercise that has failed to penetrate policy development.

## 2.7 New directions in research on young people and crime

There has been a growing recognition that social science research has a limited understanding of how young people engage with crime. However, some tentative new directions have emerged. Issues of cultural, emotional, social and psychological context have increasingly been recognised as important considerations (Barry, 2006; France and Homel, 2007; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; France, 2007; France et al 2012). The process of criminalisation and the potential for youth justice interventions to negatively impact young people has been recognised (McAra and McVie, 2007b; France, 2007a). It is also the case that young people themselves have much to impart about their relationship to crime and criminal justice – beyond the customary diet of quantitative risk assessments or life histories. For example, Armstrong et al (2006) found that crime for young people in deprived communities was often considered a ‘normal’ part of everyday life. Being a witness, victim or perpetrator may also be a common aspect of life (Smith, 2004). Crime might have positive as well as negative consequences offering social inclusion, or providing cultural capital (Barry, 2006). The notions of pathways into and out of crime therefore might be much more complex than previously considered. Girling et al (2002) explored young people’s capacities to navigate penal moralities, and in a recent national evaluation Gray et al (2005) found young offenders considered exceptionally demanding community penalties as ‘double punishment’, which they reacted negatively to. Certainly, there is more we can learn about how young people understand and respond to the melange of penal discourses (social welfare, actuarial, and authoritarian) used to justify interventions, particularly in relation to intensive programmes which have multiple objectives (see below).

## 2.8 The turn to intensity

Turning more specifically to the development of intensive programmes a number of important questions raise their heads. What is the value, potential and role for intensive programmes in the youth justice system. Is 'more' better? And what 'more' is ISSP able to deliver – more welfare, more justice or more punishment? Reviewing the history of Intensive programmes, Merrington (2006) notes how the idea is not new; a diverse range of intensive community programmes have been introduced in both England and Wales and the US. Many probation services in England and Wales set up probation day centres in the 1980s and early 1990s, offering an intensive programme under the 1982 Criminal Justice Act (Mair et al., 1994). Much of the impetus for these came from the USA, where Intensive Probation projects flourished over the same period (Petersilia and Turner, 1990). Going further back, the IMPACT (Intensive Matched Probation and After-Care Treatment) experiment in the 1970s resulted in a famous research report which contributed to the belief that 'nothing works' (Martinson, 1974) in reducing offending (Folkard et al., 1976).

Intensive programmes have differed greatly however in terms of their targeting and programme structure, with very few standards in place, even as to what is meant by 'intensive' – ranging from 5 to 25 hours supervision per week (Moore et al, 2006). The political impetus behind the introduction of the programmes is often based upon the need to tackle prison overcrowding while, at the same time, promoting

the notion of 'tough' community-based criminal justice (Merrington, 2006). But the theoretical foundations are multi-faceted, and often contradictory, attempting to blend consequentialist forward-looking rationales of deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation with backward-looking principles of retribution and a promotion of 'just deserts' (Moore et al, 2006). As such, intensive programmes can be justified as welfare-orientated, proportionate, authoritarian or based on risk management and community safety. Moreover, as in the case of ISSP, the programme sought to fulfil multiple theoretical functions simultaneously, this involves obvious risks to the integrity and coherence of how the service was understood and responded to by young people. Given these theoretical uncertainties the need for empirical analysis is clear.

A large number of evaluations, in the US, England and Wales and elsewhere, have attempted to address their value. The two dominant goals of intensive programmes have been to reduce re-offending rates and the levels of custodial sentencing, but analysis of the more methodologically rigorous studies indicates mixed results, with a number of evaluations raising doubts as to whether these aims are fully compatible (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006). Reductions in re-offending have apparently been limited by the weaknesses in the deterrence rationale, with the evidence suggesting most promise for those programmes that target high risk offenders and have a strong rehabilitation component (McGuire, J. and Priestley, P., 1995; Gendreau et al, 2000). As for the impact upon custody rates, the twin dangers of 'net-widening' and increased levels of breach have become increasingly apparent

(Ely et al, 1987; Mair et al, 1994; Clear 1997; Tonry, 1998; Gray et al, 2005). One can also take a wider perspective, recognising that, despite fluctuations, a more general decarceration movement has so far failed<sup>13</sup>. More positively, some evaluations indicate that intensive community programmes can make inroads into tackling the underlying problems of offenders, while proving popular with offenders, their families, practitioners and sentencers (Mair *et al.* 1994; Bottoms 1995; National Council for Crime Prevention, 1999; Loblely et al, 2001; Moore et al, 2006).

Notwithstanding this climate of uncertainty, intensive community programmes are becoming an increasingly integral part of penal policy in many jurisdictions, following the lead of the US (Moore et al, 2006). In 2001 in England and Wales, the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) was introduced nationwide and had been rolled out nationally by 2004 (Gray et al, 2005). In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act put ISSP on a statutory footing<sup>14</sup> as one of a package of interventions that could be attached in a ‘bolt-on’ fashion to a Youth Rehabilitation Order.

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<sup>13</sup> Between 1992 and 2002, the number of children sentenced to custody rose by more than 85% (Nacro, 2010). However, there has been a more recent buck in these trends; at the end of August 2012 there were 1,643 children (under-18s) in custody – a decrease of 463 from the same point last year (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). Nevertheless, custodial sentencing of children remains problematic (Allen, 2011), in 2011 30% of 10-14 year olds were in custody for having breached a statutory order and, for 18%, it was their primary offence (Prison Reform Trust, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Section 1 (3) (a) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 provides for a Youth Rehabilitation Order with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) as an alternative to custody.

Over the last decade there has been marked growth in the development of intensive interventions (for all ages) in the wake of rising prison numbers (see Carter Report, 2003). During this time, the Intensive Control and Change Programme (ICCP) was piloted in designated probation areas with young adult offenders (Partridge et al, 2005). Forty Intensive Supervision and Monitoring Projects for adult offenders were established in 2000, while a national Prolific and other Priority Offender (PPO) Strategy was launched in 2004, requiring a PPO scheme to be established in every Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in England and Wales (Worrall and Mawby, 2004). From 2008 to 2011 the Intensive Alternatives to Custody (IAC) programme was piloted to test the use of intensive community orders in diverting offenders from short-term custodial sentences (Hansbury, 2011). In the field of youth justice, ‘intensification’ has extended into the development of schemes such as ‘Intensive Fostering’<sup>15</sup> by the Youth Justice Board and an ‘Intensive Support and Monitoring Service’<sup>16</sup> was piloted as an alternative to secure accommodation in Scotland – an otherwise unique jurisdiction, which has, since 1964, upheld a youth justice system based on a core welfarist principles. In addition, various programmes targeted at other ‘problem’ populations such as truants, drug users and neighbours considered ‘anti-social’ have been branded

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<sup>15</sup> Intensive Fostering was established as a pilot ‘alternative to custody’ for children and young people whose home life is felt to have contributed significantly to their offending behaviour (Biehal, et al 2010).

<sup>16</sup> The Anti-Social Behaviour act (Scotland) Act 2004 introduced Intensive Support and Monitoring Services (ISMS) in Scotland in 2005 as part of a disposal to be used by Children’s Hearings in circumstances that would otherwise warrant placement in secure accommodation. Young person’s would be subject to a movement restriction condition (MRC) and at the same time receive Intensive Support Services for up to 3 months. As of April 1 2008, ISMS has been rolled out nationally in all 32 local authority areas (Boyle, 2008).

‘intensive’; there have been ‘Intensive Parenting Programmes’<sup>17</sup>, Intensive Reading Support’ services<sup>18</sup> and the Home Office introduced ‘Intensive Areas’ to target Drug Interventions Programmes<sup>19</sup> - to name but a few (Ball and Webster, 2003).

## 2.9 Catch him! Identifying persistent offenders

Typically rehabilitative and intensive interventions have targeted persistent offenders. Indeed, Victorian criminal justice policy in England and Wales targeted ‘habitual criminals’, consisting of a “small group of hard-core professional outlaws and a much larger group of inadequates, misshapen by both nature and nurture, who generally committed petty offenses” (Wiener 1990:300). More recently, the notion of persistent offenders became a policy concern following the seminal work by Wolfgang et al (1972). This study identified a small group of offenders as being responsible for a disproportionate level of recorded crime. Subsequently this pattern has been replicated in similar studies (Pulkkinen, 1988; Wikström, 1990; Farrington, 2003; Home Office 2004; Moffit, 2006; Piquero et al, 2007).

Hagell and Newburn (1994) attempted to identify persistent offenders and estimate the volume of crime for which they were responsible. They concluded that “no two definitions of persistence will lead to the identification of the same individuals...the

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Intensive Parenting Programmes’, established by the Home Office in 2004. Ten areas ran intensive parenting programmes to tackle difficult anti-social behaviour by families with children (House of Commons, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Intensive Reading Support’ was set up in 2004 in Hackney Local Authority to address chronic reading in the ten lowest attaining schools (DCSF, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> In these ‘intensive’ areas, special measures can be introduced under the Drugs Act 2005 to identify and assess the needs of more drug users in the early stages of the criminal justice system. They are: Testing on Arrest; Required Assessment; Restriction on Bail (Skodbo et al, 2007).

sentencing of juveniles on the basis of a definition of persistence will, therefore, potentially involve a degree of inequity” (Newburn and Hagell 1994: 335). Other scholars have agreed that it remains unclear *how* frequent offending must be over *how* long to qualify as persistent. Moreover Carter (2003) found that persistence was not a stable definition, with 40% of persistent offenders desisting from offending without official intervention and many being replaced each year by new persistent offenders (c.f. Cavadino and Dignan, 2002). As such, many working definitions of ‘persistence’ are arbitrary and do not isolate a qualitatively distinct group of offenders (Hagell and Newburn, 1994; Piquero et al, 2007). Piquero et al, point out that it is clear from the available literature that expedient “theoretical and empirical definitions of chronicity have yet to be established” (2007:18).

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that there is no commonly accepted definition of ‘persistence’, and that differing demarcations have been employed. For instance, in 2001 the qualification for ISSP required persistent offenders to have been charged with, warned over or convicted of offences committed on four or more separate occasions within the last 12 months, and had received at least one community or custodial disposal. Meanwhile, seven years later, the accompanying sentencing guidance for ISS (the new name for the intensive ‘bolt on’ to the Youth Rehabilitation Order) declared there was no legally recognised definition of persistence, but that a young person was “likely to be found to be persistent where the offender has been convicted of, or made subject to, a pre-court disposal that involves an admission or finding of guilt in relation to imprisonable offences on at

least three occasions in the past 12 months” (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11).

There are particular concerns that the attempted targeting of persistent offenders may result in the detrimental labelling of a sub-group of offenders as ‘inherently criminal’ (Downes and Morgan 2002; Bernburg et al,2006; Munro, 2007). The most immediate danger of labelling is one of stigmatisation; in many cases, the stigma of the criminal status may increase the probability that the individual becomes involved in deviant social groups. In turn, the formal label may increase deviant behaviour (Bernburg et al, 2006) and subject offenders to more serious sentencing outcomes via a ‘recidivist premium’<sup>20</sup> (Roberts, 2008) - with the associated harm caused from long-term exposure to the criminal justice system (McAra and McVie 2005; 2007a, 2010a). Furthermore, Smith (2002) states that labelling will “contribute to a growing obsession with the wrongdoings of the young – creating a further spiral of increased fear and renewed demands for ‘quick-fix’ solutions” (2003:193). Indeed, Garland (2001:135) has argued that ‘career criminals’ have become objectified in such a way that they inspire no sympathy or assistance from the wider public, which subsequently obstructs an appreciation of the links between poverty, deprivation and crime (Jarjoura et al, 2002; Bourgois et al, 2004; Munro, 2007).

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<sup>20</sup> Whether common or civil law, all jurisdictions punish repeat offenders more harshly (Roberts, 2008). Specifically, Section 143(2) of the 2003 Criminal Justice Act in England and Wales directs judges and magistrates to consider previous convictions as statutory aggravating factors in assessing the seriousness of an offence and subsequent disposal (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).

## 2.9 Shifts in the youth justice framework

In the broader justice and youth policy fields there are additional factors to take into account when considering the rise and value of intensive youth justice programmes. The expansion in the use of curfews and electronic monitoring as a central component of the sentencing framework is a pertinent development (not least because the surveillance element was a defining feature of ISSP) (Killias et al, 2010). Section 43 of the Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 extended the use of electronically monitored curfew orders to young people aged under 16, while successive pieces of legislation extended the eligibility criteria and the conditions in which they can be applied (Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000) and the length of such orders (the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003). Continuing this trend, electronic monitoring can be imposed as a requirement of the new Youth Rehabilitation Order under the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008.

There has also been a growth in civil and criminal laws that attempt to hold parents accountable or increase their role in the administration of punishment<sup>21</sup>. In a similar vein, Crawford (2003) identified an increasing use of 'contractual governance' in relation to children; examples being Anti-social behaviour Orders, Acceptable behaviour contracts and educational attendance contracts. Such 'agreements' seek "conformity and order through modes of governing the future,

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<sup>21</sup> The state regulation of parenting has been a central feature of current youth justice policy. Parenting Orders under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 have been available nationally since 1 June 2000. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 and Criminal Justice Act 2003 amended Parenting Orders to increase their flexibility and widen their availability. An Order can be placed on a parent (s) of a young person convicted of an offence and require them to attend a parenting programme and, if necessary, to control the future behaviour of the young person in a specified manner. Failure to comply can result in a fine of up to £1000 or a further (adult) community-based order.

and depart significantly from traditional modes of policing and that recast social obligations in forms of parochial controls” (Crawford, 2003: 479). These developments are significant as they represent a diversification of social control – particularly in relation to young people and their parents, and can impose complex and specific requirements, reaching into all aspects of social life. These measures continue to infiltrate public policy through various forms. For example, education-related parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices were extended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Meanwhile a white paper was published in 2012 detailed plans for replacing the Anti-Social Behaviour Order with a new Criminal Behaviour Order and a Crime Prevention Injunction, the latter of which would have a lower standard of proof (Home Office, 2012a). A more recent consultation on the same topic proposed giving victims of low-level crime (such as criminal damage and thefts) a say in the punishment of the offender (Home Office, 2012b).

### **2.10 Policing and surveillance**

There have also been shifts in the direction and reach of formal social control measures, such that scholars often refer to an ‘extended police family’ (Johnston, 2003). Although the term is ambiguous, Loader (2006), includes policing roles (police, wardens, private security firms, antisocial behaviour units) as well as wider agencies, such as housing, social services and youth offending teams in this ‘family’. Many organisations now call upon the police to supply information or directly

support interventions (Loader and Walker, 2007)<sup>22</sup>. As such, the police not only represent the frontline of the criminal justice system, but are actively engaged in the administration of civic governance (Crawford, 2003; Newburn, 2003). Indeed, ISSP teams relied on the provision of routine access to police intelligence systems to contribute towards risk assessments, surveillance and programme planning (Waters, 2007). This is not to be underestimated given the vast array of technical developments that the police have access to, such as ‘profiling’, ‘mapping’, ‘modelling’, ‘tagging’ ‘simulation’, ‘pre-emption’ and ‘intelligence-led policing’ (Haggerty et al., 2011: 232). Haggerty and Ericson comment that these innovations have given rise to fragmented ‘surveillant assemblages’, which operate beyond the central state (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000). In this respect (and others) ISSP was a site of both care and control, and professionals from various agencies were tasked with the challenge of balancing these tasks simultaneously (Gray et al, 2005).

Despite the policy and practice relevance of how these complex relationships between young people and the police are played out, the respective literature is surprisingly sparse (McAara and McVie, 2005). Moreover, new police strategies such as ‘intelligence-led’ policing (van Staden et al, 2011) and targeted ‘disruption’<sup>23</sup> may be applied to drug networks or anti-social behaviour initiatives

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<sup>22</sup> To reduce the level of youth offending in England and Wales, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Youth Justice Board emphasised multi-agency work (Waters, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Disruption’ is a style of policing usually employed in relation to organised crime and tackling drug networks; “Instead of aiming at the detection of crimes that have already occurred, police strategies and tactics increasingly aim to disrupt criminality in such a way as to prevent crime from occurring or to reduce its gravity if it does occur. Disruption has joined the list of quantitative performance indicators of agency success, alongside more traditional indicators such as arrest figures and other, new indicators such as assets seized.” (Innes and Sheptycki, 2004:2).

involving children and young people (see Section 9.6) , yet there is very little critical analysis of how these policing styles might impact this vulnerable group. Of the available research, most studies focus on the staff appraisals of multi-agency working (Burnett and Appleton, 2004; Waters 2007) or young people’s self-report of adversarial contact with the police (Anderson et al., 1994; MVA, 1998; Byrne et al, 2005). Notably, McAra and McVie (2005) found evidence that suggested the police may have unfairly subjected certain categories of children to more intense forms of surveillance, based on ‘previous convictions’ and subjective interpretations of suspiciousness. The authors concluded; “The police in this context act less as legal subjects and more as class subjects—enforcing urban discipline, labelling and keeping under surveillance a group of permanent suspects” (McAra and McVie, 2005: 28).

Equally important, Loader’s (1996) empirical study of the often fractious relationship between young people and the police discovered that early experiences of police conflict could have a detrimental effect on the youth’s perceptions of justice and the legitimacy of enforcement agencies (c.f. Hirschfield and Piquero, 2010; Jackson and Bradford, 2010). In turn, young people often lacked confidence in the police and refused to engage with them, even when they were a victim of a serious crime (Loader, 1996). Notably, victim surveys have demonstrated that young offenders are at considerable risk of victimisation (Smith, D.J., 2004; Wilson et al, 2006), and in some cases children and young people are at greater risk

than adults<sup>24</sup>, irrespective of class, gender or environment (Carrabine et al, 2008). In combination with the experience of many young people of being ‘moved on’ or ‘stopped and searched’ by the police (Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011), some authors have claimed that that as offenders, young people are subject to strict social controls, but are under protected as victims (Carrabine et al, 2008). From this angle we can take two warnings; the treatment young offenders receive from the police and wider agencies may be critical to their future trust in, and respect for, the criminal justice system (Paternoster et al, 1997; Tyler, 2003; Digard, 2010; Hough et al, 2010). Moreover, in targeting un-problematically particular groups of young people, the police may exacerbate (or reproduce) the marginalisation of persistent young offenders from civil society. However, as Loftus (2007) eloquently argues, it is broadly accepted that the characteristics of police culture are not divorced from the wider organisational and societal context. In fact, they reflect and aggravate the prevailing social structure. Similarly, Reiner stresses that police culture, with its variants, illustrates the “isomorphic relationship” (Reiner 2000: 136) between the police and the wider arrangements of social disadvantage.

### **2.11 A political culture of fear and anxiety**

The increasing prominence of ‘intense’, ‘robust’ or electronically ‘enforceable’ community punishments does not take place in a vacuum of course. Social theorists have commented that the UK – as in North America and Australia – has, in the past

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<sup>24</sup> For example, statistics from the 2011/12 Crime Survey for England and Wales found there were 9.7 recorded homicide offences per million people in 2011/12. Children under the age of one were the group most likely to be a victim at 21 homicides per million population. This is followed by those aged 16 to 29 with a homicide rate at 15 per million population (ONS, 2013).

few decades seen crime move to centre stage as a social and political issue (Garland, 2001; Pitts, 2003; Bauman, 2006). Loader and Walker describe the “rise of crime as a central organising principle of political authority and social relations” (2007:399). Farrall et al (2009) stress how the preoccupation with crime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is often articulated through a narrative of ‘fear’ and ‘insecurity’. In the political and cultural arenas we have not only witnessed increasing levels of public anxieties about crime, but also punitive political rhetoric; a greater prominence given to the victim in criminal justice policy (Karstedt, 2002); greater force given to public opinion in the policy-making process<sup>25</sup> and more emphasis given to security and the commercialisation of crime control through private security (Loader and Walker, 2007). These developments chime with broader social anxieties about ‘moral decay’ and have led to demands for punitive actions from the state (Gerber and Jackson, 2013).

France (2007) has commented how late modernity is typified by an intense focus on the ‘dangers’ posed by young people, whether they commit criminal offences or behave risky, anti-social ways, but we know very little about the consequences of these shifts or how the process of criminalisation affects young people’s lives. Observers have roundly condemned youth justice legislation as an unwarranted departure from welfare orientated responses, to a narrowly perceived pre-occupation with parenting and a child’s cognitive deficits, while failing to take

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<sup>25</sup> As Garland (2001: 13) remarks: ‘The policy-making process has become profoundly politicised and populist. Policy measures are constructed in ways that appear to value political advantage and public opinion over the views of experts and the evidence of research.’

account of the association between crime and poverty, poor housing and income inequality (Pitts and Hope 1997, Pitts, 2003; Gray, 2005; Muncie 2006; Gray, 2009, 2011). By the same token, Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie (2007) have argued that social workers have failed to be critical about their changing role in relation to young offenders, and have withdrawn from the debate on youth justice and the shift from welfare to justice. This is particularly remarkable considering the seemingly sidelined government aim to tackle child-poverty<sup>26</sup>; in 2010/11, 2.3 million children were living in poverty in the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012). It is essential therefore that this study takes a critical approach to the literature, as well as recent policy developments and public discourse.

At the start of this review the ubiquity of the ‘young offender’ was raised. In the late modern context of penal populism the government continues to face real and significant dilemmas concerning this group of young people. Measured and dispassionate youth justice policy is particularly difficult to achieve when the media ‘talk up’ certain issues, public concerns are whipped up and the government is under pressure to change policy and bend the criminal justice system towards the needs of the public. The tension between Government administration of justice and competing public perceptions is no doubt as frustrating for policy makers as it is for academic researchers (c.f. Roberts and Hough, 2005; Roberts et al, 2012). How this tension is played out, and what the consequences are ‘on the ground’ for the young people on ISSP has been a concern of this study.

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<sup>26</sup> In 1999, Tony Blair committed to ending child poverty by 2020. Since then all political parties have signed up to the goal of ending child poverty by 2020 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2012).

## 2.12 Connecting structure and agency: employing the work of Pierre Bourdieu

Up to this point, this chapter has explored some of the approaches to the topic at hand and some of the methodological and substantive issues which need to be grappled with. Clearly, technical problems have hampered this field of enquiry and posed serious limitations on the validity of 'evidenced' based policy research. Meanwhile, theoretical under-specification has also restricted debate.

Given the substantive, epistemological and methodological concerns of this study, it has been important to apply theoretical tools that are able to incorporate the interconnectedness of structure and agency. Many scholars who explore the relationship between structural configurations and individual subjectivities, follow in the path of Pierre Bourdieu (Hirschfield, 2008). Much of his work concerns a struggle over 'symbolic capital' and hierarchies among the economic and cultural elite. However, his theories and concepts are not exclusive to these realms. In recent years attempts have been made to apply his, often difficult and complex work, to policy relevant areas of social work (Houston, 2002; Garrett, 2006; 2007); residential childcare (Emond, 2003) the police (Chan, 1997) and the education system (Hirschfield, 2008). Other works have been directly inspired by Bourdieu. In his eminent study of crack dealing in El Barrio, New York, Bourgois (2003) compares the organisation of street culture for running an illegal drugs economy with a form of 'cultural capital' (Bourgois, 2003). Similarly, Wacquant's (2007) study of urban marginalisation in Chicago and Paris drew heavily upon Bourdieu's theory of social

space and symbolic power. Indeed, Hirschfield (2008) has highlighted the intensely political nature of Bourdieu's analysis, and his desire for his work to be both adaptable and relevant to contemporary political discourse (c.f. Schinkel, 2003; Poupeau and Discepolo, 2004).

In relation to persistent young offenders and the diverse arenas of the 'street', the criminal justice system and sites of punishment, Bourdieu's concepts provide useful analytical tools. Specifically, habitus has been one of the most profound and important of his theoretical contributions (Sandberg, 2008). Habitus incorporates "a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 16). Moreover, he has demonstrated how historical influences become embodied in individual lives; he explains how class identities become inscribed not only on group identities, but on the mind and the body. For example, individuals might express their social history with "a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expression, ways of sitting and using implements, always associated with a tone of voice, a style of speech and a certain subjective experience" (Bourdieu, 1977:85-86). As such, although the concept of habitus may present as thoroughly individualised, it reflects a shared cultural context (Weber, 2007). For example, Nayak's (2006) study of young working men in Newcastle found that they were often excluded from new corporate leisure spots in the city based on their physical mannerisms. Similarly, Norris and Armstrong have shown how surveillance

camera operators disproportionately focused on those who walked with their “head up, back straight, upper body moving too much” (1999:122).

Related to ‘habitus’ is the *field*, which, simply, refers to a setting in which individuals and their social positions are located. Every day we move through different fields, but we may have varying experiences of each, depending on our personal characteristics and affiliations. The position of each agent in the field is a result of interaction between the unique rules of the field, the individual’s habitus and their capital (social, economic, cultural, symbolic) (Bourdieu, 1984). A field, therefore is a “configuration of relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon the occupants, agents or institutions” (Bourdieu, 1992:72-73). Fields can also interact with each other, are hierarchical and reflective of wider power and class relations (Bourdieu, 1984). Finally, the agents of a field recognise and refer to its history. For example, one could refer to the criminal justice field, a social work field or the field of medical practice.

Indeed, Bourdieu paid great attention to the notion of space(s), environment and action, and these ideas have great relevance to this thesis where a melange of penal endeavours, youth cultures and political sensibilities collide. The term ‘space’ in Bourdieu’s work is interpreted literally -as spaces where events and activities take place, (which have practical and symbolic meaning) as well as metaphorically (i.e. the field(s)). Citizens can occupy multiple places within ‘relatively autonomous’

fields that “together constitute the social space. These places constitute their status, class, social position: their place within society” (Haimes, 2007: 11). In sum, the social world is a multi-dimensional space built on history, differentiation and division (Swartz, 1997).

However, Bourdieu (1986), was concerned with the differing abilities of people to navigate through a field. Notably, he stresses that it is not only economic capital, such as money or property, which influences a person’s life chances through the reproduction of class privilege or exclusion. ‘Social’ capital is also important – such as networks, connections, as well as ‘cultural capital’ (i.e. education) and ‘symbolic capital’ (i.e. prestige, such as being a war hero). Consequently, Bourdieu (1990a) has argued, that the marginalisation of particular groups from certain forms of capital – such as education, can create damaging and unretractable outcomes. Significantly for the purpose of this research, McNay has highlighted that exploring those who are marginalised can facilitate a “lucidity of the excluded” (McNay, 2000:69) –an inimitable insight into the underbelly of structures and practices in which certain people are marginalised.

Processes of conflict and domination are fundamental to Bourdieu’s work and are conceptualised as ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992). These may take physical and non-physical forms. Indeed, violence is a not only a metaphor, but a way of organising groups of people (Sandberg, 2008).

However, the subtle, everyday, 'misrecognised' aspects of symbolic violence may be equally as relevant to this thesis as physical aggression. Symbolic violence can also explain how groups of people are excluded from high status in sub-cultures in unspoken and implicit ways. For example, feminist writers have addressed the symbolic violence inherent in gendered knowledge construction. Scholars from this discipline have challenged mainstream epistemology as based on the privileges of men. In response they have sought to produce knowledge that is built on the lived reality of women and their social standing (Phillips and Earle, 2010).

Given the methodological and political marginalisation of the voice of the persistent young offender - who nevertheless has a ubiquitous reputation that precedes him, Bourdieu's theories provide a useful means to challenge what we know about this group of people, and on what basis we make conclusions about them. His work can address, simultaneously, how structural factors shape penal trends, not simply by identifying shifts in policy, but exploring the direct impact they have on individual actors operating at the various levels of the street.

It should be noted that, as Wacquant (1998) acknowledges, Bourdieu's conceptual 'tool kit' is not new, but has its roots in classic sociological and philosophical literature. For example, habitus is "an old philosophical concept, used intermittently by Aristotle (under the term hexis), Hegel, Weber, Durkheim, Mauss and Husserl, among others" (1998:322). Likewise sociologists and symbolic interactionists have a

long tradition of studying culture and sub-cultures and addressing epistemological frameworks, the most relevant of which was developed by the Chicago School. Sutherland and Cressey also argued via 'differential association' that crime was a social process relying on interactions with other people (Sutherland and Cressey, 1974). However, Bourdieu stressed that he revised many of these ideas, in a manner that transcended the traditional dualisms (macro/ micro explanations; objectivism/ subjectivism, agentic/ structural; quantitative/qualitative knowledge) with an intention to combine them through a multi-dimensional and relational analysis (Bourdieu, 1994; Archer, 2000).

Nevertheless, while Bourdieu provides useful analytical concepts, particularly for exploring the rich, in-depth qualitative data, as Garland (2006) warns, it is important not to become reliant on one theoretical framework. Moreover, the mixed methods design of this empirical study naturally calls upon a wide multi-disciplinary literature. As such, the theoretical, epistemological and methodological considerations herein lean on, but are not limited to, the body of work by Pierre Bourdieu.

### **2.13 A reflexive approach**

The basis of this study - a departure from traditional evidenced based research - was borne from my personal and professional experience as an ISSP regional evaluator (see 3.2). I intended to pursue new theoretical, epistemological and

methodological approaches to the subject matter in order to address the shortcomings of the original evaluation. In this sense the study is a reflexive exercise and represents a desire to explore the boundaries and potential un-tapped benefits of public policy research. Moreover, there is a commitment, throughout each of the chapters to critically evaluate on-going concerns. These reflexive aims have not played as large a part in criminological research (for notable exceptions see Bosworth 1999; Burman et al 2001; Liebling 2001; Wacquant, 2007) as they have in cultural, anthropological and sociological practice (Phillips and Earle, 2010). Nevertheless, there are important reasons to highlight the position of the researcher and the research subject.

Bourdieu warns that it is not possible to approach a social science subject with value-neutral objectivity or escape the social relevance of symbolic distinctions. In the face of this dilemma, following Bachelard, Bourdieu called for socioanalysts to apply systematic and rigorous self-critical practice (Swartz, 1997). Reflexivity, which literally involves a “turning back on oneself” (Aull Davies 1999:4) highlights the role that a researcher plays in generating observations in the field. Research questions and decisions made ‘on the ground’ will inevitably reflect their preferences and thoughts (Ely et al, 1997). It is only by maintaining such a continual vigilance that researchers can identify how bias may have been imported into their work.

This call for a reflexive turn in social science represents both a distinctive mode of inquiry and substantive orientation (Swartz, 1997). In fact, Bourdieu views this angle of his approach to social inquiry as what distinguishes it from others: “I believe that if the sociology I propose differs in any significant way from the other sociologies of the past and of the present, it is above all that it *continually turns back onto itself the scientific weapons it produces*” (Wacquant, 1989:55) (emphasis in the original).

Notably, for Bourdieu, these substantive and metatheoretical questions are inherently linked; he investigated relational theories and social reproduction, at the same time as examining the epistemological conditions under which that analysis was undertaken (Swartz, 1997). In the field of youth justice, Bourdieu’s work could assist researchers and policy makers to scrutinise their own personal and collective habitus. Indeed, the emotive, political and evolving professional environment that surrounds persistent young offenders actively requires a more critical perspective (Shapland, 2000a; 2000b; Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Munro, 2007). There is an urgency to tell a more authentic tale about the life of the persistent young offender and the attendant efforts of the criminal justice system and others to survey, punish, rehabilitate, admonish, blame and reintegrate him.

Much of the data used herein is subjective, controversial and sensitive. There is much to learn about research methodology and knowledge construction by tracking the research process and my role in this particular enterprise. Walkerdine *et al.* call

for an approach in which “the social, cultural and psychic are researched together” (2001: 88) rather than held apart. While attention to reflexivity might not be appropriate or meaningful in all avenues of criminological investigation, in the context of this study it cannot be over-estimated. This approach does more than provide a means of understanding the data, it also tells the story of the culture in which the data is produced; as Bourdieu describes “from the outset my task involved, not simply telling the truth of this world, as can be uncovered by objectivist methods of observation, but also showing that this world is the site of an ongoing struggle to tell the truth of this world” (Wacquant, 1989:35).

## **Chapter 3: Research design, a cross-methodological framework in search of trust, meaning and validity**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Methodology shapes our research questions, operationalises our concepts, and influences our findings. Despite significant gulfs between quantitative and qualitative methods (Bourgois et al, 2004), this thesis employs a 'cross-methodological' framework (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Bourgois et al, 2004). This type of design is sometimes viewed as a third methodological movement (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003); its emergence was in response to the limitations of the sole use of quantitative or qualitative methods and is now considered by many a legitimate alternative to these two traditions (Bryman, 1988; Morgan, 1998). The philosophical basis allows and guides mixed methods researchers to use a variety of approaches to answer research questions that cannot be addressed using a singular method (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003). In particular, criminological researchers may benefit from this approach when addressing complex and multi-faceted research problems - often encountered in the criminal justice arena.

This chapter begins by introducing the original evaluation of ISSP and briefly noting how the current study contrasts. It then addresses the separate rationales underpinning the quantitative and qualitative methods used in the study, as well as engaging with aspects of the relevant literatures. The second part discusses how

various strands of the research were operationalised, including an examination of the potential strengths and weaknesses.

Presenting a mixed methods methodology can be a cumbersome task – as the quantitative and qualitative enterprises are manifestly distinct and draw on diverse empirical and theoretical backgrounds. For the sake of parsimony, I have segmented issues pertaining to ethics into the following chapter (4). However, ethics and methodology are intimately linked, and it is intended that Chapters 3 and 4 are read in tandem.

### **3.2 The starting point – ISSP**

The primary aim of this study is to understand the long-term impact of intensive supervision and youth justice on the lives of (formerly) persistent and serious young offenders as they progress from childhood to early adulthood. The study is interested in both the impact on patterns of criminal behaviour and the development of key domains of adult life. Additionally, how the outcomes of long-term evaluations (such as ISSP) are shaped by methodological and interpretive tools is considered throughout.

The project herein uses one of the largest evaluations of intensive supervision for persistent and serious young offenders in England and Wales as its starting point (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005). It has benefited from access to a combination

of ISSP datasets that were subject to secondary analysis. The original evaluation was an ambitious and large-scale study. The research team comprised ten full-time researchers, eight of which were 'Regional Evaluators' based 'in the field'. Each evaluator was located in one of eight regions and was responsible for monitoring and collecting data directly from the ISSP schemes. I was a Regional Evaluator for the North West region<sup>27</sup>. While the research was not ethnographic in a classic sense, many of the research encounters with staff and young people were not 'one-off' meetings, but spanned a number of months. As such, Regional Evaluators drew on a range of structured and non-structured methods.

Large amounts of quantitative and structured interview data were collated and analysed. Basic data regarding the ISSP and comparison cases were extracted from the core youth offending team IT systems (e.g. YOIS, Careworks). Extensive information regarding the needs and circumstances of young people was extracted from Asset, the assessment tool used in the youth justice system (Baker et al, 2002). Interventions were observed by the Regional Evaluators to assess how well services were being delivered in practice. ISSP officers were also asked to take part in a case review survey, completing four questionnaires pertaining to the progress of each case. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from a range of interviews. A sample of young people were interviewed using standardised schedules. Staff views were obtained from ISSP managers and a range of other ISSP

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<sup>27</sup> Including Liverpool, Merseyside, Wirral, Preston, Lancaster, Blackpool and North Wales.

workers in all 41 ISSP schemes. A survey of magistrates and a small number of parents/carers interviews were also conducted.

Seven years on from the original evaluation this work addresses a substantially different set of intellectual, policy and methodological questions, and accordingly adopts a substantively different design. It has not been the intention to revisit all aspects the original data. All criminal history data analysed in this study is new and has been collected and calculated uniquely for this thesis. Likewise the bulk of the qualitative data is also new and pursues different directions. However, this follow-up exercise is supported by historical data to provide contextual information and a reference point for longitudinal grounding. The following research tools from the original evaluation utilised in this study include (where available):

- Asset
- Interviews with young people at the start and end of their ISSP disposal
- Interviews with parents
- Case review survey completed by staff members on individual ISSP
- ‘Regional Evaluators’ reports and field notes

### **3.3 The rationale**

#### ***– Exploring long term offending behaviour using quantitative data***

The original evaluation of ISSP struggled to find a robust modelling strategy for handling complexity within the reoffending data. The 24-month reconviction study

(Gray et al, 2005) reported that regression analyses were a poor fit and only explained a small proportion of the variance. Unlike other measures of statistical 'fitness', there is no formally recognised cut-off value for a "low" versus "high" measure of  $R^2$  - the fitness test for multiple regression analyses (Draper and Smith, 1998)<sup>28</sup>. However, these models, which covered a short time-frame produced  $R^2$  scores ranging from 0.049-0.308 (Gray et al, 2005) – which means they explained between four and 30 per cent of the variance. This is a typical result of reconviction studies using regression analysis (Crime and Justice Research Centre, 2005; Quann, 2006; Fazel et al, 2012; Smith and Weatherburn, 2012) and underlines the pressing need to explore and test further analytical methods.

An advantage of this follow-up study has been the extended time-frame in which to examine the cohort's offending behaviour. It also demanded a new approach to statistical modelling. As a means of understanding human development, the longitudinal design has many advantages over comparable cross-sectional methods (Duncan et al, 2006; Gray et al, 2012). Methodologists generally agree that inferring causality requires the demonstration of three conditions (Bollen, 1989; Duncan et al, 2006). First the presumed cause and effect are related; second they presume cause precedes the effect in time and third, other competing expectations can be ruled out. As Kessler and Greenberg (1981) have argued the second condition cannot be achieved by cross-sectional analyses (c.f. Gollob and Reichardt, 1987).

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<sup>28</sup> The  $R^2$  provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the statistical model used (Brace, et al, 2006). An  $R^2$  near 1.0 indicates that the statistical model fits the data well, while an  $R^2$  closer to 0 indicates the regression line does not.

Latent variable growth modelling meets all of these criteria however (Duncan et al, 2006). Indeed, there has been resurgence in time-ordered approaches that can incorporate group data (McArdel, 1988; Meredith and Tisak, 1990), while conveying specific information about individual changes – a statistical method which originated in work by Rao (1958) and Tucker (1958). Favourably, these ‘latent growth’ models can now be built and tested in a wide range of structural equation modelling programmes, such as Lisrel (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 2005), EQS (Bentler, 2006), Amos (Arbuckle 2010) and Mplus (Muthén and Muthén, 2010). Given its ability to utilise repeated measures data, assess growth forms, incorporate time-varying covariates and observe both group and individual trajectories, this method was considered the most suitable and powerful framework with which to examine the ISSP data.

Despite the statistical strength of longitudinal models, randomised control trials (RCT) are widely regarded as the ‘gold standard’ for evaluating the effectiveness of public policy interventions, particularly in medicine and international development, as they are considered to provide the most internally valid estimates (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Muthén and Curren, 1997; Harper and Chitty, 2004). However, in practice, very few RCTs have been conducted in relation to British criminal justice (Farrington and Jolliffe, 2002; Farrington and Welsh, 2005). Boruch (2007) notes they present practical and ethical difficulties; for example, an RCT would give a researcher power to override a magistrate’s decision in order to allocate offenders randomly to a condition. There are also ethical considerations to the withholding of

'treatment' and the matter of community safety (if a high risk or violent offender is sentenced to community based programme instead of a custodial placement). As such, criminological and public policy researchers have frequently sought viable and robust alternatives to the RCT (Hollin, 2008).

As indicated above, latent growth modelling has been adopted in this study. The specific style used, an interrupted time series design, has been widely used in prevention and intervention research, especially in settings in which randomised control trials are not feasible or indicated (Duncan et al, 2006) (See Chapter 7 for further discussion on the appropriateness of the method). In an interrupted time series design, measurements of the outcome variable are collected at equally spaced intervals over an extended period of time, with an intervention implemented at a specific point. They allow for the assessment of the onset and duration of change in relation to an intervention. They are considered quasi-experimental designs and are appropriate for use in pilot studies designed to document the benefit or otherwise of a public policy programme (Biglan et al, 2000; Duncan et al, 2006). West et al (2000) state that interrupted time series analysis represents a reliable and robust alternative to the RCT as well as a powerful means to develop a theoretical understanding of the variables that influence change. Given the nature (repeated measures) and context (programme evaluation) of the ISSP data this method was considered the most suitable and powerful method for taking the data forward.

– *Exploring long term offending behaviour using qualitative data*

The original evaluation collected a large amount of qualitative data from interviews with young people (n=646) (Moore et al, 2004). These were based on quantifiable questions collected through face-to-face structured interviews. However, as a member of the regional research team collecting data ‘on the ground’, it soon became apparent that it was difficult to extract valid and reliable data from the young people with this approach (although the same problems did not emerge with interviews with staff or parents).

Difficulties were reported by all ‘Regional Evaluators’ and a number of reasons were discussed. First, many young people resented being part of the evaluation as a condition of their ISSP sentence (their consent was assumed rather than sought – for further discussion of the ethical ramifications of this see Section 4.2). Many were guarded about personal and sensitive questions, and expressed frustration at - and during - the interview process. Indeed, the second problem was that interviews often lasted a matter of minutes. Participants routinely gave monosyllabic answers or refused to comment on more controversial questions (such as self-reported offending and drug-use). Countless interviews were cancelled as the young people failed to keep appointments (removing perhaps some of the more ‘hard to reach’ cases from the sample). Finally, the structured nature of the interview schedule failed to provide an outlet for participants to elaborate on their lives, thoughts or feelings. To summarise; while the data produced from interviews was plentiful, it

was ineffectual in securing valid and robust answers to questions, leaving theoretical and empirical blind-spots in the data.

Despite the prolific amount of qualitative data, arguably, the principal thrust of the original evaluation was quantitative. As detailed above, there was insufficient investment in searching out effective qualitative methods for use with the young people. Instead, emphasis was placed on the statistical analysis by members of the Youth Justice Board, politicians and the media. For example, parliamentary debates about the evaluation of ISSP related to the reconviction rates (Hansard, 2006) and cost benefit analysis (Hansard, 2003a, 2003b), while media reports concerning the publication of the final instalment of the evaluation (Gray et al, 2005) focused heavily on the limited reconviction measures<sup>29</sup>. In fact, while considerable value was found in the qualitative data from the staff, parents and occasional young people, it took a secondary role to the reoffending statistics. As researchers have commented previously, there is an anecdotal quality to many policy evaluations that include qualitative data (Mehan, 1979). This problem has been succinctly expressed by Bryman (1988):

*“There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research. Brief conversations, snippets from unstructured interviews... are used to provide evidence of a particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the*

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<sup>29</sup> This was ascertained from a content analysis of the national and local press, using the Nexis UK website for three months from the publication date of the 24 month reconviction study (Gray et al, 2005). Twenty articles on the ISSP evaluation were published, 11 articles referred directly to the published reconviction rate, the majority of which (n=7) did so in the headlines.

*representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed”*  
(Bryman, 1988:77).

Similarly, Spencer et al, (2003) have commented on the over-reliance on structured interviews in their review of qualitative data in government-funded research, as well as arguing for the provision of clearer guidance in the employment and dissemination of it (c.f. Back, 2007; Bourdieu, 1999). Finally, as discussed in Chapter 4, a lack of consideration to the ethical treatment of the participants has a subsequent effect on validity. If participants lack trust in the research process they are less likely to engage meaningfully in it (Munro, 2007; France, 2012).

For these reasons, this thesis has sought an entirely different approach to i) the collection and ii) use of qualitative data. Instead of a large sample of structured interviews, in-depth life history interviews were employed with a small number of young people, previously subject to ISSP. This style of interviewing allows the researcher to explore the emotional reactions, cognitions and connections people make when recalling their experiences of crime and justice growing up. While the method has some detractors who critique its lack of generalisability, it has experienced a resurgence in popularity over the last decade (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007; Maruna and Matravers, 2007). New developments in psychosocial criminology (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) and qualitative longitudinal research have put the case study at the centre of their new methodological strategies (Holland et

al., 2004; Farrall, 2006). The method facilitates unique opportunities to understand human subjects as simultaneously the product of their individual psychic and social worlds (Hollway and Jefferson, 2010; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) and provides a means to understand the experience of deviance across the key life stages (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Steffensmeier and Ulmer, 2005).

– *Introducing narrative analysis*

Narratives are the foundation of disciplines that produce ‘thick descriptions’<sup>30</sup>, particularly history, literature and anthropology (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Mishler, 1995; Riessman, 1993; 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2008). Historian White explains, “To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture” (1980: 5). Narratives might invoke significant characters, dramatic episodes, moral lessons, but most significantly, will employ causal logic and shared cultural ideas to create meaningful accounts about themselves.

Certainly, a narrative is more than just the chronological story of one’s life; a narrative can reveal the processes one goes through to reconstruct stories from the past (Patrizi, 2005). Meanings of events and feelings are not fixed, but shift over time and as we as individuals grow older (Mishler, 1999). Narratives are useful in

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<sup>30</sup> Thick descriptive accounts are described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way of achieving a type of external validity. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings and situations. The term was first used by Ryle (1949) and later by Geertz (1973) who applied it in ethnography. Specifically, these authors highlighted accounts in which the researcher made explicit the patterns of cultural and social relationships and put them into context. Thick descriptions can be contrasted with thin and superficial accounts.

research precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. Stories will inevitably draw selectively upon lived experiences and some memories will be emphasised at the expense of others (Riessman, 2001). A narrative analysis will play close attention to the sequence of events, but it is also geared towards a plot and themes (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrators extract plots from a complex set of memories and feelings; “they look back on and recount lives that are located in particular times and places” (Laslett 1999:392).

Bamberg and McCabe (1998) stress that individual life stories can serve multiple functions, they may be used to recall a particular event, argue, convince, entertain or evoke a particular emotion in the interviewer. Similarly, other researchers have highlighted how narrative interviews can be analysed, linguistically (Gee, 1986) culturally (Mattingly and Garro, 2000), politically (Mumby, 1993) and performatively (Goffman, 1959). The various intentions of a narrative are particularly pertinent when one considers repeat offenders may call upon numerous versions of the same event, depending on who the listener is (Presser, 2009). For example, “offenders face tangible incentives, such as release on parole, for portraying themselves in a particular way (say, as innocent or remorseful)” (Presser, 2009:181). Meanwhile, they may have a more austere style of communicating with the police in order to avoid incriminating themselves, and conversely they may exaggerate details to friends to increase their social status. This highlights Goffman’s point that stories fulfil a remedial function (1971).

The example above underlines the extent to which the recounting of a story is a reciprocal event between an interviewee and an audience. Riesmann (2005) stresses how in addition to the thematic content and narrative structure, analysis of an interview should also conduct a detailed examination of the dialogue and other forms of interaction between the researcher and the participant: "Storytelling is a process of co-construction where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively" (2005:4). This approach requires transcripts that include pauses and details of other paralinguistic features that take place. While it is a complex and time-consuming process, approaching identity as a "performative struggle over the meanings of experience" (Langellier 2001a:3) provides a wealth of opportunity to examine offender subjectivities, more than can be achieved with static conceptions of a unified self (Riesmann, 2001).

As stated throughout, the adoption of a narrative approach may mean sacrificing generalisability, but it does so for a more nuanced perspective, closer to the lived experience of the participants lives (Wilks, 2005). For White (1980), a key characteristic of a narrative account is one that is directed by the respondent, rather than the interviewer. Indeed, feminist researchers working with these methods have directed a path towards less prescriptive and more relational styles of interviewing, which reflect (and respect) participants ways of organising meaning in their lives (DeVault, 1999).

While this type of interviewing is highly individualised and subjective, it does not, necessarily, have to be divorced from a social and cultural analysis. As Riessman (2001) argues, narrative analysis builds on classic traditions in sociology which “illuminate the intersection of biography, history, and society” (2001:5). Personal stories about crime, criminality and justice for example, have the potential to tell us a great deal about cultural and historical processes. As Mills (1959) has pointed out individual’s stories are located in particular times and places, and their narratives are works of history, and include fine detail about the social spaces they occupy and the societies they are part of. Similarly, Karn (2007) links her narrative analysis with Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, stressing that individual’s stories are inherently formed and reinforced by their social position.

Presser (2009) argues that while narrative research has long been important to criminology, it has further un-tapped potential. Gadd and Jefferson (2007) stress the narrative method has its strengths in accepting and working with complex data, it facilitates theory building and is in fact essential to the exploration of the ‘particular’ (c.f. Stake, 2000). Mitchell makes the point that exploring an individual’s narrative account “is essentially heuristic” (2000:170). As such, the data herein is not intended to be generalisable, but is offered, as part of a mixed methods study to facilitate an intimate insight to the thorny and dynamic issues experienced and expressed by persistent young offenders as they enter adulthood. The aim is to contribute towards the development of a more nuanced understanding of youth offenders and youth justice. As Gelsthorpe (2007) has

suggested, individual stories can be emotionally penetrating and have the power to impact criminal justice policy more readily than traditional quantitative studies at times.

### **3.4 Quantitative research methodology**

Quantitative research should aim to be replicable (Gentleman and Temple Lang, 2004; Peng et al, 2006). This requires the methods used and the assumptions made to be explained in sufficient detail so that the same results could be achieved by another researcher. It is particularly important for standard methods to be used in reconviction studies, since these are assuming greater importance in evaluations of offender programmes. The Police National Computer (PNC) is increasingly being used as a source because greater detail are available (e.g. offence dates) and records are more up-to-date than with the alternative, the Offender Index. Despite this, no standard procedure had been established for researchers at the time of the data extraction. More recently the Ministry of Justice has issued guidance on counting procedures from PNC data (Ministry of Justice, 2011a), none of which contradicts the methods applied in this study.

#### ***– Tracking the long-term frequency and seriousness of offending***

Tracking the *frequency* and *seriousness* of offending is the principal method used to explore the trajectories of persistent and serious young offenders subject to ISSP. Changes in the frequency of offending were measured by counting the average

number of offences in a series of one year intervals pre and post intervention. Similarly, reduction in seriousness was measured by collecting offence gravity scores of the most serious offence in year intervals pre and post intervention (using the Youth Justice Board's eight-point seriousness score – see Appendix C)<sup>31</sup>.

#### – *Counting the number of offences*

The details below describe how data on frequency and seriousness of offending was calculated for this group of persistent and serious young offenders. Further details of how the data were extracted from the Police National Computer are given in Appendix A.

Only offences resulting in a conviction, as recorded on the PNC, were counted. Offences were counted separately, even if they occurred on the same day. However, an exception was made where the offences were clearly part of the same event. In practice this was restricted to cases where there were linked motoring offences such as unauthorised vehicle taking, dangerous driving, no insurance, driving whilst disqualified, all committed on the same day. These were counted as one offence.

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<sup>31</sup> The Youth Justice Board developed a seriousness score to a) help practitioners assess the severity of an offence and b) define eligibility for the 'serious crime short-cut' route onto ISSP. It is a 1-8 scale (8 is the most serious offence) based on sentencing practice (Moore et al, 2004). It allows relevant staff to quantify 'seriousness' and plan interventions, and is distinct from the gravity score often used by regional police forces in England and Wales. The 2001 version of the scale was utilised in this research (see Appendix C), which was current when the original study began. Although it has since been superseded (see Youth Justice Board, 2010c).

In counting the number of offences in the pre and post periods, date of offence rather than date of disposal were used. This meant that offences resulting in the ISSP disposal were counted in the pre-period.

Breach offences were not counted as criminal offences, in order to achieve greater comparability between ISSP and non-ISSP disposals. It could be argued that breaches resulting from the intensive demands of ISSP should be included in an assessment of its impact. However, it was decided that a distinction should be made between offences 'against the public' and 'technical' offences.

#### – *Calculating interval periods 'at liberty'*

Many of the sample spent time in custody before or after the start of their order. In order to ensure young people were '*in the community*' during each year in which their recorded offending was observed (and therefore in a legitimate position to persist or desist from offending), each year interval had to be adjusted on an individual basis to compensate for this (see also Table 3.3 for further information on how young people who spent extended periods of time in custody were lost from the sample). Since the PNC does not contain release dates, these were estimated. I assumed that half the sentence period was spent in custody on Detention and Training Orders (DTO) and adult prison sentences (i.e. during a six-month DTO, three months were spent in custody). On the advice of the Parole Board, adult sentences in excess of four years were calculated at 60% of the total, and minimum

recommendations for life sentences for individuals were sourced through court reports in the media where life sentences were applied.

– *Identifying offence seriousness*

Offence seriousness could be measured in several ways. The Youth Justice Board developed a definition of ‘serious’ offences in order to assist practitioners and define eligibility for the ISSP ‘serious crime shortcut’. The 2001 version of the scale was used (see Appendix C), which was current when the original study began. Although this has since been superseded (see Youth Justice Board, 2010c). In each time period, the most serious offence was identified using this scale. Where several offences had the same gravity, the court disposal was used to resolve which was the more serious (e.g. custody more serious than community sentence).

– *The sample: composition, size and suitability*

The study encompasses the first 41 pilot ISSP schemes, covering those cases commencing from the start-up in 2001/2 until April 2003. A total of 3,882 ISSP disposals or 2,924 individuals were recorded (an individual might have been subject to more than one ISSP order in the study period). Indeed, multiple ISSP cases for a single young person were common.

The comparison sample comprised all young people who i) met the eligibility criteria for ISSP but were sentenced to either a Supervision Order, Community

Rehabilitation Order or a Detention and Training Order during the timeframe of the original ISSP evaluation (from July 2001 until April 2003) and ii) originated from Youth Offending Teams who did not take part in the initial ISSP pilot (phase three and four schemes)<sup>32</sup>. To ensure the comparison sample did not become 'contaminated', it was important to verify that young people in the comparison sample did not later receive ISSP in the follow-up period; any who did were excluded from the study. Eventually 1370 comparison cases, or 997 individuals were collected.

#### – *Sample Sizes*

Because this reconviction study involves a longitudinal design – which looks at both aggregate and individual change, it was necessary to focus only on individuals and remove repeat cases from the database. Previous evaluations of the programme have included a new case for each new order on ISSP (Moore et al, 2004, 2006; Gray, 2005). Consequently, sample sizes in this study are smaller than in previous evaluations. While repeat cases have been removed it was possible to calculate the total number of days individuals spent on the programme (through multiple orders) to reflect each participant's full exposure to the intervention. For consistency, the first order was selected as the main case for analysis and provided the original 'time point' for 'before and after' analyses.

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<sup>32</sup> ISSP was rolled out nationally in four stages (or Phases). Phases 3 and 4 did not receive funding to provide ISSP until one to two years after Phases 1 and 2. However, they were ideal YOTs from which to recruit a comparison sample as had large numbers of young people who were eligible for ISSP but would have received an alternative disposal during the time-frame of the original evaluation.

Additional reasons for attrition from the reconviction study were as follows (see Table 3.1); in order to ensure the sample were ‘persistent’ and or ‘serious’ offenders, any young people who were not eligible for the programme were excluded from the analysis. As previously noted (Moore et al, 2004; Gray, 2005), there were very few ineligible ISSP sentences, and the vast majority of disqualified cases were on ISSP bail (65%, n=241), where charges were subsequently dropped or not proven. Cases were also excluded on account of poor data quality; this could be identified through comparing PNC data with information collected by the original ‘Regional Evaluators’ of ISSP or the presence of charges brought in Scotland where insufficient detail is collected. Lastly, in a small number of cases PNC numbers were not available.

**Table 3.1: Sample Sizes**

<b>Case decision</b>	<b>ISSP</b>		<b>Comparison</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Valid individual case</b>	2415	62	869	64
<b>Repeat case</b>	924	24	373	27
<b>Poor data quality</b>	114	3	29	2
<b>No data returned from PNC</b>	111	3	8	1
<b>No PNC number available</b>	77	2	91	6
<b>Not eligible</b>	241	6	0	0
<b>Total</b>	3882	100	1370	100

Obtaining PNC data requires careful matching using personal details and disposal date for the offence leading to ISSP. Ultimately, reliable matches were obtained on 94% of ISSP cases and 97% of Comparison cases submitted to PNC. For the purposes of this new long-term study, data was collected over the life course, with offending histories collected up to three years before the start of the original order, as well as the date of their first offence. Table 3.2 provides this information and highlights an important and previously unknown feature of ISSP sample – that a significantly larger proportion of this group have longer criminal histories than their comparison counterparts. This finding highlights a crucial difference between the samples; if the ISSP group have longer, more engrained criminal trajectories, it is also likely that they will have experienced greater exposure to the criminal justice system, be better ‘known’ to the police and sentencers’, and as such may have developed harder, more notorious ‘reputations’ as recidivist offenders.

**Table 3.2: Percentage of young people involved in offending prior to order**

	ISSP (n=2415)	Comp (n=869)
	%	%
<b>Year 3 Prior to order ***</b>	58	46
<b>Year 2 Prior to order***</b>	87	77
<b>Year 1 Prior to order</b>	100	100

*Chi-square test confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

Since the sample included highly persistent and serious young offenders, it was common for members of the cohort to spend considerable and multiple periods in custody in the years following the intervention. As such, calculation for each year follow-up period needed to adjust for any time spent in custody. Helpfully, it was possible to estimate the approximate length of a custodial order through the PNC data (see '*Calculating interval periods in custody*' above). Therefore, if a young person started ISSP on 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2002, but spent six months in prison during the subsequent year – the first follow-up period would be extended by six months and end on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003. In sum, to accurately assess the potential impact of ISSP on subsequent offending behaviour, it was critical to ensure cases were genuinely 'at liberty' in the community for 12 months.

Naturally the longer young people spent in custody the more difficult it was to follow them up longer term, which impacted the attrition levels from each follow-up interval. Table 3.3 demonstrates the attrition levels for each year. Favourably, almost no cases were lost in years one and two post intervention (100% and 99% of the sample respectively was retained), and reputable levels for year three and four (93% and 74% of the ISSP sample). However, by year five the sample noticeably drops to 42% of the original ISSP cohort, introducing a potential sampling error by removing a large proportion of the most troublesome offenders. Moreover we lose significantly more of the ISSP sample, highlighting previous concerns that there are underlying differences between the two groups in terms of their protracted criminal histories.

It was therefore decided to limit the analysis to four years post intervention, for which we have 74% (n=1789) of the ISSP sample and 81% (n=704) of comparison cases. In addition, while not all participants had committed (recorded) offences in the two and three years prior to starting their principal order, a decision had to be made whether to exclude these cases from an analysis of this time period (i.e. only use 58% of the ISSP sample three years prior to order), or record these stages as non-offending intervals in order to incorporate the full available sample. It was decided that as long as young people were over the age of criminal responsibility, these periods of desistance should be recorded for three reasons. First any episodes of non-offending, before or after, were considered meaningful for the purposes of this research project; it would allow the analysis to capture individual differences and naturally occurring interruptions in the offending trajectories of this diverse group of offenders. Second, it would maximise the sample size for each stage of the analysis, and third it would simplify the modelling process by keeping the sample as consistent as possible (rather than repeating processes for different samples). As such, the following analysis includes individuals whether they had begun their offending careers or not and follows them over seven years (three years prior and four years post ISSP).

**Table 3.3: Percentage of the cases who remain in the sample following adjustments for time spent in custody post-intervention.**

	ISSP (n=2415)	Comp (n=869)
	%	%
<b>Year 1 post intervention</b>	100	100
<b>Year 2 post intervention</b>	99	99
<b>Year 3 post intervention *</b>	93	96
<b>Year 4 post intervention ***</b>	74	81
<b>Year 5 post intervention ***</b>	42	52

*Chi-square test confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

– ***Matching the comparison group: Socio-demographic characteristics and long term offending-related variables***

This study is based on a quasi-experimental design, which seeks to compare the results of the ISSP sample with a well-matched comparison group (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Sherman 1997). A well-matched comparison group is an essential step in producing valid and reliable results from a reconviction study. In 2004 the Home Office set standards for such research; these standards are based in part on the Maryland scientific methods scale originally developed by Sherman et al (1997). The scale assesses the methodological rigour of evaluations of crime prevention programmes. The criteria for each of the five levels are as follows (Harper and Chitty, 2004:7):

1. A relationship between intervention and reconviction outcome (intervention group with no comparison group).
2. Expected reconviction rates (or predicted rates) compared to actual reconviction rates for intervention group (risk predictor with no comparison group).
3. Comparison group present without demonstrated comparability to intervention (unmatched comparison group).
4. Comparison group matched to intervention group theoretically relevant factors e.g. risk of reconviction (well matched comparison group).
5. Random assignment of offenders to the intervention and control conditions (Random control trial).

Notably, both Sherman and colleagues (1997), as well as Harper and Chitty (2004) found that the scores for the majority of reconviction studies were low. This is critical when one considers the success of programmes can be dependent on the outcome of reconviction rates. Notably, the research design and statistical analysis adopted in this study aims to achieve the fourth level of methodological rigour set out above.

Locating a well-matched comparison group of persistent and serious young offenders is a fine art. At the time of the original evaluation the matching was based on a series of static and dynamic characteristics one year prior to the intervention. Perusing the figures, in many respects the control group *was* well matched,

particularly in terms of their offending profiles one year before, which were identical, on average, for the seriousness of offending (with a mean gravity score 5.3 for both groups) and the frequency of offending was also very similar (7.7 and 7.6 for the ISSP and control groups respectively). Table 3.4 shows the extent to which the matching was successful<sup>33</sup>.

While there were closely matched in terms of their immediate criminal histories, we can also pinpoint some significant differences between the groups. The comparison sample included more 'serious only' offenders and more young women - both groups of which are at *lower risk* of reconviction (Francis et al, 2007). The ISSP group meanwhile are more likely to have registered special educational needs, as well as a higher mean Asset score – which would suggest they are at *greater risk* of re-offending (Baker et al, 2002). Moreover, modelling the data over a longer time period for this study – both before and after the intervention was a very insightful exercise. Perhaps the most noteworthy difference it revealed was the 'age at first conviction'. This variable had not been recorded in previous ISSP studies, but indicated a further difference between the samples; chiefly that the ISSP group's criminal careers begin at a significantly earlier stage. Thus far we know that the ISSP group have, on average, longer criminal careers (see above) which start earlier. Such characteristics may impact the likelihood of future offending, as well as magistrate's sentencing decisions.

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<sup>33</sup> Sample sizes for key variables is in included in Appendix E.

This finding highlights the very real difficulty of securing a well matched comparison group of persistent and serious offenders. A similar study reported that collecting a group of closely matched persistent offenders was problematic due to their diverse criminal histories, personal circumstances and individual characteristics (Behalf et al, 2010). In sum, a key methodological finding from this research suggests that careful ‘matching’ should include data in excess of one year before the intervention, and ideally collect the date of an individual’s first offence (c.f. Francis et al, 2007).

**Table 3.4: Socio-demographic characteristics - ISSP and Comparison Groups**

	ISSP (Base n=1789)	Comparison (Base n=704)	Significance*
<i>Demographics</i>			
- Mean age	16.2 (n=1789)	16.08 (n=704)	n.s
- % female	9.8% (n=175)	14.9% (n=105)	***
- % white	84.3% (n=1426)	86.6% (n=609)	n.s
-% SEN recognised with statement	27.3% (n=186) <sup>34</sup>	17.1% (n=87)	***
-% Name on child protection register	17% (n=135) <sup>35</sup>	17.2% (n=102)	n.s
<i>Criminal History</i>			
- Mean Asset Score	23.1 (n=1,119)	21.9 (n=603)	n.s
- Mean age at first offence	12.6 (n=1789)	13.1 (n=704)	***
- % received previous custodial sentence	32.5% (n=582)	35.9% (n=253)	n.s
- Number of offences in prior 12 months	7.7 (n=1,789)	7.6 (n=704)	n.s.
- Mean Gravity score (12 months prior)	5.3 (n=1,789)	5.3 (n=704)	n.s.
<i>Eligibility</i>			
- Qualified by seriousness?	17.5 (n=313)	22.7 (n=160)	**
- Qualified by persistence?	53.3 (n=954)	52.6 (n=370)	n.s
- Qualify as both persistent and serious?	29.2 (n=522)	24.7 (n=174)	*
<i>Current Offence</i>			
% Robbery	20.0% (n=357)	19.6% (n=138)	n.s
% Burglary	23.1 % (n=411)	26% (n=183)	*
% Violence	17.4% (n=311)	16.0% (n=112)	n.s
% Vehicle theft	13.5% (n=2,41)	8.8% (n=62)	**

*Tests of significance used are T-tests (means) and chi-square (nominal data).*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

<sup>34</sup> Small n-sizes occur here since details from Asset on care arrangements are not always completed for children who have no historical involvement with social work.

<sup>35</sup> Small n-sizes occur here since details from Asset on education is only completed on young people who are below school leaving age.

### – *Threats to validity*

Cook and Campbell (1979:99-103) discuss the problems of pre-test/post-test research designs. Threats to the validity of findings include:

1. *history* (possible influence of changes occurring outside the programme)
2. *maturation* (behaviours change as a result of subjects maturing, rather than because of programme)
3. *testing* (subjects learn how to perform tests better by the post-test stage)
4. *instrumentation* (e.g. measures of change are prone to subjective bias)
5. *statistical regression* (tendency for extreme scores at pre-test stage to move towards the average at post-test stage)

Statistical regression is a particular risk in this study because there tends to be a degree of random fluctuation in the number of offences committed from one time period to the next, with some people getting worse and others better. Young people recording an extreme number of offences in the first time period will tend to revert to a more average number in the next time period. This commonly occurs when a programme is given only to people with extreme scores at the pre-test stage, which is the case with ISSP. The extent of the problem is governed by two factors: the amount of variability in offending from one time period to the next (randomness), and the extent to which subjects have untypical, extreme scores. It is highly likely that offenders chosen for ISSP because of highly persistent offending

would show a reduction in offending frequency, and offenders chosen because of extreme offence seriousness would show a reduction in seriousness. In addition, because very serious offences, such as rape or manslaughter are rare, it is unlikely such offences would appear in both pre and post time periods for a given case in a study that covers seven years.

History and maturation also pose potential problems; because of the nature of persistent offending, young people are made subject to a series of sometimes overlapping interventions during the follow-up period. It is very difficult therefore to isolate the impact of one of many criminal sanctions. Finally, the period of time this particular study tracks covers the sample's adolescence and transition to adulthood, a critical time during which the average 'age crime curve' (Farrington, 1986) is said to typically peak and then decrease (c.f. Soothill, 2004; Tremblay and Nagin, 2004). Given the aims of ISSP to target persistent and serious young offenders, it is not possible to avoid the problem of 'regression to the mean', neither is it possible to swerve the issues of multiple criminal justice sanctions or maturation of the sample. The way it is dealt with is by using a comparison group with similar characteristics. The expectation is that both groups will reduce in offending frequency and seriousness. The impact of ISSP is measured by whether the ISSP group outperforms the comparison group.

### – *Software*

The quantitative data relating to individual cases were collated and analysed using SPSS 19 and Amos 19 software.

## 3.5 Qualitative research methodology

### – *The sample*

The sampling strategy concentrated on retracing young people from Liverpool for two reasons. First, focusing on one location would afford the analysis some regional specification and an opportunity to explore local cultures or ‘habitus’ as it relates to persistent offending (Bourdieu, 1999; Bourgois, 2003; Presdee, 2000; Hayward and Young, 2004). Second, the choice of Liverpool was an obvious one; during the pilot evaluation, I was a Regional Evaluator, based in Liverpool for 18 months. During this time I relocated to the city and lived centrally, my desk was located in the Liverpool ISSP office, which was a dedicated site for both the administration and practice of ISSP. As such, I was intimately involved in the area, the ISSP scheme, the participants and their families, as well as the broader criminal justice (Merseyside Police Force; the local judiciary) and political (Liverpool City Council) cultures within the city. Of course, the aim here is not to make national generalisations based on this local data. Instead, it seeks to develop a more coherent understanding of the subject by collecting detailed grounded data with strong interpretive validity.

### – *Tracing and contacting the cohort*

Attempts were made to trace each participant from the Liverpool cohort (n=65). This was achieved through a variety of sources. Historical contact details (at the time of the original evaluation) were available for 55 individuals, which provided a useful starting point. In addition, the following sources were used to locate individuals:

- the Prisoner Location Service
- Tracesmart (an online research tool which includes information from numerous electoral roles and the Land Registry)
- social networking sites, such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter
- court reports
- a media analysis tool (LexisNexis)
- Directory Enquiries ([www.192.com](http://www.192.com)).

Information confirmed that one young person was deceased. Matches were found for 33 young people (50%). Home addresses were eventually secured for 29 participants, although not all were from the most recent electoral register.<sup>36</sup> In 13 of these cases, contact information via Facebook was also available. An additional three were found on Facebook (with no residential information). Six individuals, who were known to be in prison, were contacted through the Prisoner Location Service. A common reason for not successfully tracking a participant was due to a

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<sup>36</sup> Since 2002, only an edited electoral roll has been available for purchase. It is updated annually, but citizens can opt out of having their information made public from each register.

name being very common (e.g. Smith), so reliable matches could not be confirmed, along with a general lack of up-to-date information.

Email was the preferred method of contact because it was more likely to be received by the intended person. A Facebook page for the project was set up so that potential participants could view a photo of the researcher and see information about the study. It also allowed them to reply easily and free of charge. Where email addresses were not available, information was sent via Royal Mail.

In the first instance, 28 of the most reliable matches were contacted. All available women (n=4) and all young people from minority ethnic groups (n=12) were invited to interview. No young women agreed to take part in the study: two declined – one had relocated to Ireland, and the other said she had a young family and did not want to revisit her criminal past. Her PNC history showed that she had desisted completely after ISSP. Two letters to the remaining female sample were returned to sender unopened.

#### *– Final sample and interviews*

Eventually, 11 young people agreed to be interviewed (39% response rate). All participants were male, and four were of dual heritage (one British Chinese and three Black British). One interviewee refused to participate on the day of interview – he was on a life sentence in a high-security prison and had been involved in a

violent disturbance a few days earlier. At the time, prison officials did not consider it safe or appropriate to continue with the interview. A second young person was arrested and remanded on grievous bodily harm charges before the planned interview could take place. Each of the remaining participants (n=9) was interviewed on two separate occasions. All interviews bar one were conducted face-to-face, either in prison or at a premises hired for the purposes of the study. One set of interviews was conducted over the phone, since the young man had relocated to a hostel over 250 miles away and it was not possible to organise a face-to-face meeting. While the arrangement was not ideal, two full and frank interviews were completed.

The life history interview style is non-directional; it puts greater emphasis on eliciting personal narratives, that is, asking the interviewees to tell their life stories in their own words and recounting events in their preferred order without asking them too many direct or predetermined questions (Rosenthal, 1993; Atkinson, 1998; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). Schedules for follow up interviews were particular to each participant and based on the information and analysis of the first interview.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### – *Use of secondary data*

The interviews were further enhanced by historical ISSP data (including one-to-one interviews, ISSP monitoring data and formal youth justice assessments<sup>37</sup>); official criminal history data from the police national computer (PNC), as well as publicised court reports and media articles<sup>38</sup>. These various sources of supplementary information provided an opportunity to explore the longevity of particular themes, identify consistencies and inconsistencies and take a longitudinal perspective of the participants through key stages of their young lives.

### – *Analysis*

During the early stages of the analysis all transcripts were listened to and transcribed, using the young people's own intonation and vernacular. Pauses and gestures were also noted in the transcripts and are displayed inside the quotes in brackets. To give a more specific indication of the presence and length of pauses, their length is noted in seconds in the text rather than with ellipses. 'Field notes' on additional observations that took place at the time of interview were also written up. The transcripts were read through numerous times and initial notes were taken on anything that appeared significant. The second stage of analysis consisted of a more thorough reading of the data, involving an expansion of the relevant themes and identifying psychological and theoretical abstractions. Each theme was given a descriptive label that conveyed the conceptual nature of its dynamics. The third

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Asset.

<sup>38</sup> A content analysis of media articles and published court reports was conducted using the Nexis UK website. This database has access to approximately 12,000 publications including UK national and local newspapers from 1975 to the present day.

stage consisted of further organising the data by establishing connections between the themes and linking them appropriately. In this manner, Smith (J.A. 2004) suggests that researchers “imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them” (J.A. 2004:71). Finally, I began to think about how the various issues raised by the participants could be conceptualised theoretically.

In order to produce a more authentic picture of what ISSP, other criminal justice sanctions and crime actually meant to respondents, the study sought to minimise the potential for measurement errors. The interviewer carefully, but persistently, probed the relationship between what people thought (cognition), said (account), actually did (behaviour) and felt (emotions). The topics discussed in each interview were broad-ranging, concerned with both substantive and theoretical issues. There was, for example, frequent discussion of respondent’s experience of ISSP and other youth justice sanctions, as well as the broader apparatus of the criminal justice system. Respondents spoke about their memories of education, social work, living in care, homelessness and drug rehabilitation services. Discussion of their involvement in crime and delinquency, criminal networks and the cultural climate was also customary. Of course, discussion of their friends, neighbours and family was common, although for some, these topics were sensitive and their responses guarded. How respondents chose to represent themselves and their sense of individual and group identity was a significant matter for the researcher to make sense of. By sharing stories on the topics above, these narratives invariably touched

on wider questions, such as justice, welfare, politics, the economy, the media, security and the roles and responsibilities of local citizens, all of which lie at the heart of how we, as individuals, relate to crime and our neighbourhoods.

## Chapter 4: Ethics, the search for trust, meaning and validity

### 4.1 Introduction

Persistent and serious young offenders are frequently the object of 'evidenced based' research (Hagell and Newburn, 1994; Moore et al, 2006). Their characters and behaviour have also been conceptualised and researched from philosophical, sociological and psychological perspectives (see Chapter 2). However, as a number of writers have commented, there is little in the way of rigorous criminological debate on the ethical considerations of these attempts to search for causal links with, and remedies for, persistent and serious childhood offending (Shapland, 2000a, 2000b; Armstrong, 2004; Bradt and Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Munro, 2007)<sup>39</sup>. Indeed, the critique of 'evidenced based practice' is frequently methodological (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006) or political (Gray, 2005, 2009, 2011; Muncie, 2006), rather than ethical. Shapland (2000a) warns that criminological public policy research has the potential to create real influences in people's lives, yet scholars have so far failed to recognise "what we are doing - or even, that we are trying not to think of the implications, but to hide behind a mask of being scientific or 'understanding and explaining'" (2000a:3). While contemporary youth justice polices attempt to tackle social injustice (engaging young offenders in education, training and mainstream services (see Youth Justice Board, 2000; 2008; 2011), Munro (2007) warns it has done so by relying on the validity and reliability of

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<sup>39</sup> For ethical discussions of broader criminal justice enterprises see von Hirsch et al (2000); von Hirsch and Simester (2006).

prediction tools and professional assessment<sup>40</sup>, thus ignoring wider ethical and political structures, such as the lack of flexible resources required to meet the needs of vulnerable young offenders or the possible harm that may be caused by the process of surveillance of families<sup>41</sup> and labelling children as problems<sup>42</sup> (c.f. Gray, 2005, 2007, 2009; France et al, 2012).

The contention of this study is that research is also a narrative on the morality of social relations; how criminologists approach the dilemmas and challenges involved in fieldwork with persistent and serious young offenders tells us much about how we relate to them more generally. Liebling and Stanko (2001) advise that criminologists should consider the ‘moral mission’ of a research enterprise; and honestly confront how they approach, understand and represent the subject matter. Certainly, it was an aim of this study to engage, meaningfully, with the subject matter and participants, some of whom I would be asking to tell me their life-stories. Moreover it was essential to address the ethical implications of each stage of the research, as well as taking a critical approach to how knowledge about persistent and serious young offenders is constructed.

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<sup>40</sup> Tony Blair gave a speech in 2006 in which he claimed that it was possible to assess risk accurately: “There is now a wealth of empirical data to analyse. The purport of it is clear. You can detect and predict the children and families likely to go wrong” (Blair, 2006).

<sup>41</sup> For example, the Parenting Order was created by the Criminal and Disorder Act 1998 and provides a means for making parents accountable for the offending of their children.

<sup>42</sup> For example, the Youth Justice Board has funded programmes for ‘persistent’ and ‘serious’ young offenders, as well as early intervention programmes for those who have not offended, but are considered at risk of doing so (Youth Justice Board, 2008, 2011, 2012).

One specific intention was that interviewees would feel as if the research was being completed '*with them*' not '*to them*'. However, the reasons for this are not entirely altruistic, but also methodological. Given the limitations of the interviews with young people in the original evaluation (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) (see Section 3.3), it was assumed that a more collaborative approach (May and Pattillo-McCoy, 2000) to the qualitative study would provide opportunities for improving the quality of the data, by creating closer, more trusting relationships with participants. To facilitate this, it was necessary to establish intimate and comfortable avenues of communication, which I interpreted (in part) as relating to them in a more sensitive and responsible way than had been achieved in the evaluation of the pilot (Moore et al, 2004). In sum, attention to ethical integrity was also an effort to increase the methodological rigour of the study.

The majority of ethical considerations discussed here relate to the delicate matter of retracting of the Liverpool cohort and subsequent biographical interviews. Nevertheless the possession of the criminal histories and youth justice assessments of the sample also raises important issues. Concerns pertaining to the quantitative data are addressed specifically towards the end of this section.

See Appendix B for full details of the ethical applications relating to this study. Full ethical clearance was granted by Keele Ethics Committee and the Home Office cleared my request for PNC data.

## 4.2 The rationale

As detailed above (see Section 3.3), the original evaluation failed to connect with the cohort of young people through short, structured interviews. The Regional Evaluators<sup>43</sup> proposed various explanations, two of which related to the unequal power dynamic involved in the researcher-participant relationship, specifically, i) the young people's obligatory 'consent' (as a virtue of being on ISSP) and ii) a lack of awareness of the research process. First, the Youth Justice Board stipulated that as a condition of the grant to pilot ISSP, all participating youth offending teams and young people made subject to those orders would contribute towards the evaluation. This involved collecting procedural information and criminal history searches for ISSP and comparison cases as well participating in qualitative interviews (Moore et al, 2004 and Gray et al, 2005). In short, the Youth Justice Board did not seek written consent from the participants, or their parents/ carers at any stage. In support of this action, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998 allow the Youth Justice Board and youth offending teams to disclose the personal details of the young people to local/national evaluators for the purposes of statutory research and monitoring if it contributes to 'the prevention or detection of crime'.

These caveats, which preclude the active consent of participants may create administrative benefits for research co-ordinators, but perhaps overlook the ethical

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<sup>43</sup> The Regional Evaluators were eight full-time researchers, located around England and Wales and tasked with the job of collecting and monitoring data for the original evaluation of ISSP during 2001-3. I was the Regional Evaluator for the North West region.

- and methodological - need to engage interviewees. Both Bakardjieva and Feenberg (2000) and Hudson and Bruckman (2002) have provided examples where research participants expressed a sense of violation when they discovered their consent had not been sought before researchers collected data from them. Certainly youth justice research falls into unusual territory; informed consent is a central ethical principle for research with human participants (Greig et al, 2007), although the ways in which these ethical issues are tackled in practice with children and young people can be very different (Greig et al, 2007; Tisdall et al, 2009), particularly where the young people involved are youth offenders<sup>44</sup>.

Second, the Regional Evaluators felt that at the start of ISSP, young people were made subject to a wide range of practice, administrative and research based assessments. Concerns were raised that young people were over-burdened (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) and left unable to differentiate between a confidential interview and a social work assessment. Furthermore, the Regional Evaluators indicated that young people often did not comprehend the boundaries of the research, and suggested more could have been done to test the interview schedule and improve information to ensure that the exercise was better understood by participants.

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<sup>44</sup> Conventionally, legislation states that those under 18 are not legally competent to provide consent (Greig et al, 2007), and in many cases their passive consent or assent is sought, once their parents or carers have been consulted. There is on-going debate surrounding these issues (c.f. Jason et al, 2001; Tisdall et al, 2009). To date there is little consensus in the literature or society ethical guidelines over preferred methods. Nevertheless, the Youth Justice Board is currently able to circumvent the matter of consent.

### 4.3 Retracing and making contact with the sample

Taking these previous experiences and learning from them, this study understood the complexity and the sensitivity of the research topic. Seven years on from the sample's ISSP sentence, the young people were now young adults, which raised a host of ethical considerations. Re-contacting people and asking them about their views and experiences of crime necessarily entails the disclosure of personal and sensitive material. This has implications, not only relating to the exploitation of participant's vulnerabilities for the sake of the project (Skeggs, 1994); but also in terms of the personal, emotional and social effects of recalling distressing or deleterious childhood memories. As the sole researcher, I had the power and responsibility to define the research space, to steer the agenda and control the information produced. I was aware that some members of the sample may not wish to be reminded of a period of childhood offending, may not appreciate being contacted out of the blue and may wish to withhold their past from people who were now in their lives. As such, drafting the invitations was a particularly sensitive task. It was decided at an early stage that the cover letter would not include references to youth or criminal justice bodies (in case the letters were not opened by the intended recipients), only that they had taken part in an intensive government-funded pilot programme, making clear there was no obligation to be involved. Given the educational needs and low reading ages of the participants<sup>45</sup>, it was also crucial to ensure the invitations were written in an accessible format; where young people were known to be dyslexic, letters were sent on coloured

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<sup>45</sup> Twenty-nine per cent of school-age cases had a 'Statement' of special educational needs (n=891) and the average reading age of the cohort was 10.9, approximately 5.3 years behind their chronological age (n=660).

paper. Finally, letters and emails were only sent where I was confident that the young person was still living at the given address or had regular access to on-line social-networks where some participants had been located.

In order to maximise replies and facilitate an age-appropriate discussion forum, a Facebook page was set-up with information on the project, which included my picture and contact details (email/ mobile phone). This allowed young people to find out more information about the study, interact with me and leave private or public messages, as they saw fit. This proved to be a useful means for making and sustaining contact. As expected a number of people did not want to take part in the research; two young women were able to get in touch and explain their grounds for refusal (one had moved to Ireland, and another had a young family and had “moved on”) I was able to reassure both of them that no further contact would be made.

#### **4.4 Incentives**

The invitation also included details of an incentive payment. I was keen to recompense participants for their time and commitment, which would be considerable, given the chosen research methods. While there is controversy about the provision of incentive payments to offenders in terms of rewarding illegal behaviour (Smoyer et al., 2009) or being coercive, especially to vulnerable populations (McNeill, 1997; Halpern, 2011;) my own belief was that providing some form of payment was an effective means of communicating respect for participants,

regardless of their criminal history. It also underlined the importance of the project, had the potential to reduce non-response bias<sup>46</sup> (Groves and Peytcheva, 2008) and would increase participation (Cobanoglu and Cobanoglu, 2003; Festinger et al, 2008). Indeed, research often requires participants to make special efforts, and incentives are a clear signal that the participant's sacrifices are recognised and appreciated (Hanson et al, 2012).

#### **4.5 Researcher safety**

Once the interviewees were secured, safety planning was an essential next step. Some of the participants had convictions for serious violent offences, or had been involved with organised criminal networks. Not only were there concerns about the safety and protection of the research participants, but it was possible that conducting this study might also put me at personal risk. Eventually an office based in the 'Young People's Advisory Service', in the city centre of Liverpool was located. With the benefit of a secure lobby and receptionist, this space provided a protected, impartial, quiet and accessible place to carry out the interviews. All interviews that took place in prison were also conducted in a private and quiet office. In all cases, both the participants and I were accompanied by staff to the office to ensure our safety.

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<sup>46</sup> Participants who volunteer for unpaid research would be expected to differ psychologically from those who volunteer for research offering incentives (Rush et al, 1978; Sharp et al, 2006).

#### 4.6 Approaching the interviews as a collaborative exercise

In participating in the biographical style of research that this study entails, most of the young men interviewed were entering into unfamiliar territory. While many had been involved in research and various criminal justice assessments, none had encountered the open-ended 'life-history' interview, which involves very few directed questions. Consequently, initial contact was important in setting the tone of the interview. It was also necessary to do this without pre-defining youth offending as a 'problem' or leading them to recount stories they thought I might be anticipating. From the outset I stressed my interest was on ISSP, but also their broad views and experiences growing up. Many of the interviewees began their life story at the point at which they started ISSP, but most digressed broadly from this topic over the course of the two interviews.

Because of the in-depth nature of the research method and the sequencing of arranging and conducting two separate interviews, it was inevitable that participants would ask me about myself. As Hammersley and Atkinson have noted; "it is hard to expect 'honesty' and 'frankness' while never being frank and honest about oneself" (1995:91). Throughout the interviews the young men were curious about my role, my opinions and my personal life. Generally, I did my best to respond to questions in an informative and friendly way, minimising self-disclosure and directing 'informal chats' before and after the interview around more neutral topics. Similarly, in conducting the research I did not want to be seen to be reacting in way that would indicate alarm or personal judgement which might inhibit their

narratives. However, unlike the original evaluation (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005), the present study stirred up a myriad of painful, intimate and shocking disclosures, including violence; physical and sexual abuse; homelessness; drug addiction; exploitation and murder. The importance of remaining 'reflexive' and recognising my own emotional reactions to the participants was critical in this regard. As Coffey argues, "The memory that is brought to bear is both uniquely biographical and collective. The personal experience of autobiographical memory is through social shared resources" (1999:127).

Researchers approach their work as professionals, but also individuals with emotional investments and personal histories. On most occasions the interviews were enjoyable and rewarding, but also draining. Particularly since I had met the majority of these young men as children; seeing them seven to nine years later, in a more exposed light, often in very vulnerable positions in their lives was a poignant experience. Acknowledging the intensity of the emotions involved in the study of youth offending is vital for researchers as it enables us to analyse reflexively the differences between the values of the self and those of the other (Stanko, 1997). For these reasons extensive notes about my own feelings and responses towards the young people were dictated, and I later reflected on these reactions and how they might affect my interpretation of the interview with supervisors and colleagues. All participants were also invited to reflect on the experience of sharing their life-story; how the process had made them feel and whether they were (or were not) comfortable with what they had shared. Many of the young men

maintained that taking part in the research had enabled them to return to their early experiences and gain a better understanding of themselves. Others felt positive about contributing to research and believed they had useful reflections to impart.

#### **4.7 Renegotiating confidentiality**

While confidentiality was discussed prior to the commencement of the interviews, it was essential to constantly *renegotiate* this agreement throughout the interview encounter, to ensure participants felt empowered to control what might or might not make it to publication. When sensitive stories or disclosure that might risk their identification emerged, participants were reminded that they had the right to remove sections or even the entire interview from the study. Although no one accepted this offer, many participants expressed some conflict about how much they felt able to reveal; some harboured stories or had information of a delicate or criminal nature that left perceptible gaps in their stories. Clearly, some cases were adept at monitoring the level of detail revealed in their accounts, with names, places and timings carefully omitted. This pattern was often acknowledged by some participants who admitted they would not be able to provide specifics, even though they may have wished to. Indeed, I got the sense that two or three cases felt emotionally burdened by their memories, and appreciated an opportunity to talk through their experiences. In addition to the 'de-brief' at the end of each interview, participants were also offered an advice sheet with information on relevant help lines and sources of support.

#### 4.8 Disclosure and management of sensitive data

Notably, while all participants had been warned at the outset that I was under legal obligations to disclose information pertaining to unsolved child protection offences; the physical abuse of vulnerable adults; money laundering and other crimes covered by prevention of terrorism legislation, in the main, participants were less concerned about police detection than being identified as 'grassing' on members of organised criminal networks that might invoke violent or otherwise devastating consequences. The data gleaned from this study often included highly sensitive information about individuals and agencies, including references to criminal events. The style and approach of the previous evaluation had not provided a space for participant-led elaboration; as such it was not clear the extent to which some members of the cohort were embedded in violent gang-related conflicts.

Unforeseen, but critical ethical issues relating to the unique vulnerabilities of persistent and serious young offenders thus reared up through the course of the study. It was decided that extra safety procedures would need to be put in place to protect the identities of the participants and ensure their trust in the research process. All raw data had names and identifying factors removed from their storage files; names and explicit details of events would be changed in dissemination and aside from the thesis, whose distribution could be strictly controlled, all future publications utilising this data would remove explicit references to the research site.

During the course of these interviews a series of vivid and unanticipated stories emerged which unveiled significant details about the everyday lives these young people experienced as children and now adults. Another unexpected topic was the disclosure of sexual and physical abuse by adults in positions of authority; one young man reported he had been the victim of sexual abuse in a care-home aged fifteen, while five of the nine participants from the qualitative sample volunteered<sup>47</sup> personal memories of physical violence and bullying by the police when they were children<sup>48</sup>. Obvious dilemmas arose from these revelations, particularly whether to disclose the alleged brutality by the police to a wider audience (the incident of sexual abuse had been reported to the police and ISSP staff had noted details of this serious incident). It was impossible to further corroborate these accounts; moreover, the study was not designed to garner police treatment of the sample, so there would be no space to include their response to these accusations. Exploring the ethical issues relating to observation of police violence by ethnographers, Westmarland (2001) advises that in the absence of clear guidance, personal moral judgements are often the only resource that a researcher has to decide whether the tactics reportedly used by the police were 'excessive' and whether their behaviour was violent or brutal and thus unjustifiable. Since in all alleged cases of physical violence and bullying employed by members of Merseyside Police Force the cases

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<sup>47</sup> Readers should be reminded that a life-history interview includes no structured questions (Gadd and Jefferson (2007).

<sup>48</sup> In line with the National Children's Bureau (2003) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 1) definition, the term 'children and young people' refers to all persons under the age of 18 years.

were children, and similar incidents were mentioned independently by over 50% of the sample, it was decided that these stories should be reported in the thesis.

The possession of audio material and transcripts raises additional 'data protection' responsibilities (see Appendix B for full details of the ethical applications relating to this study). Since audio files can identify people, even if pseudonyms are used, the study needed to reassure interviewees that all data was kept completely secure. After the interviews the files were kept in a digital format and encrypted on a secure server in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. After completion of the study all audio files will be destroyed. Anonymised transcripts were my primary material, and permission was sought for their archiving. They have been kept securely; password protected on a secure server. For auditing purposes some real names have been kept, for example on receipts for expenses and consent forms, and these have been lodged securely and separately.

#### **4.9 The politics of representation**

It is increasingly common for researchers to reflect upon how their personal biography shapes the nature of relations that are formed in the field and the kind of material that is collected and represented in publication (King and Wincup, 2000; Burman et al, 2001). It is impossible to provide an objective account unmediated by the process of research (Burman et al, 2001). Stories do not remain unchanged, but are refined, edited and interpreted away from the unique social relationship

context in which they were revealed. Coming to conclusions about the participants and the data they produce is always a “political, contested and unstable activity” (Maynard and Purvis, 1994:7). Working the wealth of biographical data into a thesis inevitably places greater emphasis upon certain aspects at the expense of others. Similarities in individual accounts become condensed and moved into thematic-based discussions. Decisions had to be made over what exactly, and how much of the data would make it to publication. This is what Renzetti and Lee (1993) refer to as the ‘politics of disclosure’. As a researcher I had to reconcile the shift from immersing myself in the private lives of the young people stories, the minutia of which are often hidden from public view, to collating and organising their narratives into organised summaries for a wider audience and academic dissemination. Edwards and Ribbens (1998) describes this process as being at the edges of two social worlds and highlights the inevitable tension this creates.

Likewise, Bourgois (2003) stresses that any examination of the socially marginalised encounters serious problems with the politics of representation. Many of the concerns he raises in his ethnography of crack users in El Barrio are pertinent to this study, in particular the potential for the interviews and case studies to be misunderstood and misrepresented by external reader’s eyes. It is possible that the depictions of youth culture in Liverpool contained herein will be read as hostile portrayals of young people or feed into existing negative spatial stereotypes (Walklate and Evans, 1999; Belcham, 2000; Garcia, 2006). Popular representations of persistent and serious young offenders often emphasise the spectacle of violence

and moral degradation - descriptions that are frequently laced with condemnation (Burney, 2005; France, 2007). Since the 1990's fears about the notion of an anti-work, anti-social and welfare-dependent culture began to emerge (Garland, 2001). This new 'dangerous' 'underclass', whilst highly controversial, has had a remarkable influence on the politics and policies of governments in the UK and the US (McDonald, 1997) as well as the public psyche (Farrall et al, 2009). The ubiquity of the persistent young (Scouse) offender has a reputation that precedes him (see Section 9.9), and while my accounts of these young people contains empathy, concern and sometimes humour, it also unveils stories of violence, poverty, betrayal and exploitation. However, I felt from an ethical and methodological perspective, it was important to fully explore the stories I was told, without censoring the more controversial details, to reflect, authentically, the culture and everyday lives of the young people who contributed to this study. After taking these precautions, whether readers fall prey to interpreting it in a voyeuristic or discriminatory fashion, is ultimately beyond my control.

As I have noted throughout this thesis, this central purpose of it is an attempt to get one's hands dirty and extract the more detail, more flesh and more validity from the qualitative and quantitative data. Cross-sectional statistics and structured interviews can only take us so far, and cannot access, with any degree of accuracy, the people who survive childhoods marked by persistent offending. Many of those individuals have been marginalised socially, economically and culturally. They frequently distrust representatives of mainstream society and will not reveal more

than the basic details of their experiences to an unknown researcher within a structured interview schedule (c.f. Bourgois, 2003). Because of the amount of time I spent in Liverpool, studying intensive programmes and watching members of the qualitative sample grow-up I believe I have a unique insight into their lives and can confidently handle the data sympathetically, but truthfully and responsibly. As Ferrall and Hamm (1998) advise, researchers often have to draw on their personal, emotional and human resources which lie “beyond the orbit of traditional academic discourse” in order to be faithful to their work.

#### **4.10 Quantitative data security**

While the discussion above pertains most explicitly to the process of collecting and collating the qualitative data, many of the same over-riding principals apply to the handling of the quantitative data. Having access to the personal details and offending histories of the large ISSP cohort was a significant responsibility (see Appendix B for full details of the ethical applications relating to this study). In strict accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, all raw data was kept anonymously to protect the identities of the cohort, with each person given a unique code. All data files were then kept on password protected files on a user-protected secure server. Once the data was organised it was not transferred to any portable devices, it did not leave the secure facilities of the researcher and was not shared with any colleagues beyond the project. Keele University’s Research Governance Officer ensures that all data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant requirements or updates. Keele’s computer amenities are

subject to regular security checks and anti-virus up-dates. All servers are kept in locked facilities.

#### **4.11 Funding**

It should be noted that this study was part-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Youth Justice Board. While funding bodies can occasionally introduce potential bias by influencing the nature of the research questions and the presentation of the data, neither agencies had any say over the research design or theoretical thrust of the thesis. The Youth Justice Board's research manager was kept informed of the progress of the study once a year. A separate policy summary of the thesis has been drawn up for dissemination.

#### **4.12 Final thoughts**

Through my academic career I have worked with a number of large criminological data-sets. Alongside the various ISSP studies I have also completed projects using the British Crime Survey (BCS) (Farrall et al, 2009). From a personal experience, gaining access to criminal history data pertaining to young offenders, particularly in the earlier reconviction studies (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005), was a much more 'relaxed' process than requesting identifiers at the LSOA<sup>49</sup> (local) level from the BCS. To conduct low-level regional analysis (which would identify cases within a small area of approximately 1,500 people) with BCS data requires 'Special Licence'

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<sup>49</sup> A LSOA is a geographical area designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. They contain approximately 1500 people each. There are 32,482 LSOAs in England.

access<sup>50</sup>. Prospective users of Special Licence data must be accredited by the UK Statistics Authority as an Approved Researcher (UK Data Archive, 2012). Access is subject to express permission by the Home Office and requires researchers to adhere to exceptionally strict conditions of use. Data is usually only available for short periods of time, after which it must be destroyed. Often data can only be analysed in a private (not shared) office and the user must not have live internet links while the data are unencrypted on the machine (UK Data Archive, 2012). Failure to adhere to the conditions can result in the immediate termination of the licence holder's access to the data, which may be permanent. Depending on the severity of the breach, fines and/or imprisonment can also be applied as well as individual or institutional sanction from ESRC funding and institutional suspension from all ESRC data services (UK Data Archive, 2012).

Conversely, the request for individual criminal histories from the Police National Computer for a national cohort of children for the 24-month reconviction study (Gray et al, 2005), was sent to me after a brief email exchange, by 2nd class mail with a simple password. At the time of data collection for this thesis, stricter guidelines were in place at the Ministry of Justice (my application had to commit to keeping the data secure and confidential and it was received in an encrypted format) (see Appendix B.3). However, the comparison between the security regarding personally identifiable data on persistent and serious young offenders

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<sup>50</sup> The Office for National Statistics (ONS), in collaboration with the UK Data Archive and ESDS Government, developed a 'Special Licence' to provide access to social survey datasets that were detailed, yet anonymised. The original licence was launched in September 2005. Later, the 2007 Statistics and Registration Service Act applied a legal framework for its use (UK Data Archive, 2012).

and low-level geographical markers on anonymous members of the public was startling.

Another notable experience took place during the final stages of this thesis. Since the study has been a joint funded exercise with the ESRC and the Youth Justice Board, members of the Board felt compelled to warn Merseyside Police Force of the historical accusations of bullying and violence towards children in the event of a policy summary of the study being published<sup>51</sup>. Merseyside Police Force then issued me with an unprecedented request for the names and details of the young people who made the allegations, my research notes and the dates and time frames of the alleged abuse. I refused this request and explained the legal and ethical grounds for doing so, which they reluctantly accepted<sup>52</sup>. As Westmarland, (2001) argues, the issue of ethics in public life is becoming more prominent, particularly for the Police who are eager to protect their professional reputation. I can only speculate what they intended to do with my research notes and the names and details of the cohort, although it was suggested that the Merseyside Police Force were entitled to address the claims. Nevertheless, it struck me as a bold and presumptuous request.

Similarly I cannot elaborate as to why personal data concerning vulnerable young people was not subject to a series of tighter conditions. It is possible that these

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<sup>51</sup> A Youth Justice Board policy summary would not name Merseyside Police Force, since all publications relating to this project, aside from the thesis will remain regionally ambiguous.

<sup>52</sup> Due to data protection it has not been possible to include a copy of the email exchange in an appendix.

circumstances reflect broader sensibilities about the various actors in the criminal justice arena; persistent young offenders (who merit little ethical consideration) the police (who defend) and BCS-identified victims (who need to be protected). Arguably, public opinion in England and Wales has not been conducive to the idea of promoting suspects and offenders rights generally (Gray, 2005, 2009, 2011). Monaghan asserts that "...with regard to youth justice, there remains considerable ambiguity of commitment to rights and a significant level of infringement and outright denial... respect for children's rights is selective and, arguably, discriminatory" (2005: 47).

More pragmatically, Munro (2007) makes the point that recent trends in criminal justice and social work with children demands cross-professional collaboration, with greater information sharing<sup>53</sup>. This she claims, poses unacknowledged problems for ethical matters of confidentiality and consent. She points out that professionals are now more used to getting access to a wealth of information on a young person and their family. Such is the professional expectation for this data, government guidance only mentions confidentiality and privacy in a negative light as an "obstacle" (Munro, 2007:50). However, the importance of privacy and confidentiality should not be overlooked; there is a substantial body of research that shows that people value a confidentiality when seeking statutory help and will withhold information if

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<sup>53</sup> For example the Common Assessment Framework is a shared assessment tool for use across all children's services and all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision. It was introduced in 2006 (CWDC, 2007). Similarly, Youth Offending Teams were established by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act; they are multi-agency teams which are co-ordinated by the Local Authority and overseen by the Youth Justice Board in order to deliver services to young people in the criminal justice system.

they are unsure that disclosures will be kept private (Wattam, 1999; Hallett et al, 2003). Likewise, studies of children's views of the new information sharing protocols have produced a consistent message from young people; while they accept the need to breach confidentiality in particular circumstances (i.e. a risk of significant harm), breaching it for other problems is considered intrusive and may deter young people from asking adults for help (CRAE, 2006; Hilton and Mills, 2006).

In this respect (and others), taking a critical approach to ethics allows us to go beyond the sum of the data collected for this study. *What happened* to the participants when they grew up – is only part of the story. Examining in detail how our knowledge of this group of offenders is constructed and managed over time by various players in the criminal justice system is telling, and has the potential to reveal much about how we relate to persistent and serious young offenders more generally. Engaging with this population of offenders entails a negotiation with society's broader attitudes towards crime, youth justice, young people and the health of our communities (Girling et al, 2000; Farrall et al, 2009). This is a challenge for methodology, but as Liebling and Stanko (2001) advise; effective research must be grounded in investments in innovation and reflexivity, and create opportunities to challenge our a priori knowledge and assumptions.

## **Part 2 The long-term trajectories of ISSP: Results from the quantitative data**

### **Chapter 5: a preface to the sample and data**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 2 the debates surrounding persistent offenders and youth justice were examined alongside the limitations of narrowly focused, short-term evaluative studies. Hitherto, quantitative researchers have struggled to find convincing evidence of the effectiveness of intensive programmes; in fact, the results often tell us more about the complexity of studying this group of offenders, who by definition are accompanied by a convoluted range of meso, micro and macro influences. Studies have been impeded by methodologies that suffer from inadequate internal and external validity. Some have concluded that we ought to be approaching the topic at hand in a rather different manner – both theoretically and methodologically. This chapter takes up that challenge and, through the use of the longitudinal data and structural equation modelling, it begins to explore whether long-term statistical techniques can reveal a more comprehensive picture about the impact of intensive community programmes.

To these ends, the following chapters embark on a series of tasks. First, in Chapter 5 we return to the sample of young people on ISSP and explore aspects of their

individual, familial and social background - given the relevance of these variables to the subsequent analysis. In doing so, acknowledgements of potential measurement errors are highlighted. Indeed, much this thesis is concerned with methodological rigour as it is the substantive concerns. In chapters 6 and 7 we turn to the long-term offending histories of the ISSP and comparison groups and subject the data to a series of in-depth analyses. In particular, the steps taken to examine the data are presented in sequential order:

1. Bivariate and multivariate regression analysis of (a) the *frequency* and (b) *seriousness* of offending, using the ISSP sample in contrast to a comparison group.
2. Bivariate and multivariate regression analysis of *reconviction* rates in contrast to a comparison group.
3. Latent growth curve modelling of the (a) *frequency* and (b) *seriousness* of offending in contrast to a comparison group.
4. Group analysis using mixture modelling of the ISSP group.

Finally, from a strictly quantitative perspective, the chapter considers the value of reconviction studies and policy evaluations in relation to the example discussed herein.

Full details of the methodology have been expanded upon in chapter 3.

## 5.2 The ISSP Sample: a quantitative introduction

The majority (90%, n=1614) of the young people on ISSP were male, with a mean age of 16.2 years at the start of the programme<sup>54</sup>. Approximately four in five were of white ethnic origin (84%, n=1426), but the variability in ethnic background was much more pronounced in certain areas of the country, notably London. Analysis revealed that the young people on ISSP had a mean of 7.7 recorded offences (offences captured on the police national computer) one year before commencing ISSP<sup>55</sup>. Standard deviations and minimum and maximum values also indicate that there was considerable variation within the sample, suggesting it was capturing a 'persistent'<sup>56</sup>, but not homogenous population (see Table 5.1). Examining the data two years before ISSP reveals that the vast majority of the sample had been convicted of offences (85%, n=1517), albeit at a lower intensity; during this year the ISSP cohort had an average of 3.5 offences. This indicates the sample's offending behaviour had intensified in the year before commencing ISSP, although the majority had extended criminal histories. Indeed, the mean age at first conviction was 12.6 (n=1789) – 3.5 years (on average) before starting ISSP.

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<sup>54</sup> Sample sizes for key variables in included in Appendix E.

<sup>55</sup> These figures relate exclusively to the sample used in the subsequent reconviction study and have excluded those who were lost to custody.

<sup>56</sup> The sample might be considered persistent in the sense that they met the earliest criteria for ISSP, but as detailed in the following chapters notions and definitions of persistence change on a regular basis and over time (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002; Garside, 2004), indeed the recent guidance for the new ISS is both lower and less specific that the original (See Chapter 1).

**Table 5.1: Recorded offending frequency within the ISSP sample prior to the intervention**

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	St. Deviation
<b>Recorded offences 1 year prior (n=1789)</b>	1	46	7.7	7	4.7
<b>Recorded offences 2 years prior (n=1517)</b>	1	25	3.5	3	3.4
<b>Recorded offences 3 years prior (n=964)</b>	1	28	3.5	3	3.5
<b>Age at first conviction (n=1789)</b>	10	17.1	12.6	13	1.6

The most common index offence was burglary of a dwelling (23.1%, n=411) or robbery (20%, n=357). The mean gravity score of the sample's index offence (not to be confused with mean score of most serious offence over the year) was 4.9 (n=1598) - on the Youth Justice Board's eight-point seriousness scale (See Appendix C). For context of sentencing patterns during this time period, analysis of sentencing data from all Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales in 2001 demonstrated that 25% of those young people committing a gravity five offence received a custodial sentence, with 65% receiving a community sentence. The corresponding proportions for gravity six offences were 43% (custody) and 50% (community) (Moore et al, 2006).

### 5.3 Previous involvement in the criminal justice system

One of the benefits of this follow-up study was the ability to collect additional data and formulate new independent variables for exploration. One such variable was 'time spent in custody'; PNC data provides details on the length of any custodial sentence, however since it does not contain release dates, these were estimated. The assumption was that half the sentence period was spent in custody on juvenile custodial orders (DTO). Of those young people whose offending career had begun 2% (n=32) had been subject to a custodial detention three years before ISSP, while 9% (n=160) were detained two years prior to ISSP and 28% (n=509) one year before. Table 5.2 demonstrates the length of the average custodial detention before ISSP. From this we can gauge that these sentences were not the shortest available to the respective courts (i.e. a four month DTO – 60 days in custody), in fact the average sentence one year before ISSP was 140 days – which equates to a ten-month DTO, on average.

**Table 5.2: Average length of custodial sentences (in days) prior to ISSP**

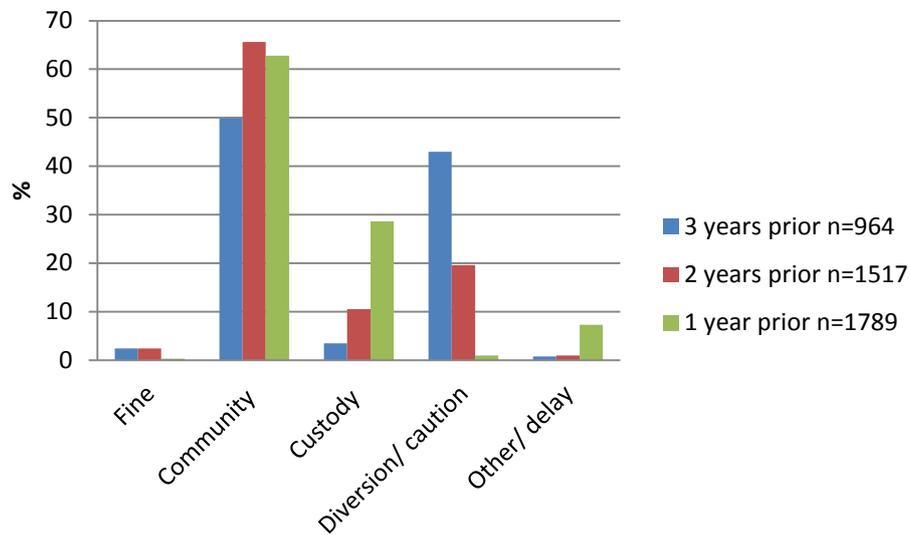
	Min	Max	Mean	St. Deviation
<b>1 year prior (n=509)</b>	10	880	140.0	102.8
<b>2 years prior (n=160)</b>	9	540	102.9	76.6
<b>3 years prior (n=32)</b>	1	270	112	70.7

To demonstrate the advancement of young people up the sentencing tariff prior to ISSP, figure 5.1 illustrates the most serious sentencing outcome among active offenders at one, two and three years before commencing the programme. Naturally, custody was considered the most serious disposal, followed by community-based sentences (with practitioner intervention), then fines, while diversion and cautions were considered the least serious sentencing result. As would be expected, diversion, cautions and fines become less frequent as the sample moved nearer to their ISSP sentence (and subsequent definition as a persistent and/or serious offender), while the use of community and custodial orders increased exponentially. According to sentencing law, previous convictions may be treated as factors which increase the seriousness of an offence currently before the court, since a persistent offender is considered more culpable than a first-time offender. This legal principle, made explicit in the Criminal Justice Act 2003, can be applied to both children and adults. In addition, the relevance of previous convictions to custodial sentencing was made clear by the Powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000, under which a DTO can only be passed on a child aged 12-14 if their offending was 'persistent', although there was no accompanying explicit definition of 'persistence'. In sum, these results indicate that, on average the cohort had extensive experience of various criminal justice disposals before ISSP, underlining the existence of a 'recidivist premium'<sup>57</sup> among the sample.

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<sup>57</sup> All jurisdictions, whether common or civil law, punish repeat offenders more severely. The 'Recidivist Sentencing Premium' holds that offenders with previous convictions should be considered more blameworthy and deserving of harsher punishments (Roberts, 2008).

**Figure 5.1: Distribution of most the serious sentencing outcomes among active offenders prior to ISSP**



#### 5.4 Exploring Asset

The body of work covering ‘risk and protective factors’ and associated estimates of reconviction (see Baker et al, 2004; Baker, 2005) in criminal justice practice has received a mixed response from academics (Homel, 2005; Case, 2007). Advocates of this approach stress that it satisfies a need to identify “a unified explanatory edifice” (Smith, 2006b:83) as well as contributing structured and reliable material concerning the antecedents of youth (or adult) offending. Others argue its focus is too narrowly drawn onto static measurements of psycho-social factors (such as criminogenic attitudes or family set-up) at the expense of other important social, cultural and political contexts (Annison, 2005; Case, 2007). Methodologically, various personal and social characteristics identified by risk factor assessments are likely to be closely related and raise the issue of multicollinearity in subsequent

statistical analysis. This occurs when two or more predictor variables are highly correlated, for example the relationship between long-term substance misuse, offending and poor health. Case (2007) also warns that the notion of a common aetiology can over-simplify the complex interactions between various psycho-social factors, as well as further overstating the ability of youth justice practice to distinguish the causal influence of these potential 'risks'.

In youth justice practice the 'Asset' tool<sup>58</sup> is the main standardised risk/needs assessment used to guide intervention and justify professional decision-making<sup>59</sup>. Its capacity to predict reconviction is approximately 69% (Baker et al, 2002)<sup>60</sup>. Asset can be updated as a record of progress over time, so that changes can be tracked and appropriately responded to. It is the primary source of information used in the production of court reports and made available to secure establishments in advance of children being received into custody (Jacobson and Hough, 2010). According to the National Standards for Youth Justice Services (Youth Justice Board, 2010), Asset must be completed for all children subject to bail supervision and support; those for whom court reports (pre-sentence report and specific sentence report) have been

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<sup>58</sup> The Asset 'Core Profile' includes demographics and explores offence-related information (offence details, criminal history) and these are known as 'static' factors. In addition, there are 12 sections covering various aspects of a young person's life which may be related to offending. These factors are known as 'dynamic' in recognition of the fact that they can change over time. The 12 sections cover the following areas: living arrangements; family and personal relationships; education, training and employment; neighbourhood; lifestyle; substance use; physical health; emotional and mental health; perception of self and others; thinking and behaviour.

<sup>59</sup> Asset is completed by youth justice staff; it requires them to engage in interviews with the young person and their family, and a range of other sources to obtain information and make a series of judgements about the factors that affect their offending behaviours.

<sup>60</sup> Recently, evidence from the Juvenile Cohort Study advised that the predictive ability of Asset could be improved by replacing the Asset static component of the Scaled Approach with OGRS 3 (Offender Group Reconviction Scale 3 (OGRS 3)). OGRS was designed to be completed by practitioners to facilitate standardised assessment across adult probation services (Wilson and Hinks, 2011).

requested; and for those on custodial sentences at assessment, transfer to the community and closure stages.

While Asset lacks information on important psychological, cultural and political factors, it was used widely by criminal justice practitioners during the ISSP pilot and provides extensive information on the young person's individual circumstances. It is critical to highlight the limitations and reported concerns of this type of data, but it remains a valuable source of information to explore for the project herein, (particularly if used in combination with other data sources). Table 5.3 compares Asset data from the ISSP sample, with those from a national sample of young people subject to a wide range of youth justice interventions around the same time period (2000-2001). The 'national sample' had originally been selected to test the validity and reliability of Asset across a cohort of young people who encompassed a wide range of criminal histories and current offences (Baker et al. 2002). The concern here is not with examining their respective risk of *reconviction* per se, but to note the level of recorded concerns that practitioners had about each group's personal circumstances, since a high score on Asset represents both a risk of reconviction and assessment of underlying needs. In sum, the data demonstrates that members of the ISSP sample – on average - had a range of underlying needs, were socially excluded and represented some of the most difficult challenges the youth offending teams were tasked to address. As can be seen, the areas with the

greatest proportion of ‘high risk’<sup>61</sup> cases were lifestyle (68% n=1119), thinking and behaviour (64%), attitudes to offending (50%), and statutory education (45%).

**Table 5.3: Proportions of ‘high risk’/ ‘high need’<sup>†</sup> cases for ISSP sample and national sample**

Asset Section	ISSP Sample (max n=1119 <sup>62</sup> )	National Sample (max n=3159)	Difference	P-value
Attitudes to offending	50%	25%	+25%	***
Living arrangements.	35%	16%	+19%	***
Family and personal relationships	43%	22%	+21%	***
Statutory education	45%	16%	+29%	***
Employment and training	30%	9%	+21%	***
Lifestyle	68%	36%	+32%	***
Substance use	37%	18%	+19%	***
Emotional and mental health	23%	13%	+10%	***
Thinking and behaviour	64%	38%	+26%	***
Perception of self and others	33%	16%	+17%	***
Motivation to change	33%	15%	+18%	***

*Chi-square test confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

*<sup>†</sup>‘High risk’ or ‘high needs’ is classified as a score of 3 or 4 on a scale of 0-4.*

The Social Exclusion Unit (2005) uses the terminology of ‘complex needs’ to refer to those who face particularly severe disadvantage due to interlocking problems, with the total representing more than the sum of the parts. Many offenders on ISSP fell into this category, and their manifold difficulties, posed huge challenges to ISSP staff. Practitioners often felt that these underlying needs had not been addressed

<sup>61</sup> ‘High risk’ or ‘high needs’ is classified as a score of 3 or 4 on a scale of 0-4 (Baker et al, 2002).

<sup>62</sup> The n-size is reduced here since complete Asset information was not available on the full ISSP sample.

by other agencies, and that, in effect, ISSP was being used as a 'dumping ground' for those young people with the most entrenched problems (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005).

Expanding on the Asset data, nearly half the young people on ISSP were recorded as living in a deprived household (45%, n=411), 35% (n=331) absconded or regularly stayed away from home and 35% (n=323) were recorded as living with known offenders. Moreover, 28% (n=289) of the sample had experienced abuse in the home, while 27% (n=263) were recorded as having suffered a significant loss or bereavement. There were additional concerns that in many cases family members had significant problems in their own lives, which impacted upon the young person's situation. A quarter of young people were recorded as having a significant person in their life involved in illegal drug abuse (24%, n=250), 21% (n=224) involved in heavy alcohol abuse, and 43% (n=454) involved in criminal activity. While some families had previously approached other agencies for help, many had been unsuccessful and consequently they felt that they had been let down by statutory agencies (Moore et al, 204; Gray et al, 2005).

A considerable number of young people referred onto ISSP were not living within the family home. Fifteen percent were classified as having no fixed abode (n=120), and this lack of permanency, along with the offender's general chaotic lifestyles, were reported to cause significant problems for the practitioners. Thirteen per cent

(n=106) were accommodated in local authority care with the consent of their parents, 9% (n=70) were, at the time of assessment, subject to a care order and 6% (n=47) were placed on the child protection during the course of their ISSP. A further 11% (n=88) had previously been listed on the child protection register. Practitioners also expressed concerns that young people in care were more likely to be criminalised by typical teenage behaviour (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005). These results are typical of the corpus of research on persistent young offenders and 'looked after' children (Arnull et al, 2005; Harrington and Bailey, 2005; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). A recent report from the Criminal Justice Joint Inspectorate (2012) examined young offenders who were in care and accommodated away from their home area. They found the overall outcomes and future life chances for these children and young people were "extremely poor" (2012:4).

Just under half the young people on ISSP who were beyond compulsory school attending age were unemployed (58%, n=277<sup>63</sup>). Of those young persons of statutory school attending age, just 16% (n=170<sup>64</sup>) attended mainstream school, and 23% (n=221) had received no source of educational provision in the prior six months. Just over one quarter (27% n=186) of school-age cases had a 'Statement'<sup>65</sup> of special educational needs and 38% (n=302) had been subject to a permanent

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<sup>63</sup> The sample size is smaller here since young people under school age are removed from the section in Asset on employment and training. Likewise, those above school age do not answer questions on current education provision.

<sup>64</sup> See footnote above.

<sup>65</sup> A statement of special educational needs (SEN) is a legally binding statutory assessment and plan for a child's educational requirements (beyond the standard provision within mainstream school). It is conducted by an Educational Psychologist on behalf of the Local Authority.

exclusion. Of those who were in some form of education 14% (n=114) claimed they had suffered either current or previous bullying and 42% (n=337) reported having a bad relationship with education staff. Their average reading age was 10.9, approximately 5.3 years behind their chronological age (n=660<sup>66</sup>). The links between educational disaffection and youth crime are well established, with previous research finding non-attendees three times as likely to become involved in offending (Graham and Bowling, 1995). Similarly, in a survey across the secure estate Tye (2009) found that 88% had been excluded from school. In this vein, ISSP practitioners indicated that boredom and lack of structure, which resulted from a lack of regular schooling, was directly linked to many of the young people's offending behaviour. Some young people had been out of education for extended periods and ISSP practitioners were highly critical of the local education authorities' treatment of these young people's cases. As the Audit Commission (2004) has highlighted, it is not exceptional for excluded pupils to have to wait up to a year for alternative provision to be identified.

Use of drugs was common according to both the ISSP staff and the young people themselves. Two thirds of young people had tried cannabis (n=711). Of the drugs most commonly associated with acquisitive crime, 9% (n=100) of the ISSP sample were known to have used heroin, 7% (n=82) were known to have used cocaine, and 6% (n=66) were known to have used crack cocaine. Fourteen per cent (n=117) were perceived by the youth offending team as engaging in practices with drugs or

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<sup>66</sup> A reading test was administered during the ISSP evaluation to around half the young people.

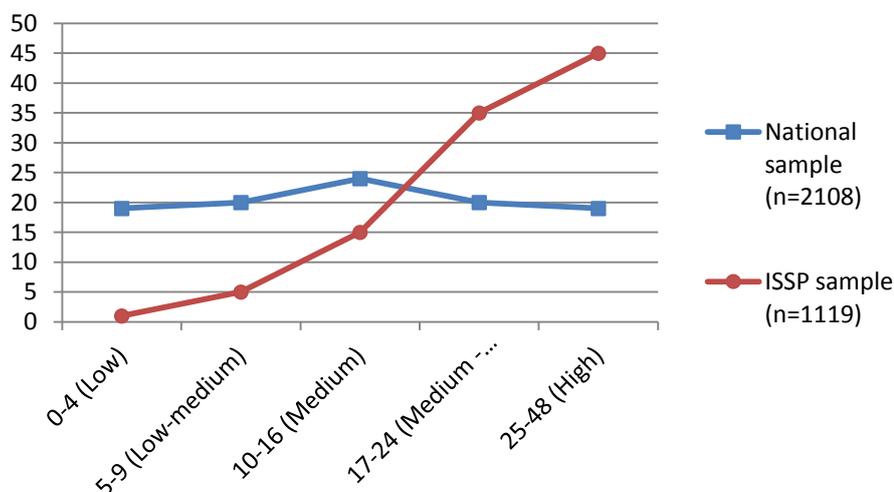
alcohol which put them at particular physical risk. There were regional differences however, with some schemes finding alcohol misuse to be a significant problem, other schemes facing largely cannabis problems, and a few schemes finding considerable problems with the misuse of class A drugs (Moore et al, 2004). It is also worth noting that these estimates are likely to be conservative. The original evaluation of ISSP discovered a 'disclosure effect' in relation to both substance misuse and emotional health (Moore et al, 2004). This phenomenon recognises that in some areas, practitioners are over-reliant on the honesty of offenders who might conceal information about illicit behaviours at the commencement of an intervention. However, over the course of a programme, during which trust is developed, a young person may reveal more about the true extent of their activities perhaps increasing the professional's assessment of the problem. Indeed, various studies of structured assessments have found that, in areas such as substance use, offenders may under-report problems at the beginning of an intervention that later they disclose more readily (Raynor et al. 2000).

Around the time of the ISSP pilot, the Audit Commission (2004) reported a significant rise in the number of young people with mental health problems, and ISSP workers found undiagnosed mental health problems in many cases. A notable number of young people were experiencing emotional difficulties such as phobias, eating disorders or sleeping disorders (12%, n=124). Fifteen per cent (n=154) were said to be deliberately self-harming and 17% (n=178) were considered 'vulnerable' because of current self-harming behaviour and suicidal feelings. Most prominently,

46% (n=487) were said to be struggling emotionally with current life circumstances. Again, these findings are commensurate with the existing literature; Kroll et al (2002) examined the mental health needs of boys (age 12-17) in secure care and found high levels of psychiatric morbidity. One third was depressed prior to custody and depression and anxiety levels remained high after admission. Brooker and Fox (2009) reported that over half their sample of children in custody had been in contact with or been referred to mental health services, around one in five had previously attempted suicide and two in five had self-harmed. Douglas and Plugge (2006) found 71% of the girls they interviewed in the secure estate had some level of psychiatric disturbance.

The total Asset score is obtained by adding together the twelve section ratings, providing a score from 0-48. The Asset validation study (Baker et al. 2002) demonstrates that the higher this score, the greater the associated risk of reconviction. The mean rating for the young people coming onto ISSP was 24 which is at the very top-end of the 'medium-high' score band. Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of total Asset scores for the ISSP sample. These values are compared to those of the same 'national sample' of young people as used in Table 5.3. As can be seen, nearly half of the ISSP sample fell within the high score band, compared to one-fifth of the national sample. This score band has a corresponding risk of reconviction within twelve months of 76%. Furthermore, 8% (n=90) of the ISSP cases scored 35 or more on Asset, which corresponds to a risk of reconviction within twelve months of 84%.

**Figure 5.2: Total Asset score bands for ISSP and national samples**



ISSP was thus successful, on the whole, in targeting young offenders who had pronounced underlying needs and an accompanying high risk of reconviction (adhering to the ‘What Works’ principle of ‘risk classification’ – the evidence-base on which ISSP was premised<sup>67</sup>). This is worth noting, since a standard concern that arises from the use of ‘alternatives to custody’ is the risk of ‘net-widening’. Cohen (1985) identified this process as an unintended effect of increasing the capacity of less severe sentencing options - that only serves to draw more people, specifically, less persistent offenders into the higher echelons of the criminal justice ‘net’<sup>68</sup>. This can be a particular problem in youth justice, because if young people are perceived by sentencer’s as ‘failing’ their ‘last chance’ on an intensive community penalty they

<sup>67</sup> Meta-analytic studies have revealed considerable variations in the ‘effectiveness’ of criminal justice interventions in terms of reducing reoffending. This has in turn, led to the development of the ‘What Works’ guidance which has sought to identify aspects of the most effective programmes (McGuire, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> Raynor (2012) reports that ‘net-widening’ is not an inevitable consequence of the provision of community-based alternatives to prison. He points out that there was indeed clear evidence that suspended sentences had contributed to a greater use of imprisonment in the 1970’s (Bottoms, 1980). However ‘tariff escalation’ did not occur following the expansion of community sentences in the 1980’s. Among adults, probation began to accommodate a more heavily convicted group of offenders (Home Office, 1992).

may be further exposed to custodial sanctions (a disposal the Youth Justice Board has been keen to limit the use of since its inception<sup>69</sup>). Moreover, evidence from the previous ISSP study suggests that use of intensive supervision with young people who were not eligible<sup>70</sup> was counter-productive. In terms of subsequent offending they performed significantly worse on frequency as compared to 'persistent' offenders and significantly worse than 'serious' offenders when gravity scores were considered (Moore et al, 2004).

These considerations pose concern for the recent lowering of the ISS eligibility threshold (see Section 1.3). Since the inception of ISSP in 2001, the eligibility criteria have been broadened several times. Relaxing the previously strict and nationally consistent rules runs the risk of ISS being used with young people who would have previously received a conventional community penalty rather than with those who would otherwise have received a custodial sentence. This problem is compounded by the available evidence that suggests intensive supervision is less effective with less persistent or less serious offenders (Moore et al, 2004).

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<sup>69</sup> Reduction in the use of custody was not a stated aim of ISSP, however, there were expectations that the sort of provision ISSP represented would be able avert young people away from the custodial estate (Gray et al, 2005). Later, reducing custodial placements was one of the Youth Justice Board's corporate targets from 2005-8, but it was later exchanged in favour of an objective to provide 'safe and effective use of custody' for the subsequent corporate plan (2008-11). Nevertheless it was stated that "The YJB remains concerned about the large number of children and young people in custody. Our programmes to make available robust alternatives to custody, and to develop sentencers' confidence in these alternatives, are critical to effective sentencing" (2008:1)

<sup>70</sup> As reported in Moore et al (2004) only a small proportion (2%) of young offenders subject to ISSP were not found to be within the eligibility criteria.

## 5.5 Persistence and seriousness

As discussed in Section 2.9 there is no commonly accepted definition of persistence, and differing demarcations have been employed. For example, prior to the launch of ISSP the government defined a persistent young offender as ‘a young person aged 10 to 17 years who has been sentenced by any criminal court in the UK on three or more occasions for one or more recordable offences and within three years of the last sentencing occasion’ (Home Office, 1997), whilst the Youth Lifestyles Survey 1998/99 defined a persistent young offender as ‘someone who, in the last year, had committed three or more offences (Home Office 2000). More recent guidance declared there was no legally recognised definition of persistence but that a young person was “likely to be found to be persistent where the offender has been convicted of, or made subject to a pre-court disposal that involves an admission or finding of guilt in relation to imprisonable offences on at least three occasions in the past 12 months” (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11).

The definition of persistence used for the targeting of ISSP however was more discriminating (see Section 1.2) requiring four or more ‘offending episodes’ in the prior year. The seriousness criterion added in 2002 also ensured that those young people who had committed the most serious offences were eligible for the programme. This criterion was restricted to those who had committed offences which were serious enough that an adult could receive a custodial sentence of fourteen years or more (Youth Justice Board, 2002), amended in 2005 to those offences which could attract a sentence of up to ten years for an adult. Seemingly,

the question of whether ISSP was suitable for both persistent and serious offenders was not explicitly addressed at the time of the revisions. This can be seen as indicative of the tendency for policy makers to treat persistent and serious offenders as a homogeneous high risk group which sits at the top-end of the offending spectrum.

It is imperative to note however that serious offenders differ significantly from their persistent counterparts in terms of their social-demographic status, offending behaviour and sentencing history<sup>71</sup>. Table 5.4 reveals that offenders meeting the persistence criterion for ISSP (Groups A and B) had greater 'underlying needs' (higher total Asset scores), and therefore a higher risk of re-offending, than offenders qualifying on grounds of seriousness but not persistence (Group C). The latter group were more likely to be female and of minority ethnic classification. Additionally, the evidence suggests that those groups who met the persistent criteria had greater experience of the criminal justice system, on average. Not only did they have more convictions, but they were also significantly more likely to have been made subject to secure detention than their 'serious only' counterparts, one two and three years before ISSP. Table 5.4 also demonstrates persistent and

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<sup>71</sup> The way persistent and serious young offenders are perceived by the court appears to have an impact on sentencing outcomes. Studying cases who were rejected for an extended 12 month ISSP Sutherland et al (2006) discovered a large proportion of those 'rejected' cases were convicted of 'serious' offences - specifically 'violence against the person' resulting in injury. This would indicate that, on a case-by-case level, there is a 'threshold of seriousness' that once crossed tends to result in a custodial sentence. Previous research has also found that sentencers see custody as inevitable once a certain upper limit is reached (NACRO, 2000).

persistent-serious offenders were significantly younger than serious-only offenders when they committed their first offence<sup>72</sup>.

Finally, the last two rows demonstrate how young people responded to the programme was mediated by their offender classification. This data demonstrates that the serious-only offenders were more likely to complete ISSP and less likely to leave or breach the conditions of their sentence by committing further offences. While it is tempting to assume these results are indicative of the serious-only sample's increased commitment to the programme, other authors have warned that 'less hardened' or lower risk offenders generally do not require the most intensive interventions. Cullen and Gendreau (2000) claim subjecting offenders at lower risk of reconviction to structured, intrusive programmes is "an imprudent use of scarce resources" (2000:147). Similarly, while the 'What Works' literature (McGuire, 1995) indicates that intensive programmes should be reserved for higher risk offenders, these cases were least likely to complete – a finding confirmed by this study. This suggests that if practitioners and policy makers wish to reserve intensive interventions for higher-risk offenders they may also have to accept lower completion rates.

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<sup>72</sup> It may be noted that at first glance the difference in 'age at first offence' between persistent-only and serious-only offenders, may be *significantly*, but not *substantially* different. It is possible that young people aged 12.7 and 13.2 would be in the same school year group. However, seven months as a proportion of a child's life has the potential to symbolise greater meaning than it might for an adult. Moreover research has stressed the significance of age in relation to long-term offending trajectories; "Since the Second World war, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of two defining moments in the development of someone's [criminal] career. Having a conviction is one of these and being given a custodial sentence is another" (Soothill et al, 2004:401) (c.f. Francis, 2007).

**Table 5.4: Comparison of criminal histories and personal characteristics by offender categories**

	Group A	Group B	Group C	P-value	P-value	P-value
	Persistent only (n=954)	Persistent and serious (n=522)	Serious only (n=313)	Persistent only vs. Persistent serious	Persistent only vs. Serious only	Persistent serious vs. Serious only
Mean age (in years)	16.3	16.1	16.1	** .001	* .009	n.s
% Female	8.5	8.8	15.3	n.s	** .001	* .003
% Minority ethnic group	9.5	14.3	37.5	* .005	*** .000	*** .000
Age at first conviction (in years)	12.7	12.6	13.2	n.s	*** .000	*** .000
Mean Asset score	24.2	22.9	18.5	* .022	*** .000	*** .000
Mean number of offences 1 year prior	9.1	8.3	2.4	** .01	*** .000	*** .000
Mean number of offences 2 years prior	3.9	3.4	2.3	* .015	*** .000	*** .000
Mean number of offences 3 years prior	3.5	3.8	2.7	n.s	* .018	* .008
Mean gravity score 1 year prior	4.7	6	6.1	*** .000	*** .000	*** .000
Mean gravity score 2 years prior	4	4	4.2	n.s	n.s	n.s
Mean gravity score 3 years prior	3.7	3.8	3.9	n.s	n.s	n.s
% Custodial disposal 1 year prior	4.8	4.3	0.5	n.s	*** .000	*** .000
% Custodial disposal 2 years prior	51	34.6	12.2	* .002	*** .000	*** .000
% Custodial disposal 3 years prior	31.8	29.7	16.3	n.s	* .004	* .012
% Completion of ISSP	55.4	49.7	77.2	* .031	*** .000	*** .000
% ISSP breached for fresh offences	10.3	10.3	2.9	n.s	*** .000	*** .000

*Tests of significance used are T-tests (interval data) and chi-square (nominal data). Asterisks indicate whether groups differ significantly (\*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level)*

These marked differences pose theoretical and methodological challenges for the study herein. On average, persistent offenders display disparate modes of offending behaviour, and they respond differently to the criminal justice system compared to serious-only offenders, both before and after an intervention. This makes the selection of a well-matched comparison group a complex challenge; as already stated, the comparison group employed in this study includes a greater proportion of serious-only offenders, who are more likely to have shorter criminal histories and lower post-intervention reconviction rates. Their better performance on reoffending measures must be understood in the context of their inherent lower risk. The ensuing modelling strategy aims, where possible to control for these differences and indeed towards the end of Chapter 7 a more detailed examination of the variation *within* the ISSP sample is attempted. However, the conflation of persistent and serious young offenders at a policy and practice level leaves methodological challenges for an evaluator; locating a compatible comparison group of persistent and serious young offenders, who typically have very complex and divergent criminal and personal histories, is especially difficult.

### **5.6 Methodological and theoretical blind spots**

Thus far we have learnt about the aggregate personal and offender-based characteristics of the ISSP sample. Finally, it is also important to recognise what we do not know about these young people, and what remaining 'blind spots' remain. As stated above, Asset assessments are first and foremost social work tools and much of the data collected by youth offending teams is focused on the young

person's individual psycho-social status and the procedural elements of their supervision. For some young people, individual characteristics and experiences may be the most important factor influencing their problematic behaviour; for others, it may be the environment in which they operate or a combination of the two (Wikström and Butterworth, 2006). But less is known about potential area-level correlates; the cultural identity of the areas in which the young people have grown up; the political and social context of their communities or the possible influence of alternative forms of social capital and neighbourhood resilience. The absence of robust environmental variables is problematic for the development of comprehensive and integrated theoretical and statistical models. Indeed, researchers working in the broader field of criminology recognise the importance of interaction effects, multilevel or hierarchical structures and complex relationships within quantitative data (c.f. Nagin and Tremblay, 1999; Nagin, 2005; Gray, 2011). It is very likely that a reciprocal process between macro, micro and meso variable affects persistent and serious youth offending, where some variables shape or mediate others in a mutual fashion. Yet we currently know surprisingly little about the nature of these relationships.

Recent studies by Wikström et al (2012) have used quantitative data to combine the role of personal and environmental differences in crime causation into a developed *integrated* theoretical framework.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, the Edinburgh Youth Transitions

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<sup>73</sup> 'Situational Action Theory' is a theory of moral action and crime that aims to integrate personal and environmental explanatory perspectives within one theoretical framework. It has sought to reinvigorate understanding of crime, crime causation and understanding of the role of development and change (Wikström, 2004, 2005; Wikström and Sampson, 2003).

study uses longitudinal quantitative data to go beyond the collection of static and narrowly-focussed variables, to explore the dynamic and variable nature of offending and *non-offending* behaviour among children brought up in similar social and political conditions (Smith and McVie, 2003; McAra and McVie, 2005, 2010a, 2010b, 2012). While this thesis does not have the capacity (or presumption) to replicate these innovative and pioneering studies it does aim to follow their leads and incorporate, where possible, further information on area-level data. To this end we now turn to the inclusion of statistics from the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

## 5.7 Multiple Deprivation

Chapter 3 provided details of new variables that were possible to incorporate in this study. Since the original database included the postcode of the young person's residence at the time of their ISSP, it was feasible to link that postcode with data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is an important resource for policy makers, academics and practitioners. Empirically led and theoretically sophisticated, the IMD maps out deprivation across England. Deprivation is a wider concept than poverty and refers to problems caused by a lack of resources and opportunities<sup>74</sup>. Specifically, the IMD is a measure of *multiple*

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<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that there are no IMD data available for Wales in 2004 so all of the information drawn from this variable refer only to England. There are versions of IMD for Wales (and Scotland), but they are not comparable between nations - the least deprived ward in Wales and least deprived ward in England may bear little resemblance to each other. IMD is also not available for the comparison group (see Appendix E). This poses particular problems within this study. While it is possible to use Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) to deal with the missing data in Amos, FIML assumes data is 'missing at random', which does not strictly apply in this context. However,

*deprivation* at the small area level (LSOA<sup>75</sup>). IMD 2004 (CCSR, 2004) was selected, as the data for that exercise refers to mid 2001 onwards – exactly when the ISSP pilot began. The model which underpins the IMD 2004 is based on the idea that distinct dimensions of deprivation can be recognised and measured separately. These include seven ‘domains’ of income; crime; employment; health; education, skills and training; barriers to housing and services and living environment. The data has both a) scores (1-32,482) and b) a ranking (1-100) for every LSOA: the higher the *score* the greater the level of deprivation. For *rankings*, 1 represents the most deprived LSOAs and 100 are the least deprived.

Table 5.5 provides the information on the *rankings* of the various domains of deprivation for the ISSP sample in terms of percentiles<sup>76</sup>. From this we can see the cohort fell, on average, within bottom 20% of deprived LSOAs (mean of IMD rank = 20.7). Similarly, the rankings for income, employment, health and disability and crime and disorder were within 25% of the most deprived LSOAs. The data also show there was variation within the sample, with young people from the ISSP cohort living in both the bottom 1% of deprived (1) LSOAs and the 1% least deprived LSOAs (100) on almost all measures.

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since no alternative data that incorporated explicit measures of economic and social deprivation were obtainable, it was decided to utilise IMD in the models – with appropriate caution.

<sup>75</sup>A LSOA is a geographical area designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. They contain approximately 1500 people each. There are 32,482 LSOAs in England.

<sup>76</sup> Percentiles are a measure of dispersion. They describe the relative location of points anywhere along the range of a distribution. Specifically, percentiles divide a set of data into 100 equal parts. For example, the median score of a distribution is at the 50th percentile: It is the score at which 50% of other scores are below (or equal) and 50% are above. Percentiles are most often used for determining the relative standing of an individual or group within a population. Some of the most popular uses for percentiles are connected with test scores and rankings. In the analysis above 1 represents the most deprived LSOAs and 100 relates to the least deprived LSOAs.

**Table 5.5: Average rankings for IMD 2004 domains (percentiles)**

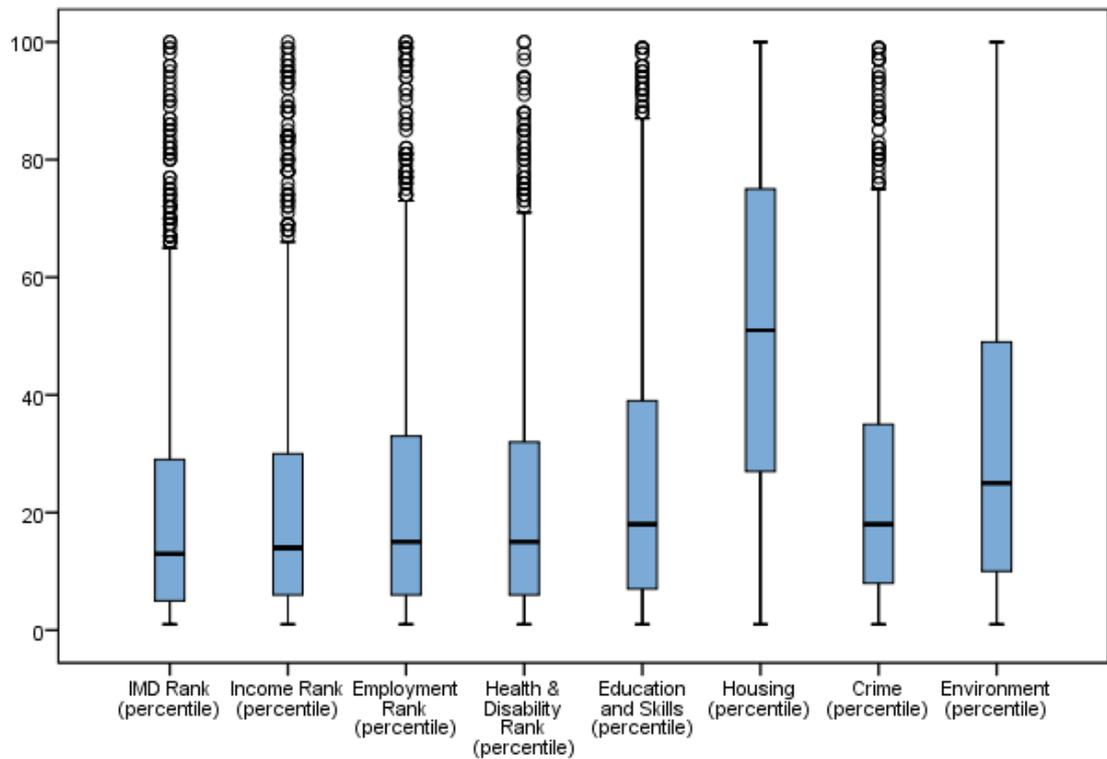
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
IMD Rank (percentile) (n=1021)	20.7	13	1	100	20.6
Income Rank (percentile)	21.6	14	1	100	21.5
Employment Rank (percentile)	22.4	15	1	100	21.7
Health & Disability Rank (percentile)	22.2	16	1	100	20.8
Education & Skills Rank (percentile)	26.1	18	1	99	23.4
Housing Rank (percentile)	50.7	51	1	100	28.2
Crime & Disorder Rank (percentile)	24.5	18	1	99	21.8
Environment Rank (percentile)	32.1	25	1	100	26.6

Figure 5.3 presents the data graphically in a box plot<sup>77</sup> and compares the averages rankings (percentiles – see footnote 72) of the seven domains of deprivation, in addition to the overall measure. What the plot shows is that the vast majority of the ISSP sample live in lower super output areas in the bottom tercile (most deprived) and suffer multiple layers of deprivation. The exception here is the measure for barriers to housing which has no outliers and the mean ranking is 50.7% - indicating an average result.

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<sup>77</sup> The boxplots in figure 5.3 ought to be read like this: The main 'box' contains the middle 50% of cases. The horizontal line in the box represents the median value. The vertical lines extending up and down from each box mark highest and lowest values within 1.5 box lengths (Norusis, 1998). As such, boxplots are graphical representations of central tendency.

**Figure 5.3: Boxplot deprivation within the ISSP sample (low scores = high levels of deprivation) (n=1021)**



Whilst the IMD is not without its problems<sup>78</sup>, the data offers a useful insight into an otherwise unclear aspect of the ISSP sample’s social and environmental background and serves as a tool for comparison in a poorly understood area<sup>79</sup>.

Having explored characteristics of the ISSP sample, Chapter 6 moves on to examining their long-term offending behaviour, in comparison to a control group.

<sup>78</sup> As already stated the IMD 2004 was limited to England. It is also a relative measure of deprivation. This means it can tell you if one area is more deprived than another but not by how much. It is also difficult to track changes over time; deprivation scores cannot be compared between 2010 and 2007 or 2004 because an area’s score is affected by the scores of every other area. As such, it is not possible to tell whether a change in score is a real change in the deprivation level of an area, or whether it is due to the scores of other areas going up or down.

<sup>79</sup> It must be stressed that the sample sizes for IMD in this study are incomplete (See Appendix E). As such, while IMD data represents a series of complex measures of deprivation, its potential – in this instance - may be restricted by limited data coverage.

## Chapter 6: Tracking long-term offending frequency and seriousness

This chapter explores the top-line findings from the offending histories of the ISSP sample, as measured against a matched-comparison group. It is the first of two chapters that address the quantification of offending behaviour as a measure of success of youth justice interventions. As already stated, the interest here is both substantive and methodological and the analysis is accompanied by methodological and theoretical reflections.

### 6.1 Frequency of offending

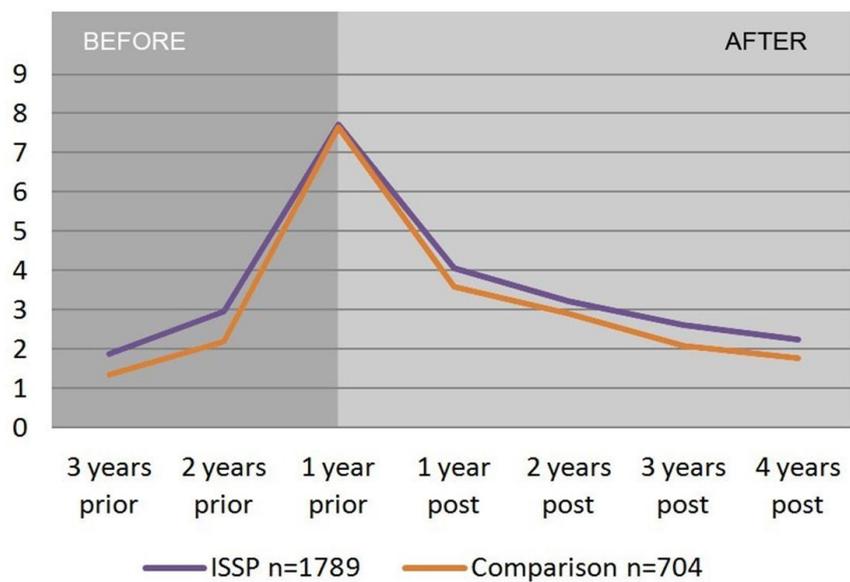
Table 6.1 provides top-line results for frequency of offending, year on year between the ISSP and the comparison sample (see Section 3.4 for details on how the offences were counted). Graph 6.1 offers an illustration of the figures and demonstrates three important features; first there is a sharp spike in the frequency of offending immediately prior to the intervention, reflecting the qualification of persistence for an ISSP order. Second the frequency of offending reduces immediately at the point of intervention and continues to drop steadily downwards up to four years later. A likely explanation for this pattern (observed in both the ISSP and comparison groups) is the statistical phenomenon, ‘regression to the mean’<sup>80</sup> (Cook and Campbell, 1979) which expects extreme scores at pre-test stage

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<sup>80</sup>Given that ISSP aimed to work with persistent and/ or serious offenders (who generate extreme offending scores), it is not possible to avoid the problem of ‘regression to the mean’. The way it is managed is to use a well-matched comparison group with similar characteristics. Both groups are

to move towards the average at post-test stage. Nevertheless, in both groups, offending behaviour persisted. Third, the ISSP and comparison samples have remarkably similar trajectories *as a group at* all time points, although the standard deviations suggest there are considerable differences *within* the groups.

**Figure 6.1: Mean offending frequency - three years prior and four years post**



Early bivariate explorations confirmed there were significant differences in the mean frequency scores between the ISSP and comparison groups two and three years prior to the index order and, three and four years after. Across all year intervals, the ISSP group had higher values, albeit modest.

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expected to reduce their levels of offending frequency and seriousness. The impact of ISSP is measured by whether the ISSP group outperforms the comparison group.

**Table 6.1: Frequency of offending three years prior and four years post - ISSP and**

**Comparison groups**

	ISSP n=1789				Comparison n=704				P-value between groups
	min	max	mean	St.dev	min	max	mean	St.dev	
<b>3 years prior</b>	0	28	1.88	3.09	0	14	1.35	2.38	***
<b>2 years prior</b>	0	25	2.97	3.36	0	29	2.18	3.14	***
<b>1 years prior</b>	1	46	7.71	4.72	1	57	7.64	4.95	
<b>1 year post</b>	0	28	4.06	4.11	0	34	3.58	4.4	
<b>2 year post</b>	0	27	3.23	3.77	0	24	2.9	3.63	
<b>3 year post</b>	0	20	2.62	3.24	0	26	2.09	3.05	***
<b>4 year post</b>	0	24	2.24	3.11	0	19	1.78	2.79	***

*Tests of significance used are t-tests. Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

In order to test these results further<sup>81</sup>, multivariate analysis including measures of personal characteristics, sentencing history and offender-related variables were

<sup>81</sup> Given the exploratory nature of this investigation, a large number of variables were created, summarising aspects of the criminal and sentencing history data with personal characteristics. Many differed only slightly, and some were, in fact, novel combinations of information not previously used in previous ISSP evaluations. The model development process involved testing and defining the relationship of these variables, individually or in combination to meet the goals and questions of the study. This was, in fact, a laborious trial and error process, involving 'enter' regression techniques to determine which variables, and which combinations of variables, most completely and exhaustively contributed to the predictive accuracy of the model. Collinearity diagnostics and tolerance levels were assessed to determine whether multicollinearity would be a problem in the final models. Moreover, SPSS provides useful information on the normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of the data. These examinations revealed that data relating to the frequency of offending (as a dependent variable) in the post-intervention period were positively skewed. Transforming the raw data through a natural log helped fit the variable into the model. Finally, the Durbin-Watson test (Durbin and Watson, 1950) confirmed the residuals in the final model were not correlated (all values fell between 1.5 and 2.5 – the accepted boundaries).

conducted<sup>82</sup>. Since standard regression analysis does not provide a full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation for dealing with missing data, information from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which only covers England were omitted.

The outcome of this exercise suggested that when controlling for other factors the initial significant differences between the ISSP and comparison groups disappeared. Notably, the majority of significant predictors were related to the young person's offending behaviour. Indeed, the strongest and most consistent predictors of high-frequency offending post-intervention were the number of recorded offences committed the year before. In addition, those who came into contact with the criminal justice system at an earlier age were significantly more likely to commit higher numbers of offences in years one, two and three after ISSP. Notably the seriousness of offending appeared to have a stronger impact on offending frequency as the sample grew up (as opposed to when they were younger). Specifically, it was only in years three and four post-intervention that the seriousness of offending exerted an influence. During these years, those who committed the most serious offences one year prior were significantly more likely to offend more frequently.

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<sup>82</sup> Linear regression analyses were conducted on each time period. The dependant variable was the frequency of offending (raw score) in the subsequent year (i.e. in the first year after the intervention and then each year thereafter). The data was strongly positively skewed as is evidenced in Figure 6.1 - thus it was decided to transform the data into a natural log to make them suitable for analysis. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence, age, gender, ethnicity, mean Asset score, group membership (ISSP/ comparison), offender typology (serious / persistent); offending frequency one, two and three years prior; mean offending gravity-score one, two and three years prior; number of days spent in custody in previous 12 months; community-based order in prior 12 months. Variables were entered into the model in an 'enter' process. The R squared value was low, ranging from .240 and .252 (See Table 6.2 for the full results).

Frequency of offending was increased among those who were categorised as persistent and serious offenders, as compared to those who were 'serious only' (but not as compared to those who were persistent only). Gender was also a strong predictor of future offending; young women were significantly likely to commit fewer offences than young men across all four year intervals. Meanwhile higher Asset scores predicted offending behaviour in the short term (years one and two post-intervention). (See Table 6.2 for the full results).

Conspicuously, the measure of the amount of variance explained by the statistical model used in the multivariate analysis – the  $R^2$  value<sup>83</sup> was low, ranging from .240 to .252<sup>84</sup>. This indicates the model explained less than a quarter of the variance. Indeed, while it was possible to find evidence for a number of statistically significant relationships in the model, the low  $R^2$  value denotes that some, (although perhaps not all) of the independent variables are a poor predictor of the dependent variable (subsequent offending post intervention). Unlike other measures of statistical 'fitness', there is no formally recognised cut-off value for a "low" versus "high"  $R^2$ , instead is at the discretion of the researcher (Draper and Smith, 1998). Similarly low

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<sup>83</sup> The  $R^2$  is the square of the correlation coefficient and measures the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the vector X. It is also known as the coefficient of determination, or the coefficient of multiple determination for multiple regression. It is used and reported in the context of statistical models whose central purpose is the prediction of future outcomes (or prediction of the value of y) on the basis of external information.  $R^2$  is most often seen as a number between 0 and 1.0, used to describe how well a regression line fits a set of data. An  $R^2$  near 1.0 indicates that a regression line fits the data well, while an  $R^2$  closer to 0 indicates the regression line does not 'fit' the data well. In sum  $R^2$  provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the statistical model used (Brace, et al, 2006).

<sup>84</sup> The regression analysis reported in Table 6.2 did not use an imputation method to compensate for missing data. As such some cases were lost and the sample size for each 'year' fluctuated. It should be noted therefore that one needs to be cautious about comparing the  $R^2$  score of each sweep. Nevertheless, these low 'goodness of fit' indicators suggest that regression analysis is not a robust method for examining the reconviction data herein.

$R^2$  figures were apparent in the various regression analyses in the 24-month reconviction study (Gray et al, 2005). In fact, the  $R^2$  for those models, which covered a shorter time-frame with fewer independent variables were, on occasion, exceptionally low – ranging from 0.049-0.308 (Gray et al, 2005). This is not an unusual finding within reconviction evaluative studies using regression analysis (c.f. Crime and Justice Research Centre, 2005; Quann, 2006; Fazel et al, 2012; Smith and Weatherburn, 2012) and demonstrates the need to explore and test further analytical methods and include more explanatory variables.

**Table 6.2: Linear regression analysis of frequency of reoffending over four years**

	Offending Frequency 1 year post intervention		Offending Frequency 2 years post intervention		Offending Frequency 3 years post intervention		Offending Frequency 4 years post intervention	
	Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value
Age at first offence	-.097	.006*	-.113	.000***	-.066	.020*	-.048	.115
Age at start of order	.018	.598	.011	.664	-.052	.059	-.040	.169
Gender (Male =0; Female =1 )	-.079	.009*	-.114	.000***	-.071	.005*	-.085	.002*
Ethnicity (White = 0; Non-white =1)	-.073	.019*	-.017	.492	.001	.983	-.005	.843
Total Asset score	.134	.000***	.052	.040*	.026	.336	-.007	.801
ISSP or Comparison case? (ISSP=0; Comparison=1)	-.046	.132	-.009	.716	-.054	.061	-.023	.384
Serious-only offenders (Not serious =0; Serious =1)	-.082	.041*	-.063	.046*	-.058	.081	-.085	.010*
Persistent-only offenders (Not persistent =0; Persistent =1)	.074	.091	.052	.129	.009	.802	-.012	.701
Number of recorded offences 3 years prior	.046	.187	.033	.240	.064	.037*	.071	.039*
Number of recorded offences 2 years prior	.081	.027*	.086	.003*	.116	.000***	.039	.264
Number of recorded offences 1 year prior	.197	.000***	.286	.000***	.244	.000***	.281	.000***
Gravity score of most serious offence 3 years prior	.024	.463	-.011	.692	-.035	.303	.019	.579
Gravity score of most serious offence 2 years prior	.015	.657	.000	.998	.036	.248	.101	.003*
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year prior	-.070	.089	.032	.289	.137	.000***	.115	.001**
Number of days in custody 1 year prior	-.069	.159	-.057	.055	-.060	.056	-.061	.077
Any community-based sentence 1 year prior (No community order = 1, One or more community orders =0 )	-.074	.106	-.111	.001*	-.051	.125	-.029	.400
Model Summary	R <sup>2</sup> =.252 N=2493, n=851		R <sup>2</sup> =.247 N=2493, n=1380		R <sup>2</sup> =.250 N=2493, n=1237		R <sup>2</sup> =.240 N=2493, n=1117	

Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level

## 6.2 Seriousness of offending

Table 6.3 presents information on the mean gravity score<sup>85</sup> of the most serious offence in each time period (at liberty) three years prior to the order and four years post. We can see from the figures in Graph 6.2 that the gravity score reaches its peak just prior to the commencement of ISSP or the respective comparison sentence, before a sharp reduction. As previously warned, the statistical phenomenon ‘regression to the mean’ (Cook and Campbell, 1979) is a likely explanation for this ‘peak and trough’ pattern. In both the ISSP and comparison groups the gravity score after the intervention never drops below its lowest point before the intervention, suggesting that on average, offending behaviour is maintained. The trajectories of both groups are remarkably similar at all time points, although it is clear there is variation within the samples (see standard deviations and minimum and maximum figures).

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<sup>85</sup> Offence gravity is measured using the *Counting Rules* introduced by the Youth Justice Board in 2000, which provides a standard list of offences and graded their seriousness from 1 to 8 (see Appendix B). The least serious offences (gravity 1) are expected to receive first tier penalties, while the most serious (gravity 8) are expected to receive custody. Where no offence was committed the young people were scored a zero.

**Figure 6.2: Mean gravity score - three years prior and four years post**

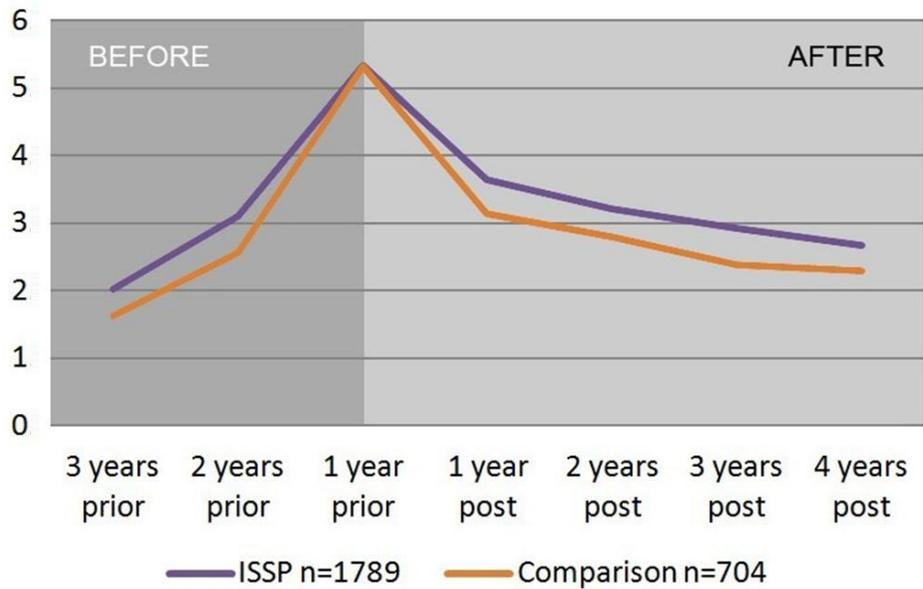


Table 6.3 indicates that there were significant differences in the results of the ISSP and comparison sample in all years except 12 months before the start of the index order. As before, when these results were subject to multivariate analysis<sup>86</sup> the effect disappeared, with the exception of the first year after ISSP (see Table 6.4 for the full results). A very similar pattern emerged in relation to offence seriousness, as it did for offence frequency. The most powerful and stable predictor of high gravity offences in the four years post-intervention was the frequency of offending

<sup>86</sup> Linear regression analyses were conducted on each time period. The dependant variable was the mean score of the most serious offence (raw score) in the subsequent year (i.e. in the first year after the intervention and then each year thereafter). In contrast to offending frequency, there were far fewer outliers in the data relating to offence seriousness and the normal probability plots suggested there were no major deviations from normality. As such, no transformation of the data was necessary. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence, age, gender, ethnicity, mean Asset score, group membership (ISSP/ comparison), offender typology (serious / persistent); offending frequency one, two and three years prior; mean offending gravity-score one, two and three years prior; number of days spent in custody in previous year; community-based order in prior year. Variables were entered into the model in an 'enter' process. The R<sup>2</sup> value was low, ranging from .180 and .199 (see Table 6.4 for full results). Linear regression analyses were conducted on each time period.

one year prior to the respective time period (Year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4) – indicating that, once again there was a complex temporal relationship between frequency and gravity of offending. Moreover, as the sample grew up the gravity of offending began to have a stronger influence. The gravity of the most serious offence, one year prior to the respective interval, increased the risk of committing more serious offences two, three and four years post-intervention.

Meanwhile, being a male offender increased the likelihood of committing more serious offences across each follow-up period (years 1-4). Persistent- serious offenders, rather than serious-only offenders were also increased the odds of committing the most serious offences in all years' post-intervention. This finding suggests that persistence has a stronger influence on the gravity and frequency of offending than seriousness.

Shorter term influences were also apparent; higher asset scores, being of white ethnic origin and a member of the ISSP sample were independently related to higher gravity offences within the first year post intervention, but these patterns were not sustained.

Again, the  $R^2$  values were low, ranging from .180 to .199<sup>87</sup>. Indeed, the figures were markedly lower than those for analysing offence frequency, indicating that predicting offence gravity is more challenging than predicting offence frequency.

**Table 6.3: Gravity scores of offending three years prior and four years post – ISSP and Comparison groups**

	ISSP n=1789				Comparison n=704				P-value between groups
	min	max	mean	St.dev	min	max	mean	St.dev	
<b>3 years prior</b>	0	7	2.02	2.05	0	7	1.63	2.03	***
<b>2 years prior</b>	0	8	3.10	2.03	0	7	2.56	2.16	***
<b>1 years prior</b>	3	8	5.33	0.97	3	7	5.33	0.92	
<b>1 year post</b>	0	7	3.65	2.16	0	7	3.14	2.23	***
<b>2 year post</b>	0	7	3.20	2.25	0	7	2.79	2.25	***
<b>3 year post</b>	0	7	2.93	2.29	0	7	2.38	2.27	***
<b>4 year post</b>	0	8	2.67	2.40	0	7	2.30	2.34	***

*Tests of significance used are t-tests. Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

<sup>87</sup> As previously mentioned, the regression analysis reported in Table 6.4 did not use an imputation method to compensate for missing data. As such some cases were lost and the sample size for each 'year' fluctuated. It should be noted therefore that one needs to be cautious about comparing the  $R^2$  score of each sweep. Nevertheless, these low 'goodness of fit' indicators suggest that regression analysis is not a robust method for examining the reconviction data herein.

**Table 6.4: Linear regression analysis of gravity of subsequent offending over four years**

	Gravity of offending 1 year post intervention		Gravity of offending 2 years post intervention		Gravity of offending 3 years post intervention		Gravity of offending 4 years post intervention	
	Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value	Beta	P-value
Age at first offence	-.073	.048	-.135	.000***	-.088	.003*	-.040	.204
Age at start of order	-.006	.874	.018	.503	-.036	.211	-.030	.325
Gender (Male =0; Female =1 )	-.099	.002*	-.134	.000***	-.086	.001**	-.102	.000***
Ethnicity (White = 0; Non-white =1)	-.080	.015*	.001	.958	.016	.559	.041	.148
Total Asset score	.099	.003*	.040	.125	-.007	.810	-.015	.609
ISSP or Comparison case? (ISSP=0; Comparison=1)	-.075	.019*	-.030	.222	-.065	.112	-.014	.605
Serious-only offenders (Not serious =0; Serious =1)	-.163	.000***	-.093	.004*	-.100	.004*	-.093	.006*
Persistent-only offenders (Not persistent =0; Persistent =1)	.020	.658	.013	.723	.045	.230	-.023	.465
Number of recorded offences 3 years prior	.021	.555	.021	.462	.041	.192	.029	.411
Number of recorded offences 2 years prior	.035	.354	.058	.053	.048	.159	.022	.544
Number of recorded offences 1 year prior	.124	.001**	.166	.000***	.132	.000***	.166	.000***
Gravity score of most serious offence 3 years prior	.039	.266	.031	.259	-.005	.884	.055	.107
Gravity score of most serious offence 2 years prior	.031	.380	.017	.601	.058	.074	.119	.001**
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year prior	-.013	.755	.111	.000***	.186	.000***	.183	.000***
Number of days in custody 1 year prior	-.069	.155	-.070	.066	-.061	.092	-.053	.083
Any community-based sentence 1 year prior (No community order = 1, One or more community orders =0 )	-.082	.085	-.086	.015*	-.037	.282	-.010	.782
Model Summary	R <sup>2</sup> =.180 N=2493,n=851		R <sup>2</sup> =.197 N=2493,n=1380		R <sup>2</sup> =.199 N=2493,n=1237		R <sup>2</sup> =.192 N=2493,n=1117	

Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level

### 6.3 Reconviction

Traditionally, evaluative research adopts a two-year follow-up period and report reconviction (yes/ no) results, sometimes in addition to other measures of offending behaviour (Hedderman, 2009)<sup>88</sup>. There are numerous and well-documented problems with a measurement strategy such as this (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Harper and Chitty, 2004); reconviction rates do not discriminate between serious (such as rape) and petty offences (theft). Neither is reconviction a suitably sensitive measure to elaborate on the nature or volume of subsequent offending. Indeed, the aforementioned evaluation of ISSP demonstrated that over two years 91%<sup>89</sup> of the sample had been reconvicted (Gray et al, 2005)<sup>90</sup>. It is also worth noting that during the early stages of modelling the reconviction and sentencing data, forms of survival analysis<sup>91</sup> were explored. Data was randomly collated on almost one half of the ISSP sample – and indicated that, on average, just over three months (94.7 days) elapsed before members of the ISSP group were officially reconvicted (n=807). Since it was time-consuming and resource-intensive to collate the relevant PNC data for this type of analysis - which bestowed

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<sup>88</sup> For example, the Ministry of Justice typically include reconviction (yes/no) in their yearly output which appraises the relative merit of different youth and adult sanctions (see, Ministry of Justice, 2012b).

<sup>89</sup> Reconviction rates reported in this study differ from those of previous ISSP evaluations for two reasons. This long-term follow-up study has counted individuals and rather than ISSP sentences (of which one young person may receive more than one) and is thus smaller. Additionally, the longer time-frame, means this study loses fewer young people to custody.

<sup>90</sup> Reconviction rates for young people with similar offending histories to the ISSP group during a comparable time frame to the ISSP pilot (2003) show similar results. Over two years 97% of community sentences and 96% of young male offenders released from custody were reconvicted (Home Office, 2004).

<sup>91</sup> Survival analysis is generally defined as a set of methods for analysing data where the outcome variable is the time until the occurrence of an event of interest (Kleinbaum, 1996). Common examples are death, occurrence of a disease, divorce etc. The time to event or 'survival time' can be measured in various temporal blocks, such as weeks, months or years.

comparatively insensitive results - it was decided to opt instead for reconviction (yes/no) with a logistic regression. In sum, we may concur with the available research, that reconviction is a rough and short-range measure of subsequent offending for a population of persistent and serious young offenders.

It is also important to bear in mind that by virtue of being subject to an 'intensive' intervention, young people on ISSP are likely to have been subject to greater levels of surveillance by the police, which may in turn increase the levels of reconviction (Petersilia and Turner, 1992; Worrall and Walton, 2000).

In sum, reconviction rates alone do not provide an insightful measure of offending behaviour or the process of desistance (Moore et al, 2006). Instead, this study maintains a focus on frequency and seriousness of offending. Nevertheless, reconviction data has been presented here to show year on year how many young people drop out of the criminal justice system – although of course, they may continue offending without the knowledge of the police. It is also important to note that desistance in this case is measured in 12 month blocks (at liberty<sup>92</sup>) and young people may re-enter the system at a later stage. Table 6.5 provides information on reconviction rates in the four year follow-up period; it shows reconviction rates

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<sup>92</sup> To reiterate, all young people were followed in periods of 12 months pre and post-intervention. Any time spent in custody during these intervals was compensated for to ensure that each person was followed up for 12 months *in the community*. This is to ensure measures of reconviction and reoffending were accurate and consistent as possible.

drop consistently each year after the index sentence, meaning as the young people grow-up more of them drop out of the criminal justice system altogether.

**Table 6.5: Reconviction rates four years post order**

	ISSP (n=1789) %	Comparison (n=704) %	P-value between groups
<b>1 year post</b>	79.7***	72	***
<b>2 year post</b>	72.1**	65.8	**
<b>3 year post</b>	67.3***	57.1	***
<b>4 year post</b>	60.8**	53.7	**

*Chi-square test*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

Readers will notice the data demonstrate a significant difference in the reconviction rates between the ISSP and comparison samples, with comparison reconviction rates being significantly lower. However, the comparison sample included significantly more ‘serious only’ offenders and young women who, typically have lower reconviction rates. Once the analysis controlled for these key features in multivariate models<sup>93</sup>, membership to the comparison group only remained a significant predictor of desistance at three year’s post-intervention (see Table

<sup>93</sup> Binary logistic regression was conducted on each time period. The dependent variable was reconviction – no =0 yes =1. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence, age, gender, ethnicity, mean Asset score, group membership (ISSP/ comparison), offender typology (serious/ persistent); offending frequency one, two and three years prior; mean offending gravity-score one, two and three years prior; time spent in custody one year prior; community-based order one year prior. Variables were entered into the model simultaneously.

6.6<sup>94</sup>). The strongest predictor of reconviction was gender – estimates suggested that young women were less likely than young men to be reconvicted in follow-up years two, three and four. Similarly, offending frequency one year prior was a predictor of reconviction in years two, three and four. Meanwhile persistent and serious-persistent offenders also had greater odds of reconviction in the short and long-term – at years one, two and four years post.

White offenders, and those with higher Asset scores had increased odds of reconviction in the short term (years one and one and two respectively) – but these patterns were not maintained. Overall, these results concur with the patterns of the previous linear regression models.

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<sup>94</sup> When analysing data with a logistic regression, an equivalent statistic to  $R^2$  does not exist. However, to evaluate the goodness-of-fit of logistic models, several pseudo  $R^2$ 's have been developed. These are "pseudo" because they look like  $R^2$  in the sense that they are on a similar scale, ranging from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating better model fit, but technically they cannot be interpreted as one would interpret a linear regression  $R^2$  (Norusis, 1998).

**Table 6.6: Binary logistic regression analysis of reconviction over four years**

	Reconviction 1 year post			Reconviction 2 years post			Reconviction 3 years post			Reconviction 4 years post		
	Wald	P-value	Exp-B	Wald	P-value	Exp-B	Wald	P-value	Exp-B	Wald	P-value	Exp-B
Age at first offence	.000	.983	.998	6.695	.010*	.873	1.431	.232	.945	.027	.870	.992
Age at start of order	.197	.657	.953	1.631	.202	1.087	.059	.809	.985	2.334	.127	.909
Gender (male=1, female=0)	3.775	.052	1.880	39.732	.000***	3.607	10.217	.001**	2.147	16.874	.000*	2.678
Ethnicity (white =1, non-white=0)	11.149	.001**	2.420	.035	.851	.962	.075	.785	.943	.387	.534	.868
Total Asset score	5.709	.017*	1.031	7.246	.007*	1.023	1.627	.202	1.011	.010	.921	1.001
ISSP or Comparison case? (ISSP =1, comparison case=0)	2.012	.156	1.364	1.329	.249	1.185	5.745	.017*	1.422	.184	.668	1.069
Serious-only offenders (not serious =1, serious=0)	7.233	.007*	2.454	3.845	.050*	1.580	.085	.770	1.077	9.582	.002*	2.148
Persistent-only offenders (not persistent = 1, persistent=0)	.009	.923	.971	.475	.491	1.152	.016	.899	1.026	1.120	.290	1.194
No. recorded offences 3 years prior	3.143	.076	1.091	1.240	.265	1.032	4.832	.028*	1.043	.493	.483	1.015
No. recorded offences 2 years prior	2.348	.125	1.074	.009	.925	1.002	.164	.685	1.009	.666	.414	1.020
No. recorded offences 1 year prior	2.172	.140	1.053	33.038	.000***	1.194	19.068	.000***	1.124	20.570	.000***	1.150
Gravity score 3 years prior	.322	.571	1.056	.177	.674	1.019	.745	.388	.917	1.076	.299	1.045
Gravity score 2 years prior	.015	.901	1.008	.733	.392	.918	3.101	.078	1.078	1.525	.217	1.054
Gravity score 1 year prior	4.219	.040*	.719	1.800	.180	1.058	.030	.862	1.010	.298	.585	.968
No. days in custody 1 year prior	1.139	.286	1.002	1.481	.193	.997	2.335	.081	1.362	4.405	.054	.996
Community sentence 1 year prior (no community order = 1, one or more community orders =0 )	.759	.384	.735	4.470	.034*	.651	5.313	.056	.635	5.871	.015	.617
Model Summary	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> .236 N=2493, n=851			Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> . 242 N=2493, n=1380			Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> .120 N=2493, n=1237			Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> .098 N=2493, n=1117		

Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level

## 6.4 Summary

In summary, the statistical analyses of the seven year period identified a sharp spike in offending frequency and seriousness immediately prior to the intervention. This reflects both qualification for the ISSP programme, and the statistical phenomenon – ‘regression to the mean’ which expects extreme scores at the pre-test stage to move towards the average at the post-test stage (Cook and Campbell, 1979). Over the subsequent years the frequency of offending dropped steadily downwards, as did the seriousness of offending (albeit at a lesser rate), although the average trend suggested that offending behaviour was maintained into late adolescence/early adulthood. The ISSP and comparison groups displayed remarkably similar trajectories at all time points – there was no long-term significant difference between the groups in the aftermath of the programme (the estimates for the seriousness of offending in the first year post intervention *were* significantly lower for the comparison group, although this pattern was not maintained). Considerable variation in the estimates of both the frequency and seriousness of offending were observed, highlighting that there was considerable heterogeneity in terms of offending within both the ISSP and comparison groups.

Multivariate analyses explored offender typology indicators, sentencing history with individual characteristics<sup>95</sup>. These exercises revealed that the most consistent

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<sup>95</sup> It was not possible to include explicit measures of environmental and social characteristics in these regression models without losing a significant number of cases (SPSS does not facilitate Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimations – a sophisticated method for dealing with missing data that outperforms listwise and pairwise deletion, mean substitution and Similar Response Pattern Imputation (SRPI) (Jöreskog, K.G., and Sörbom, 1993). Nevertheless, the total

predictor of future criminal convictions was a young person's (recorded) criminal history (c.f. Francis et al, 2007). Specifically, the frequency of offending in the previous year was the most consistent indicator of both future offence frequency and gravity across all years after ISSP. Meanwhile, by years three and four - as the cohort grew-up - the gravity scores of offences committed 1 year prior also began to exert an influence on both persistent and serious offending. This indicates that complex relationship between offence frequency and seriousness existed in the data - that became progressively stronger among those who continued to offend into early adulthood.

Additional results indicated that young people who qualified for ISSP on account of the 'seriousness' of their offending were more likely to reduce the frequency and gravity of their offending in comparison to offenders who met the criteria for 'persistence'. Moreover, this trend held over all four follow-up years. Similarly, young women were also more likely to reduce the quantity and gravity of their offending in comparison to young men in both the short and long term (years one-four post intervention). In line with the literature (Francis et al, 2007) 'age at first offence' proved to be a strong predictor of future offending; those young people who came into official contact with the criminal justice system at an earlier age were at increased risk of high quantity and high gravity offences across the first three years of the follow-up.

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Asset score incorporates implicit measures of social characteristics including neighbourhood resources; housing; racial and ethnic tensions and local education and training provision.

Higher Asset scores and an offender's ethnicity (white) were demonstrated to have a short-lived effect on the frequency (two and one year's respectively) and seriousness of offending (one year each), but not beyond.

These results do not contradict those from similar studies; Mossman (1994) re-evaluated 58 data sets from 44 published studies and found that overall, past behaviour was the best predictor of future behaviour when compared with other independent variables. Likewise, Bonta et al. (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies (1959-1995), and found that for violent recidivism, criminal history indicators had the largest association, followed by personal demographics and lifestyle. Clinical variables were not associated with reconviction. More recently, Francis et al (2007) examined six different birth cohorts born between 1953 and 1978, totalling more than 58,000 males and females from England and Wales. They concluded the most significant predictor of criminal career length was age was at first conviction while gender was also very important, with females approaching a 40% higher likelihood of stopping than males (c.f. Blumstein et al., 1986; Farrington et al., 1990; Cunliffe and Shepard, 2007).

In relation to the effectiveness of intensive programmes, as was shown in Chapter 2, intensive community programmes are now well established in the US, England and Wales and elsewhere. A large number of evaluations have attempted to assess their effectiveness and impact on reoffending (Barton and Butts 1990; Bottoms,

1995; Partridge *et al.* 2005; Wiebush *et al.*, 2005). Few have demonstrated strong evidence in that regard. Indeed, favourable outcomes have tended to occur when samples were small or there was not a suitable comparison group (c.f. Sherman *et al.*, 1997; McGuire, 2002) (Merrington, 2006; Moore *et al.*, 2006). Thus far we have been unable to find a meaningful or significant difference between the ISSP and comparison samples in relation to their subsequent offending behaviour. A deeper analysis of the groups suggests however, that there are previously unknown significant differences in their composition and long-term offending histories. These differences highlight the struggle of locating a well-matched comparison group of persistent and serious young offenders, who typically have divergent and complex criminal and personal histories. It is impossible to say what the effect of an even closer matched comparison sample would have had on the results. In order to pursue a purely quantitative answer to these questions – the findings from this study indicate that in relation to persistent and serious young offenders at least, researchers would need to build some randomisation into a research project in order to manage the inevitable complexity of the sample.

Chapter 7 moves on to applying new statistical techniques to the data set to examine its longitudinal structure, as well as attempting to explore the variation within the samples.

## Chapter 7: Viewing long-term offending trajectories through latent growth curve and mixture models

### 7.1 Latent growth modelling: Incorporating temporal processes

The data thus far have revealed some important discoveries; first we have learnt that there are disparities in the broader criminal histories of the ISSP and comparison samples, whereby the ISSP group have been exposed as having longer-term offending backgrounds, which have started at a significantly younger age (see Section 3.4). It is indeed possible that these conditions qualitatively affected the ways in which ISSP cases were perceived and dealt with by criminal justice agencies; in particular magistrates and police may have considered them 'recidivist' offenders even before they started ISSP, potentially subjecting them to more on-street surveillance, fewer diversionary measures and more convictions and sentencing occasions (c.f. Petersilia and Turner, 1992; Worrall and Walton, 2000). Adding significance to this finding, we have learnt that longer term criminal history variables (up to three years prior to the intervention and 'age at first offence') are significant predictors of future offending behaviour. In sum, this would suggest that finding a suitable control group must not only focus on matching participant's immediate criminal histories (12-months prior) - as was achieved for the initial reconviction studies of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) – but incorporate longitudinal variables which can integrate aspects of a participants life-course exposure to crime and criminal justice sanctions. Some of these tasks may be easier than others. Indeed, it is difficult to control for the possible effects of 'labelling'

practice<sup>96</sup> which might be a very real, but subtle, aspect of police and sentencing practice with young people (c.f. Farrington, 1977; Stewart et al. 2002; Bernburg et al, 2006; McAra and McVie 2010b). Furthermore, it is well recognised that youth crime has personal, familial, social, psychological, historical, political and cultural dimensions that require interdisciplinary analysis. Building a robust and sophisticated modelling strategy is not an easy task. Indeed, the multivariate analyses conducted thus far have not been able to explain much of the variance within the models – the  $R^2$ <sup>97</sup> values of the regression analyses were modest.

While cross sectional data provide a useful first step in illuminating important ideas, results from such data are often provisional. For example, this study presents information about the average shape of frequency and seriousness of the two samples over time, but this only tells us half the story. We know that there is considerable variance *within* each group – we also know from the qualitative data (see Part Three) that while some young people persist in offending, others desist – sometimes on a temporary or sometimes on a permanent basis. Other pertinent questions relating to persistent offending turn out, on closer inspection, to contain a temporal element. For example, to what extent is frequency of offending associated with seriousness of offending, as young people grow-up do they become

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<sup>96</sup> Labelling theorists (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1967) noted the amplificatory potential of state agencies to ‘create’ deviance by ‘labelling’ individuals, particularly impressionable young people, as ‘deviants’, ‘offenders’ or ‘rebels’- creating stereotypical identities by subjecting them to unduly heavy penalties, surveillance and other forms of exclusion (from jobs, recreation, education). More recently, using panel data, Bernburg et al, 2006 empirically tested this hypothesis and found that official labelling (convictions, sentences) played “a significant role in the maintenance and stability of delinquency and crime at a crucial period in early and middle adolescence” (2007: 820).

<sup>97</sup> In statistics,  $R_2$  is the proportion of variability in a data-set that is accounted for by the statistical model. It provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model and therefore is a measure of ‘model fit’.

more or less serious offenders? Is desistance a short or long-term process? Research which is able to include a dynamic and chronological perspective would allow us to consider how time impacts offending behaviour. In short, the inclusion of information that goes beyond aggregate estimates offers the potential for a more nuanced understanding of offending behaviour.

As Loeber and LeBlanc have warned, cessation of offending does not occur “merely as a function of individual’s chronological age” (1990: 542). As already demonstrated above, age and maturation can have a variable impact on offending behaviour (for example, age at first recorded offence can have a long term impact on future offending, while age at the point of intervention does not) (c.f. Shover, 1996). Francis et al (2007) have also pointed towards the need for criminological research to avoid static perspectives and “think much more dynamically” (2007:86). Moreover, scholars are increasingly paying attention to additional internal and external variables, such as thoughts (moral judgements and values) and behavioural responses (non-offending and everyday ‘habits’) in relation to youth offending patterns (c.f. Smith and McVie, 2003; Wikström et al, 2012). However, addressing all these issues methodologically is not an easy task; as Maruna has noted, “Desistance from crime is an unusual dependent variable for criminologists because it is not an event that happens, but rather it is the sustained *absence* of a certain type of event (in this case, crime)” (2001:17). Indeed, quantitative criminological and evaluative policy work on youth justice often struggles to capture the interplay

between these constituent dimensions (for exceptions, see Smith and McVie, 2003; Wikström et al, 2012).

There *are* a number of statistical tools that are better placed to examine some of these questions however. For example, latent variable modelling<sup>98</sup> allows researchers to assess the structural paths between feelings, thoughts and behaviours. While such ambitions may be beyond the scope of this particular thesis and data-set, I contend that a broader approach to statistical analysis opens up new possibilities in probing the effect of interventions. Meanwhile, for the task at hand – evaluating the impact of an intervention on offending behaviour - longitudinal panel or cohort designs may facilitate a more precise examination of individual and group behaviour.<sup>99</sup> These studies are able to address some of the most challenging research questions – helping to determine the antecedents, correlates and consequences of a phenomenon (Duncan et al, 2006). In fact, recent analytic developments in relation to longitudinal data allow much greater headway to be made in teasing apart the relative contributions of multiple variables to create stronger causal inferences (c.f. Nagin and Tremblay, 1999; Nagin, 2005).

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<sup>98</sup> 'Latent' or 'hidden' constructs, such as moral judgements are not easily subject to direct measurement. Construction of a suitable measurement strategy for latent variables is an important part of basic social research, and a necessary step in the exploration of relationships between concepts. This kind of research has a long history in psychology and education but is less developed in criminology (Gray et al, 2011).

<sup>99</sup> In the 1980s there were a series of debates between Hirschi and Gottfredson and various others about the relative merits of longitudinal research on criminal careers. However, the radical insights into criminal careers gained from longitudinal research since then have been so vast, and of such policy relevance as being enough to warrant a general acceptance of the value of this style of research (Gray et al, 2012).

Specifically, latent growth curve (LGC) modelling is a statistical technique used to estimate growth trajectories. It has emerged as a flexible analytic method and uses longitudinal, 'repeated measures' data (in this case the number of offences or mean gravity score of the most serious offence year on year) (Duncan et al, 2006). These models are useful because they quantify intra-individual growth over time, producing estimates of the initial starting point (intercept) and the rate of change (slope). Such techniques have the ability to estimate individual differences and can answer questions about which variables exert important effects on the rate of development at the same time as capturing vital group statistics (Duncan et al, 2006). Rates of change can be analysed to see if they differ as a function of a specific time period (such as before and after an intervention) or within different groups of people (i.e. between a control and experimental group or men and women) (Duncan et al, 2006). In sum, LGC modelling uses repeated measures raw-score data, while the latent factors are interpreted as chronometric common factors representing individual changes over time. The following analysis employs this technique for exploring the ISSP data further.

The Amos statistical package (version 19) was used to conduct the analysis. As with various styles of statistical analysis the LGC model must be 'identified' – this means that the researcher must determine whether there is enough information to estimate the model. Rules can be followed that will, in practice achieve this (see Bollen, 1989). The parameters of the model are then estimated, usually using Full

Information Maximum Likelihood Estimation (FIML)<sup>100</sup>. Finally, the fit of the model is evaluated<sup>101</sup>.

## 7.2 Modelling strategy

### – *Stage 1: Offending trajectories of the ISSP sample*

The first stage of this analysis involved examining the growth trajectories for the ISSP group only, before expanding the model to the comparison group. Modelling change within a sample of persistent and serious young offenders whose data contained extreme scores from a pre and post test design was a challenging task. Readers should be reminded of the sharp ‘spikes’ in offending frequency and gravity in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 that erupted immediately before admission to the ISSP programme (Cook and Campbell, 1979). While LGC modelling can be adapted for

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<sup>100</sup> Amos uses a procedure known as Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) to handle missing data. A number of investigators have shown that FIML outperforms most common methods of handling missing data, including listwise and pairwise deletion, mean substitution and Similar Response Pattern Imputation (SRPI) used in various data analysis packages (Jöreskog, K.G., and Sörbom, 1993).

<sup>101</sup> A common approach to LGC modelling is to test the underlying structure of a model and report some index of the ‘goodness of fit’ of that model to the data. A number of methods exist to evaluate the fit; commonly accepted indices are the chi-square statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Duncan et al, 2006). Due to the fact that Chi Square is extremely sensitive to sample size, over-identification and violations of the assumptions of multivariate normality, it has now become standard not to be too concerned by a significant Chi Square statistic (see Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Jöreskog, 1981). The fit indices that were used in this thesis were Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The CFI has a range of 0 to 1, with 1 indicating perfect fit. Values greater than .90 have traditionally been taken to indicate acceptable model fit, although a cut-off of .95 has been suggested as more appropriate (Carlson and Mulaik, 1993). CFI compares the existing model fit with a null model which assumes the latent constructs in the model are uncorrelated (the ‘independence model’). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is an index of approximate rather than exact model fit. It takes into account model parsimony (fewer parameters being estimated) by calculating the discrepancy of the model from the data per degree of freedom. Ranging from 0 (an exact fit to the data) to unity (an extremely poor fit), scores below 0.08 indicate acceptable model fit and scores of around 0.05 or below indicating very good fit (Browne and Cudek, 1993). RMSEA is less affected by differences in sample size than many other measures of global fit.

both linear and non-linear patterns (by the inclusion of quadratic or cubic factor loadings for example), the ISSP data included both extreme 'spikes' and considerable variation within the ISSP and comparison samples. Moreover, LGC models are most powerful when a small number of factors are used to describe the data (Tucker, 1958). As such, securing an adequate 'model fit' with the seven-year repeated measures data was difficult to achieve. However, a good 'model fit' was essential to ensure the subsequent results were both reliable and valid measures of the topic at hand.

Eventually it became necessary to 'interrupt' the seven-year repeated measures data into specific time periods. Segmenting the data into discrete blocks allows the researcher to examine time-specific trajectories, such as before and after an intervention or at different transition points in a child's education (primary, secondary, higher education). This is a common approach to data that are drawn from intervention settings and analysed in a multiple population framework (Muthén and Curren, 1997). In this instance, the interruption corresponds to a specific event – the commencement of ISSP – and the goal of the analysis centres on the effect of that programme on subsequent offending behaviour in contrast to a comparison group. These methods are most commonly referred to as 'Interrupted time series' analysis LGC (Duncan et al, 2006) and have been widely used in evaluative research, often in place of randomised control trials. Considered quasi-experimental, this type of design has been identified as representing one of the strongest alternatives to the randomised experiment (West et al, 2000).

– *Stage 1 results: Headline figures for the ISSP group – offence frequency and seriousness*

The ‘model fit’ was optimised to a satisfactory degree when the ISSP data were split into two distinct time periods, with the main focus on exploring the post-intervention trajectory. To summarise, the measurements of the outcome variable (post intervention offending frequency / offence gravity) were collated at equally spaced intervals (1 year) over four years post-intervention. Consequently, the shape of the post-intervention data could be modelled on a linear growth shape. Figure 7.1 includes the factor loadings and demonstrates how the slope (on all subsequent models) was fixed in a linear direction starting one year after ISSP<sup>102</sup>. Table 7.1 provides the headline figures for the offence-frequency trajectory – for the ISSP sample only.

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<sup>102</sup> In these types of model slope loadings must be fixed at different values to denote the nature and pattern of the repeated measures (in this case offending frequency/ gravity per year). Fixing one of the slope’s regression coefficients at zero has the effect of locating the intercept at the initial measurement. As such, in the following models ‘time 1’ is fixed at 1 year post intervention. It is important to be aware of this because shifting the loadings on the slope alters the scale of time, which affects the interpretation of the intercept factor mean and variance.

**Table 7.1: LGC parameter estimates for the frequency of offending four years post ISSP (ISSP sample only)**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Mean Intercept</b> (Average frequency of offending)	3.945	0.000***
<b>Mean Slope</b> (Average change in the frequency of offending per year)	-.607	0.000***
<b>Intercept Variance</b> (Variance at initial status)	8.065	0.000***
<b>Slope Variance</b> (Variance in subsequent change )	.535	0.000***
<b>Intercept-Slope Covariance</b> (Correlation between initial status and change)	-1.664	0.000***

*N=1789*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

*CFI .873*

*RMSEA .091*

The above figures suggest that the average number of offences committed by the ISSP sample one year after the programme was 3.945 (mean intercept). It reduced, on average, steadily downwards by 0.607 (mean slope) each year thereafter. Again, this model identified significant variance within the sample; the intercept (1<sup>st</sup> year after ISSP) varied by 8.065, while the slope (rate of change) varied by 0.535. Notably, the covariance between the intercept and the slope was negative, meaning that subjects who started with a higher initial status changed more over time. In other words, an ISSP case who committed a higher than average number of offences one year after starting the programme, were more likely to experience

greater reductions from offending over the follow-up years. This pattern replicates the typical 'regression to mean' model, where more extreme scores regress more radically in the aftermath (Cook and Campbell, 1979). Table 7.2 repeats this analysis in relation to offence gravity scores within the ISSP sample four years post intervention.

**Table 7.2: LGC parameter estimates for the gravity of the most serious offence four years post ISSP (ISSP sample only)**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Mean Intercept</b> (Average gravity score of most serious offence)	3.597	0.000***
<b>Mean Slope</b> (Average change in the seriousness of offending per year)	-.321	0.000***
<b>Intercept Variance</b> (Variance at initial status)	1.272	0.000***
<b>Slope Variance</b> (Variance in subsequent change )	.148	0.000***
<b>Intercept-Slope Covariance</b> (Correlation between initial status and change)	-.064	0.000***

*N=1789*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

*CFI .984*

*RMSEA .026*

These figures indicate that gravity of the most serious offence one year after ISSP, was, on average 3.597, and reduced by .321 each subsequent year after that (up to four years). Once more there was significant variation among the sample in terms

of their starting point and rate of growth. Moreover, the negative covariance between the intercept and slope suggests that those who began their post-ISSP trajectory with higher mean gravity scores were more likely to reduce the seriousness of their subsequent offending than those whose initial status was lower.

– ***Stage 2: Multivariate analysis of offending trajectories***

The second stage of the modelling strategy involved incorporating independent variables. This was achieved in stages, looking in turn at i) offence-specific factors ii) socio-demographics ii) sentencing history and finally iv)<sup>103</sup> environmental, personal and familial characteristics social a before examining a model which included all four domains. This was a long process of investigating a large number of potentially duplicating variables, individually and in combination with others to achieve a theoretically sound and statistically parsimonious model that had a robust predictive capacity. The most challenging part of the process was incorporating variables which identified the longer-term characteristics of the samples' criminal history. Indeed, the 'extreme' spike that occurred in the data (by way of tracking offences three years prior and four years post-intervention - see Figure 6.1 and 6.2) had a critical impact on model-fit. A number of composite variables of pre-intervention criminal history indicators were created, but proved difficult to

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<sup>103</sup> i) 'offence-specific' variables included the frequency and mean gravity scores of offences 1 year prior to the intervention and four years post as well as 'offender classification' (persistent/ serious) ii) 'socio-demographic' characteristics included gender and ethnicity ii) 'sentencing history' – age at first offence; ISSP or comparison case and previous custodial sentence (before intervention); and finally iv) 'environmental, personal and familial characteristics'– incorporated Asset and IMD. See Appendix E for relevant sample sizes by domain.

incorporate without seriously compromising the 'goodness of fit' tests. Eventually, this LGC settled on previous offending frequency and gravity scores (1 year prior); age at first offence and identification as a persistent offender<sup>104</sup> as indicative of an individual's criminal history. Experience of custody; ISSP status; gender; ethnicity; total Asset score and the rank of their home at the time of ISSP on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) were also encompassed into the model.

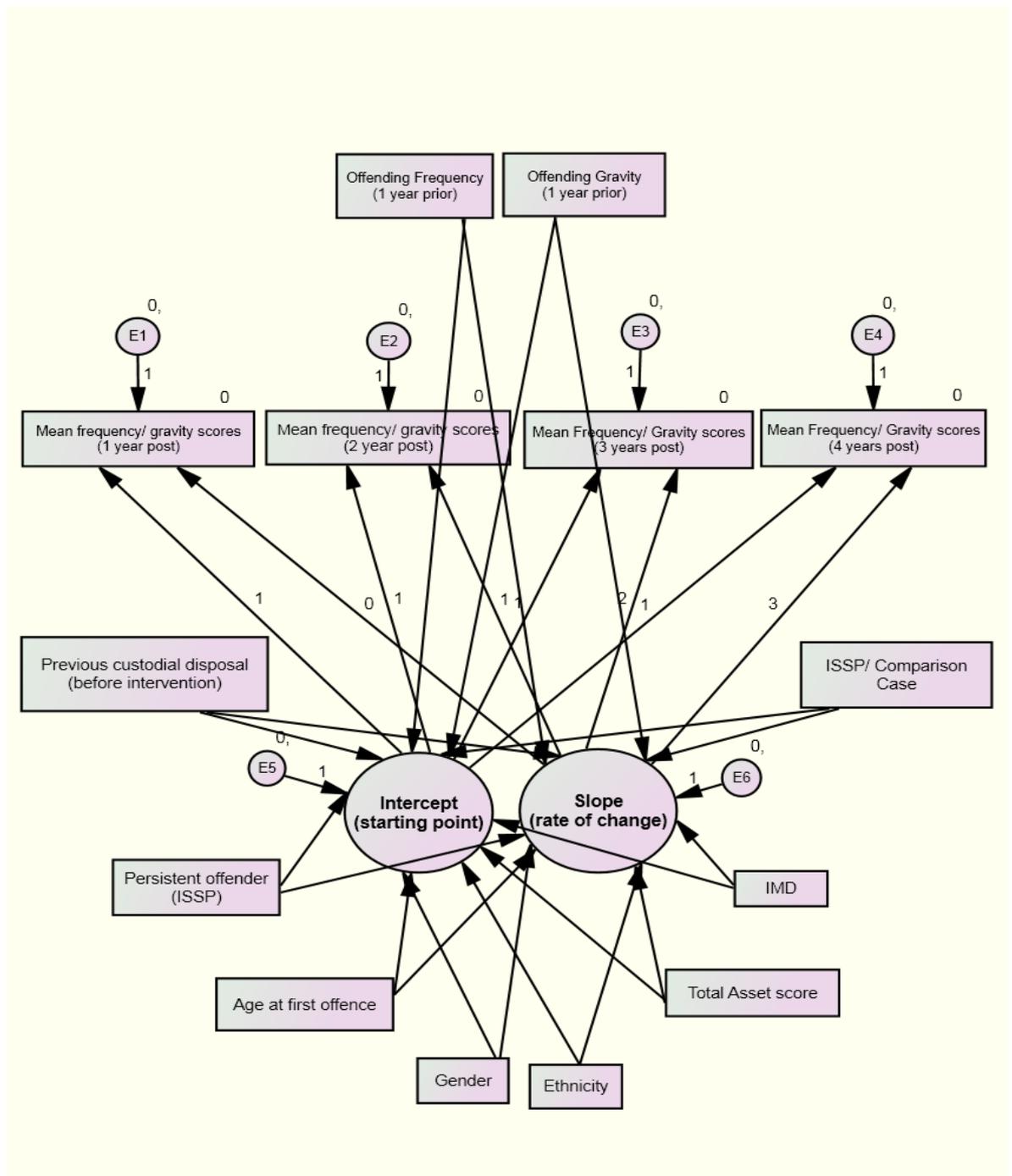
In sum, the model assesses the post ISSP phase, but in so doing controls for the sample's long-term offending behaviour prior to the intervention. The 'intercept' represents the first year (at liberty) after the intervention. Meanwhile the 'slope' examines the sample's longer term offending trajectories (four years repeated measures). See Figure 7.1 for an illustrative presentation of the model<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> By virtue of qualification for ISSP/ comparison sample.

<sup>105</sup> For clarity's sake the co-variances have been removed from the illustration. However, co-variances were calculated between all exogenous variables.

**Figure 7.1: Path diagram of LGC multivariate model**



**– Stage 2 results: Multivariate analysis -frequency of offending**

The multivariate LGC results for the frequency of subsequent offending are presented in Table 7.3. As can be seen, parameter estimates were significant on a

range factors. Young people who qualified for ISSP on account of 'persistence' had higher levels of offending pre-issp (than non-persistent offenders) at time point 1 (the point of intervention). The mean slope for persistent offenders (-0.178) was negative which means that, on average, frequency of offending declined amongst persistent offenders more slowly than for serious offenders. In sum, we might conclude that the inevitable 'regression to the mean' differs significantly amongst the offender-categories (persistent and/or serious) over time.

The mean slope for young people who experienced custody before ISSP (-0.176) also shows that the frequency of their offending reduced less than those who were not subject to secure detention. Similarly those with the highest volume of offences one year prior to ISSP were associated with lower reductions in offence-frequency over time (mean slope -0.047). The same pattern was true of young people with high Asset scores (mean slope -0.013). Conversely the gravity score was positive (0.09), meaning those individuals with higher gravity scores in the year before intervention were more likely to demonstrate a steeper decline in the years after ISSP

The results regarding the slope reflect the longer term rate of change amongst the sample (up to four years after ISSP). These results differ somewhat from those related to the short-term point of intervention – or intercept. These figures suggest that at time 1 females committed fewer offences than their male counterparts.

Likewise, young people of non-white ethnic origin (compared to white candidates) and young people whose first offence was committed at a later age than others, were more likely to have lower levels of offences at time 1. On the other hand, persistent offenders (as compared to serious only offenders); those with the highest Asset scores; those with the highest rates of offending 1 year prior to the intervention and those who had been subject to a custodial disposal (compared to those with no experience of the secure estate) prior to ISSP were more likely to have higher rates of offending at time point 1.

Alternatively, those with the highest gravity scores at time point 1 were more likely to commit fewer crimes during this period. Overall, this suggests that the seriousness of offending is not a predictor of short term (intercept) or long term (slope) high-frequency offending.

**Table 7.3: LGC parameter estimates - frequency of offending, four years post intervention**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P value</b>
<b>Intercept (starting point post intervention)</b>				
Gender (Male=1, female =0)	-0.901	0.205	-4.403	.000***
Ethnicity (White=1, non-white=0)	-0.487	0.189	-2.578	0.01**
Age at first offence	-0.235	0.039	-5.971	.000***
Persistent offender† (Not persistent =1, persistent =0)	0.719	0.179	4.006	.000***
Experience of custody before intervention††	0.564	0.138	4.1	.000***
ISSP/ Comparison case (ISSP =1, comparison=0)	-0.246	0.143	-1.729	0.084
Total Asset score	0.052	0.009	5.797	.000***
Rank of Index of multiple deprivation	0.002	0.004	-1.544	0.123
No. of offences 1 year before intervention	0.207	0.015	14.06	.000***
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year before intervention	-0.319	0.09	-3.537	.000***
<b>Slope (rate of change)</b>				
Gender (Male=1, female =0)	-0.037	0.086	-0.432	0.666
Ethnicity (White=1, non-white=0)	0.087	0.08	1.085	0.278
Age at first offence	0.003	0.017	0.172	0.863
Persistent offender† (Not persistent =1, persistent =0)	-0.178	0.076	-2.35	0.019*
Experience of custody before intervention††	-0.176	0.058	-3.023	0.003*
ISSP/ Comparison case (ISSP =1, comparison=0)	-0.039	0.06	-0.641	0.522
Total Asset score	-0.013	0.004	-3.327	.000***
Rank of Index of multiple deprivation	0.003	0.005	1.849	0.064
No. of offences 1 year before intervention	-0.047	0.006	-7.573	.000***
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year before intervention	0.09	0.038	2.36	0.018*

*To reflect the yearly repeated measures data, the intercept was fixed at 1 and the slopes were fixed in a linear pattern, 0,1,2,3. See Figure 7.4*

*† Classified as a persistent offender at the time of the intervention.*

*†† Subject to a DTO or custodial remand prior to the intervention*

*N=2493*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

*CFI .982*

*RMSEA .035*

### – Stage 2 results: Seriousness of offending

Turning to the seriousness of offending, a wide range of independent variables were related to short term measures of this concern (see Table 7.4). Specifically, young men (rather than young women); young people from white ethnic origins (vs.

non-white); comparison cases (vs. ISSP); offenders classified as persistent (vs. serious offenders); offenders who were convicted of offences at an earlier age; young people who had spent time in custody prior to the intervention; those with the highest Asset scores and young people who had committed the highest rates of offence frequency one year prior to ISSP were more likely to have higher gravity scores on average at time 1 (the period immediately following intervention).

However, the longer-term trajectories of the seriousness of young people's offending behaviour were less consistent. The average seriousness of offending over four years was likely to decline less steeply for young people who were non-white; or had higher Asset scores or amongst those who were convicted of the most offences prior to the intervention. However, even though this result was significant (0.022) the co-efficient was small, meaning the effect was small (-0.01).

Overall, these results begin to illustrate disparate rates of change throughout the sample. There is clear evidence of a 'regression' downwards to the 'mean' over time. However it also appears that some young people regress at a steeper rate than others, which is perhaps not surprising given the conflation of highly persistent and one-off serious offenders in the target group. Specifically, offenders classified as 'persistent' and those who had been convicted of the greatest number of offences appeared to regress less dramatically over the study period in relation to both the frequency and seriousness of offending. Conversely, those who had

committed some of the most serious offences prior to the intervention were more likely to demonstrate desisting trajectories. While persistent and high-frequency offending (prior to ISSP) predicted the rates and seriousness of further offending up to four years post intervention, high gravity scores (prior to ISSP) did not. Meaning young people who committed the highest volume of offences were less likely to drop out of the criminal justice system, than those who committed the most serious offences. Persistent childhood offending is clearly a difficult set of behaviours to 'leave behind'. Thus far we know that, the persistent offenders in this study tended to have more entrenched underlying problems (see Table- 5.4). They were also persistent users of the criminal justice system – aspects of which may have unintended negative consequences. Researchers have previously linked the impact of formal criminal labelling on involvement in deviant social networks and increased likelihood of subsequent offending (Sampson and Laub 1993; Bernburg and Krohn 2003; McAra and McVie, 2005; Bernburg et al, 2006). This quantitative analysis has been beneficial in illuminating distinct rates of change within the sample. However, at this stage it is impossible to tease out *why exactly* persistent and more frequent offenders were more likely to remain entrenched in the criminal justice system from childhood into adolescence/ young adulthood.

**Table 7.4: LGC Parameter estimates - gravity of subsequent offending, four years**

**post intervention**

	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>C.R.</b>	<b>P value</b>
<b>Intercept (starting point post intervention)</b>				
Gender (Male=1, female =0)	-0.852	0.115	-7.438	.000***
Ethnicity (White=1, non-white=0)	-0.483	0.106	-4.568	.000***
Age at first offence	-0.145	0.022	-6.56	.000***
Persistent offender† (Not persistent =1, persistent =0)	0.335	0.1	3.334	.000***
Experience of custody before intervention††	0.318	0.077	4.128	.000***
ISSP/ Comparison case (ISSP =1, comparison=0)	-0.417	0.085	-4.929	.000***
Total Asset score	0.029	0.005	5.793	.000***
Rank of Index of multiple deprivation	0.005	0.008	-0.295	0.768
No. of offences 1 year before intervention	0.082	0.008	9.926	.000***
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year before intervention	-0.076	0.051	-1.511	0.131
<b>Slope (rate of change)</b>				
Gender (Male=1, female =0)	-0.128	0.059	-2.174	0.030*
Ethnicity (White=1, non-white=0)	0.22	0.054	4.06	.000***
Age at first offence	-0.019	0.011	-1.671	0.095
Persistent offender† (Not persistent =1, persistent =0)	-0.016	0.051	-0.306	0.76
Experience of custody before intervention††	-0.071	0.039	-1.795	0.073
ISSP/ Comparison case (ISSP =1, comparison=0)	0.049	0.043	1.129	0.259
Total Asset score	-0.007	0.003	-2.629	0.009*
Rank of Index of multiple deprivation	0.002	0.006	0.574	0.566
No. of offences 1 year before intervention	-0.01	0.004	-2.291	0.022*
Gravity score of most serious offence 1 year before intervention	0.008	0.026	0.317	0.751

*To reflect the yearly repeated measures data, the intercept was fixed at 1 and the slopes were fixed in a linear pattern, 0,1,2,3. See Figure 7.4*

*† Classified as a persistent offender at the time of the intervention.*

*†† Subject to a DTO or custodial remand prior to the intervention*

*N=2493*

*CFI .996*

*RMSEA .017*

*Confidence levels: \*=95% level, \*\*=99% level, \*\*\*=99.9% level*

**– Stage 3: ISSP Practice**

Finally, it was possible to examine aspects of the ISSP programme to ascertain if any one element of the programme had a positive - or indeed negative - impact on subsequent offending. Models were run on all aspects of the multi-modal

programme<sup>106</sup>; different forms of electronic monitoring<sup>107</sup> and total number of days exposure to the programme. Notably, confirming a finding in the previous 24-month reconviction study of ISSP (Gray et al, 2005), restorative justice was positively associated with a reduction in the *frequency* of offending in the first year after commencing ISSP ( $p < .000$ )<sup>108</sup>. However the trend was not maintained in the longer term and had no unique impact of the gravity score of subsequent offending<sup>109</sup>. There were no significant differences in offending frequency or seriousness related to surveillance type<sup>110</sup>.

Lastly, one would also expect to observe some impact on the rates of offending frequency and seriousness according to the 'dosage' of ISSP. The number of days spent on the programme was examined and demonstrated that increased exposure was associated with modest reductions in the frequency<sup>111</sup> and seriousness<sup>112</sup> of further offending in both the immediate aftermath of the programme and up to four years later. The significance of this finding is that it is unlikely to be an artefact of selection bias. In previous evaluative studies 'completion' of the programme has been associated with greater reductions in reoffending (Hedderman and Hough,

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<sup>106</sup> Education and training; restorative justice; addressing offending behaviour; interpersonal skills; family support; accommodation; drug/alcohol problems; mental health; leisure/recreation activities.

<sup>107</sup> Electronic tagging; voice verification.

<sup>108</sup> The fit indices and output for this analysis were as follows, CFI: 954; RMSEA: 0.044. Estimate for Restorative Justice on intercept -.911; S.E: .255; C.R: -3.571; P.000\*\*\*. (n=1789).

<sup>109</sup> The fit indices for this analysis were as follows, CFI: .990; RMSEA: 0.018. (n=1789).

<sup>110</sup> The fit indices for this analysis were as follows. Frequency of offending, CFI: .944; RMSEA: 0.061. Seriousness of offending, CFI: .988 RMSEA: 0.024. (n=1789).

<sup>111</sup> The fit indices and output for this analysis were as follows, CFI: 928; RMSEA: 0.068. Estimate for 'number of days on ISSP' on intercept were, -.003; S.E: .001; C.R: -2.522; P.012\*. Estimate for number of days on ISSP' on the slope were, -.001; S.E: .000; C.R: 2.352; P.019\*(n=1789).

<sup>112</sup> The fit indices and output for this analysis were as follows, CFI: 981; RMSEA: 0.029. Estimate for 'number of days on ISSP' on intercept were, -.002; S.E: .001; C.R: -3.418; P.000\*\*\*. Estimate for number of days on ISSP' on the slope were, -.002; S.E: .001; C.R: 2.232; P.026\*. (n=1789).

2004). However, it is also probable that offenders who breach and leave the programme early are more likely to commit further offences, thus creating a selection effect in the data. This particular analysis does not exclude young people who breached the programme or committed further offences, but focuses solely on exposure to ISSP (number of days) – possibly including multiple sentences<sup>113</sup>. This finding does not imply that ISSP should be longer or more intensive, only that repeated attempts at the programme may not be detrimental.

### 7.3 Exploring variation within the sample: Mixture modelling

One of the empirically intriguing and statistically challenging issues about the ISSP offending data has been the variation *within* the sample. The bivariate and multivariate analyses have consistently highlighted the heterogeneity in both the ISSP and comparison groups. Chiefly this has been due to the conflation of persistent and one-off serious young offenders as the target-group for ISSP, who not only tended to follow distinct patterns of offending (before *and* after the intervention) but also displayed, on average, different individual characteristics and responses to ‘treatment’<sup>114</sup>. Also contributing to the variation was the very nature of persistent offending, which typically fluctuates over time (Hagell and Newburn,

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<sup>113</sup> A significant proportion of offenders were sentenced to ISSP more than once. The original evaluation (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) found that 75% of the ISSP cases used in that analysis were the first for an individual young person, 19% of cases were for a second ISSP, and 6% were for a subsequent ISSP (n=3990).

<sup>114</sup> As Table 5.4 in Chapter 5 demonstrated, serious-only offenders were more likely to be female (13.2%); be part of a minority ethnic group (39.7%) and have a lower mean Asset score (18.8) when compared to persistent-only offenders (6.8% female; 17.1% minority ethnic group, mean Asset score of 24.5). Moreover, serious-only offenders had a higher ‘completion rate’ for ISSP (77.2% compared to 49.7% of persistent offenders) and were less likely to leave the programme for further offences (8.6% of serious-only offenders had their ISSP terminated or breached for reoffending, compared to 24.8% of persistent-only offenders).

1994; Soothill et al, 2003). It was an obvious choice for this study therefore, to explore those differences further, particularly with the availability of longer term data.

The statistical question was how best to model the population heterogeneity of individual-level trajectories? Nagin (2005) discusses the circumstances under which 'group-based' approximations (such as latent class analysis<sup>115</sup>; semi-parametric group based modelling<sup>116</sup> and finite mixture modelling<sup>117</sup>) have important advantages over other more traditional methods such as growth curve modelling for exploring latent classes within the data. While neither approach assumes homogeneity, (which is antithetical to their respective aims to analyse the reasons for individual differences in development), growth curve modelling continues to treat the aggregate measures as if they are from one population. Group-based modelling by contrast, assumes that the population is composed of a mixture of distinct subgroups, each defined by a prototypical growth curve (Duncan et al, 2006). Because this method allows for cross-group differences, it is especially suited for identifying and modelling heterogeneity in types of developmental trajectories within a given population (Nagin and Tremblay, 1999). Specifically, these methods do not use observable characteristics to create groups (such as calculating separate models for men and women or age brackets) (Muthén and Shedden, 1999). Instead, these approaches partition the population into a chosen number of latent classes

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<sup>115</sup> See Clogg, 1995; McCutcheon, 1987.

<sup>116</sup> See Nagin, 1999; 2005.

<sup>117</sup> See Everitt and Hand, 1981; Lee, 2007.

and estimate their varying behaviour and the size of the groups in the analysis (i.e. the form of the trajectories is not imposed, but rather emerges from the data itself).

Nagin and Tremblay stress such modelling procedures do not produce literal segmented samples to which individuals either do or do not belong. Rather, the role of the groups is a device for approximating and reducing a complex “underlying reality” (2005:878). They warn that it is important that researchers and readers of such analyses remember that individuals do not actually belong to a trajectory group; the number of trajectory groups in a sample is not fixed, and that individuals will not follow the group-level trajectory consistently (Nagin and Tremblay, 2005; Nagin, 2005). However, the authors summarise the power and utility of this method with large scale longitudinal data as follows:

*“The trajectory group is a statistical device for creating a data summary that describes the behavior and characteristics of a set of individuals following approximately the same developmental course. The purpose of a data summary is to capture the essential features of the data points used in computing it. As such, it is intended to transcend the individual-level variation in that data. In this spirit, a developmental trajectory group summarizes the average behavioral trend of a collection of individuals.” (Nagin and Tremblay, 2005: 892)*

It was thus decided a finite mixture modelling exercise may provide a useful means for exploring these patterns (Muthén and Shedden, 1999). This method has become increasingly popular in criminological<sup>118</sup> and other evaluative research over the past ten years, such as developmental psychology (Broidy et al., 2003) and developmental psychopathology (Lacourse et al., 2003). Furthermore major advances have been made in statistical methodologies for analysing developmental trajectories, indeed, mixture modelling can now be conducted in more recent versions of the statistical analysis package Amos<sup>119</sup>.

Due to the confines of a PhD study, this exercise was exploratory - methodologically and substantively and limited to the ISSP sample (n=1789).

### – *Results*

One of the challenging aspects of mixture modelling is determining the number of latent classes or groups for the relevant statistical programme to compute. After some initial exploration, a four-class group provided the most appropriate and viable out-put; the groups were empirically distinct and their respective sizes - as a proportion of the sample - were reasonable. The model focussed solely on the ISSP sample and included the seven years available data and combined information on

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<sup>118</sup> Trajectory analysis has become an increasingly popular method for examining offending behaviour of youth offending populations (Nagin and Tremblay 1999; Nagin 2005). Recently, the method has also been employed in wider criminological research such as the study of crime distribution across geographic locations (Weisburd *et al.* 2004; Weisburd *et al.* 2009) and trends in terrorist activities and crime across countries and groups (Piquero and Piquero 2006).

<sup>119</sup> Amos 16 was the first version to introduce a mixture modelling feature, and is based on a Bayesian approach (Arbuckle, 2010).

the frequency and seriousness of offending. Appendix D contains the parameter estimates for the four-group analysis. The top-line findings are graphically represented in Figure 7.2 and 7.3 which display the frequency and gravity distributions respectively. In a mixture modelling analysis, you also get an estimate of the proportion of the population that lies in each group – based on predicted probabilities. The proportion of young people in each group is highlighted. For example, the population of Group 3 is estimated to be 48%. It is important to note the following analyses do not intend to present a causal relationship between ISSP and long term offending behaviour<sup>120</sup>; at this stage we are simply looking to *initiate* an examination of the variation within the sample's behaviour as indicated by the previous results<sup>121</sup>. Additionally, it is essential to bear in mind that the data on which these trajectories are based originates from the Police National Computer (PNC) and is a measure of *recorded* criminal offences. Many individuals in each sample will likely be committing further and possibly more serious offences beyond the detection of the police<sup>122</sup>. As such these are tentative estimates of criminal behaviour patterns. The four groups can be summarised as follows:

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<sup>120</sup> There are some limitations to the mixture modelling approach; questions arise when attempting to identify the optimal number of latent classes. Second, the various populations within the sample may not be adequately modelled using the same statistical structure. Another limitation is that in large samples, a number of latent classes could be required to adequately explain the variation that exists across all individuals. Finally, there is considerable and contentious debate within the academic community on the appropriateness of employing a statistically (rather than theoretically) driven models that lead to reified conclusions (See discussions between Sampson and Laub (2003; 2005a; 2005b) and Sampson et al (2004) with Nagin and Tremblay (2005)). Despite these limitations, mixture modelling and similar approaches represent important new developments in the study of change (Duncan et al, 2006).

<sup>121</sup> Within the confines of this particular PhD, it has not been feasible to investigate this analysis further. However, there is indeed scope to extend an examination of ISSP data with mixture modelling methods – which will be the focus of future work.

<sup>122</sup> The value of self-reported criminal behaviour is that it is able to capture information that does not otherwise come to the attention of criminal justice agencies. Typically self-reports record a higher level of offending than official statistics (Snyder and Sickmund, 1999). Indeed, information

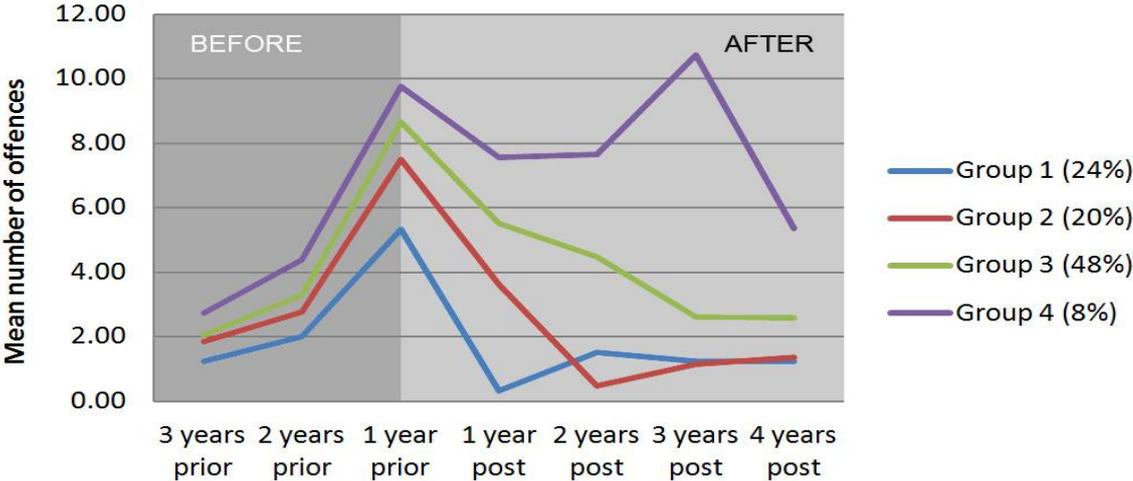
- Group 1 (24%): 'Desisting serious youth offenders': These offenders peak with a small number of high gravity offences before ISSP (i.e. as youths). The majority desist within the first year following ISSP, with periods of non-offending and low level fluctuations as they grow up.
- Group 2 (20%): 'Desisting persistent-serious youth offenders': These offenders experience a peak in their offending frequency immediately prior to their ISSP sentence (as youths). In the short-term they continue offending; in year one post-intervention the average gravity score remains high, but thereafter the frequency and seriousness of offending is on a downward trend. On average most will desist from crime around two years post-ISSP, with subsequent minor fluctuations.
- Group 3 (48%): 'Declining frequency/ high-gravity offenders': This group, the largest group within the ISSP sample, exhibit a down-turn in terms of the frequency of their offending after ISSP – although it is not achieved as quickly as the first two groups. In addition, the gravity of their on-going offending follows a much slower decline, suggesting they continue commit fewer but relatively serious offences as they grow up.
- Group 4 (8%): 'Chaotic frequency and gravity persisters': This group, the smallest in the analyses, are the most prolific offenders. The frequency of their offending peaks and troughs at a high level over the study

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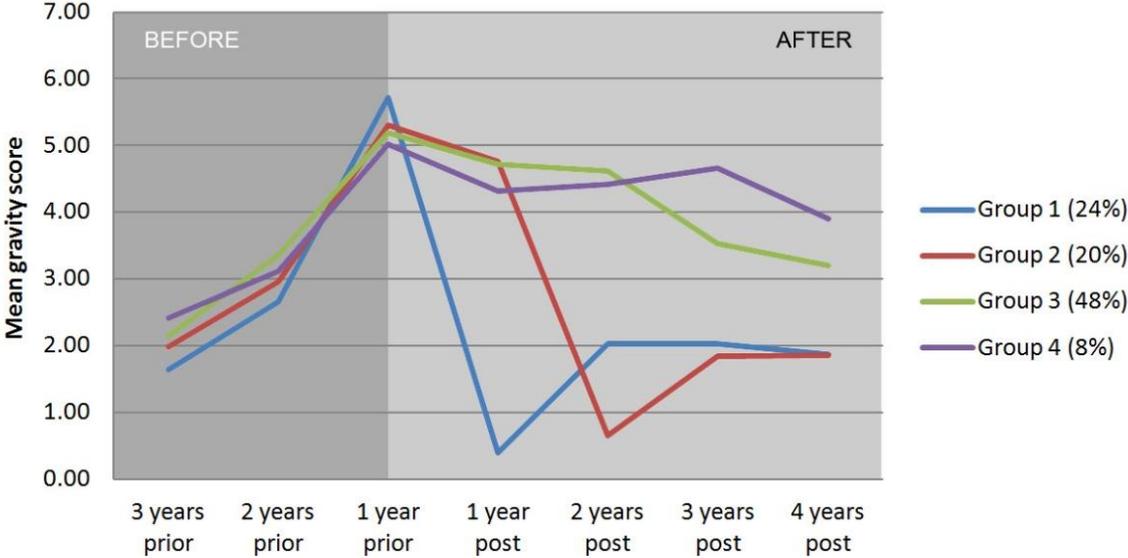
from the Original Evaluation revealed that young people on ISSP were involved in a large amount of unrecorded crime (Moore et al, 2004). Self-report studies do have limitations however; problems with memory recall, definition, or unwillingness to disclose law violations and smaller sample sizes. There is also some evidence that participants over-report minor offences, and under-report serious offences (Rutter et al., 1998).

period, while the gravity of their offending only achieves a modest reduction after ISSP.

**Figure 7.2: Mixture modelling - distributions of offending frequency, four groups**



**Graph 7.3: Mixture modelling - distributions of offending seriousness, four groups**



According to this investigation, the sharp average reduction in crime as demonstrated in the previous chapter (see graph 6.1 and 6.2) was maintained by approximately half of the sample (Group 1, 24% and 2, 20%). Their offending behaviour reduced, on average, to a small number of low-level crimes within one-two years after the intervention. Group 1 (24%) - the 'desisting serious youth offenders' were distinguished by the gravity of their offending prior to ISSP, indeed this group committed some of the most serious offences out of the sample at this time (a mean gravity score of 5.7 – see Appendix D), but presented the least risk in relation to longer-term offending when compared to the other three groups. The largest group – Group 3 (48%) 'Declining frequency/ high-gravity offenders' - continued their offending into early adulthood (albeit at a lower frequency level) and by the fourth time-point post-intervention had committed an average of 2.6 offences per year with a mean gravity score of 3.2. The smallest group – Group 4 (8%) the 'chaotic frequency and gravity persisters' posed the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system out of all the groups identified; four years after ISSP they committed, on average, 5.4 offences a year, with a mean gravity score of 3.9. Notably, and substantiating the results from the latent growth curve modelling above, it was young people who committed the highest volume of offences at the point of entry onto ISSP (Group 3 and 4) (i.e. the most persistent offenders) who were more likely to sustain their offending behaviour from childhood into early adulthood.

These findings represent the beginning of an examination into the variance within the offending behaviour of the ISSP sample pre and post-intervention. As already noted, we can see that those young people who were the most persistent offenders prior to ISSP (those in Group 4) found it harder to escape the criminal justice system than those who committed the most serious offences prior to ISSP (Group 1). For example, Group 1, on average, desisted from offending within the first follow-up years; while Group 4's offending behaviour plateaued or even intensified at points after the intervention. These are complex patterns which require careful and skilful examination. Statistically, they indicate that 'regression to the mean' is not necessarily the same process for the frequency of offending as it is for the seriousness of offending. Stigler (1997) and Maraun et al, (2011) stress that in order to fully comprehend the impact of 'regression to the mean' on data it is vital to study the 'average' as well as the 'extreme' scores of the sample - to avoid making incorrect inferences. It is possible that the difference in the (predicted) long-term trajectories of persistent and serious offenders is the outcome of their particular statistical 'average' – i.e. serious and persistent offenders are two distinct groups who regress differently<sup>123</sup>. On the other hand, it could be that real differences in behaviour post-intervention were due to the differing responses serious offenders had to interventions, or persistent offenders had to repeat-processing by the criminal justice system. Naturally at this stage, we can only speculate, but the need

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<sup>123</sup> Further examination would be required to conclude whether differences in the rates of regression to the mean - observed in this mixture modelling analysis - may be considered theoretically and statistically distinct from other more common patterns of youth offending trajectories. Identified in the literature (c.f. Moffitt, 1997; Broidy et al, 2003; Sampson and Laub, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Sampson et al 2004; Nagin and Tremblay, 2005; Skardhamar, 2009).

to further examine differences in how young offenders 'regress' over time has been highlighted in this research.

#### 7.4 Summary

This chapter began by utilising latent growth curve (LGC) modelling to explore longer-term criminal behaviour within the ISSP sample and test which, if any, of the available individual, social, offender typology and criminal justice indicators had an influence on the young people's offending trajectories. The data confirmed that there was a sharp downward slope in frequency and seriousness of offending within the ISSP and comparison groups after the intervention – which is a typical pattern in pre-post-test evaluations (Cook and Campbell, 1979). Again, this strategy identified significant variance within the sample, suggesting that it is not homogeneous. Irrespective of the inclusion of a broad range of independent variables, the multivariate LGC results found the most dominant drivers of offending frequency and seriousness related to offender-based characteristics. Specifically, variables pertaining to *persistence of offending*– number of offences, status as a persistent offender - were identified as the strongest and most consistent predictors of offending frequency *and* seriousness in both the short and longer term. This finding indicates a reciprocal relationship between offence frequency and seriousness begins to emerge at certain points in young people's offending careers.

Meanwhile, offenders with the highest total Asset scores – i.e. those who were assessed as having the most complex ‘underlying needs’ – were at increased risk of committing more frequent and higher gravity offences in the immediate aftermath of their sentence and four years beyond. White rather than minority ethnic participants had a greater likelihood of continuing to commit more serious offences in the first year after ISSP commenced, as well and up to four years later.

Comparison cases also had significantly lower (albeit modest) estimates of offending seriousness in the first year post intervention. However, this pattern was not sustained in the longer term. The general pattern of ‘no-difference’ between the groups suggests that non-intensive community disposals may be just as effective as intensive ones in reducing offending. However, it remains that previously unknown differences existed between the ISSP and comparison groups which casts doubt over the robustness of the findings. Future researchers looking to evaluate programmes using a comparison group may need to consider introducing some randomness into the study design, or perhaps look into the feasibility of using ‘propensity score matching’ to minimise any observed differences between the groups<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Propensity score analysis, is an approach to estimating treatment effects with non-experimental data (Apel and Sweeten, 2010). It involves matching cases based on their predicted likelihood to ‘match’ the treatment group. This method was employed in the 24-month reconviction analysis (Gray et al, 2005), but proved difficult to operationalise on a retrospective basis. Propensity score matching assumes all relevant differences between the groups pre-treatment can be captured by observable characteristics. It is important therefore, when collecting a comparison sample to have access to high quality and extensive pre-treatment data. This was not appreciated at the beginning of the study and we were missing important areas of data (as relevant to highlighting the potential differences between the groups – not simply the differences in their immediate criminal conviction histories).

Confirming a finding from the previous 24-month reconviction study of ISSP (Gray et al, 2005), restorative justice was positively associated with a reduction in the frequency of offending in the first year after commencing ISSP. Finally, the analysis suggested that increased exposure (active days on the programme) may be associated with better outcomes in relation to offending behaviour. This result does not mean that ISSP programmes should be longer per se, but that repeating an ISSP sentence is not necessarily counter-productive.

Methodologically, the LGC technique has clear advantages for the analysis of the longitudinal data. First it allowed for a complex temporal model which could combine direct and indirect relationships. Second, the method produced robust models with commendable 'goodness of fit' measures. Indeed the respective RMSEA and CFI results were considerably more favourable than the  $R^2$  of the regression analysis in the previous chapter, and constituted, in the main, a 'very good' fit (Browne and Cudek, 1993). Finally, Amos facilitates a full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation using a missing data analysis technique, which is recognised as a more powerful way of dealing with missing data than standard deletion or imputation methods (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1999).

The second section of the chapter conducted an exploratory exercise into the marked variance within the sample. An analysis using finite mixture modelling identified four distinct groups of offenders within the ISSP sample. There was

simultaneous evidence of long-term persistence as well as relatively swift desistance (after the intervention) within this sample of ISSP cases. Notably, and corroborating the results from earlier analysis the results indicated that participants who were defined as 'persistent' rather than 'serious' offenders when they started ISSP were more likely to sustain their offending behaviour from childhood into early adulthood. While this exercise was essentially exploratory, it provided a useful means for analysing a large sample of diverse offenders. Future evaluative research might benefit from further investigation and exploitation of these methods.

## 7.5 Discussion

### – *Clarifying persistence*

As previously noted throughout this thesis, there is no accepted UK legal definition or academic agreement on what constitutes 'persistent' youth offending. When deciding upon a sentence, magistrates and youth offending teams are at liberty to apply their own judgements, subject to operational guidance. But, what does it mean to be a persistent young offender and how do we recognise one? Does it mean an offender who continually commits offences over a long period of time? Or does it include those offenders who commit a high volume of offences over a short period of time? Laub and Sampson (2003) correctly note the difficult conceptual and methodological issues regarding the term persistence within the academic community. Meanwhile, at a practice level, even those intensive programmes that have targeted 'persistent offenders' have employed variable definitions of the

select group<sup>125</sup> (Moore et al, 2006). Indeed, the qualification of ‘persistence’ for ISSP down-shifted from an explicit benchmark of four or more offending episodes in the prior twelve months in 2001, to a more indefinite suggestion that it would “likely” involve “an admission or finding of guilt in relation to imprisonable offences on at least three occasions in the past 12 months” in 2009 (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11).

The findings from this study suggest that further exploratory work should be completed on understanding the nature and legal boundaries of ‘persistence’. The analysis herein concluded that those young people who qualified for ISSP via the persistence route presented the greatest challenge for the young – and adult – criminal justice system in the longer term.

But what does this study mean by persistent? Empirically, the average number of offences committed one year (at liberty) before starting ISSP was 7.7. Similarly the mixture modelling exercise suggested that around half of the young people on ISSP presented the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system in terms of future offending (Groups 3 and 4 in the mixture modelling analysis). These young people had, on average committed at least eight offences in the year prior to starting ISSP

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<sup>125</sup> For contrast, The Freagarrach programme targeted the most persistent juvenile offenders in Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling in Scotland. To qualify, the young person needed to have at least five offending episodes within the previous twelve months and to have at least one offending episode within the last two months (Lobley, Smith and Stern 2001). Meanwhile, The Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP) in the United States targeted ‘high risk’, incarcerated young offenders who had demonstrated high recidivism rates (Wiebush *et al.* 2005).

(at liberty). As such, the current working guidelines at 'around three' offending episodes in the prior 12 months (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11) may be pitched too low and risk expanding an intensive programme to those whose behaviour, although problematic, might not warrant (or benefit from) a high-tariff sentence (c.f. Merrington, 2006).

Indeed, commentators have raised concerns about the potential detriment which may be caused by labelling a group of lower risk offenders as 'innately criminal' (Downes and Morgan, 2002). More generally, it can be argued that the emphasis upon identifying and managing particular populations of youth offenders on the basis of their previous criminal history and subsequent 'risk' needs to be constrained to ensure that 'risk' is seen alongside other social principles and priorities, i.e. justice and reintegration. Applying Cohen's 'dispersal of discipline' thesis (1979), it is recognised that intensive community penalties can be seen as resulting in wider, denser and different nets. Alternative arguments in favour of a less punitive approach and lower levels of intervention adhere to the sentencing principle of parsimony, which requires the penalty imposed to be the least burdensome possible (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002; Morgan, 2002; Ashworth, 2004).

#### – *Age at first offence*

Methodologically, this study found support that 'age at first offence' was a reliable and robust variable to collect and include in multivariate analysis (Francis et al,

2007). Ideally, it should also inform the selection of suitable and well-matched comparison group (Cook and Campbell, 1979). It is worth noting that while Asset collects information on this point it is often not completed, and may be based on anecdotal evidence (interviews with young person or their family)<sup>126</sup>. In this instance, the age at first offence was taken from the PNC data. It is a more accurate and consistent strategy for collecting information, although it naturally conveys the young person's first involvement in the criminal justice system rather than the first time they committed a crime.

– *What works: more questions than answers*

Despite the conceptual and legal uncertainty surrounding the matter of persistence, young people who are believed to constitute this group of offenders receive an inordinate amount of theoretical and political attention (Hagell and Newburn, 1994; Muncie, 2004; Haapanen et al, 2007). The emphasis can be seen as representing a “shifting from acts to people” (Hudson 2001:153). Indeed, the assumption that persistent offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of recorded crime (Wolfgang et al, 1972; Hagell and Newburn, 1994; Home Office, 2001; Prime et al, 2001), has led to a range of intensive interventions designed to modify their behaviour – most often to reduce reoffending (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006). Influencing recidivism rates has become a central focus of the ‘What Works’ body of research, and efforts have been made to improve the standard of evaluations (Friendship et al. 2005). Nevertheless, this study found no evidence that

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<sup>126</sup> Asset forms are completed by a social worker in consultation with the young person and a parent or carer. Information *may* also be gleaned from official sources.

ISSP out-performed other, comparable criminal justice interventions in terms of affecting future criminal behaviour among persistent and or serious offenders. What is more, these results are quite typical. The reconviction findings from some of the more rigorous evaluations, particularly in the United States have not been promising (Pearson 1988; Barton and Butts 1990; Wiebush et al, 2005). Similarly, reviewing the research literature, Gendreau, Goggin and Fulton thus determined that “when it comes to the matter of reducing offender recidivism, the conclusion is inescapable, ISPs [intensive supervision programmes] have had little effect on offender’s future criminal activity” (2000:198). Comparable results have also been found in relation to the IMPACT experiment and the ‘high-tariff’ IT projects in England and Wales (Folkard, Smith and Smith 1976; Bottoms 1995).

Thus a finding of ‘no difference’ suggests that, statistically speaking, ISSP was no better and certainly no worse than other disposals. That such findings are commonplace leaves researchers and policy makers in a position of stalemate; persistent offending behaviour appears to be rather resistant to interventions, be they therapeutic *or* punitive, intensive or non-intensive. As such, a result of ‘no difference’ implies that we do not know how to remove or suppress persistent offending behaviour - beyond its own natural fluctuations (c.f. Martinson, 1974; 1979). In this way, research in this field ultimately raises more questions than it answers (MacKenzie, 2000); is a reduction in offending a valid and testable priority

for youth justice? Do we need alternative measures of success?<sup>127</sup> What are the implications of the 'no-difference' result for evidence-based practice? Should the future of policies be based on quantitative studies that, despite their sophistication, struggle to find a causal relationship between offending and intervention programmes? Is our empirical and theoretical framework towards persistent offending sufficiently robust? Are random control trials necessary to properly establish their worth?

At this juncture it is important to bear in mind that predictors of persistent offending may not necessarily be what prompts the on-set of offending (Wikström and Treiber, 2008). Certainly, some of the most influential variables in this study relate to criminal history and offender status – but what *initially* prompted those young people to get involved in offending? Despite the predictive capacity of a selection of variables, we may not have a sufficiently comprehensive understanding of what *causes* a young person to become (and remain) involved in high frequency offending in the first instance. As Wikström and Treiber (2008) stress this poses pertinent empirical and practice considerations; if a “prevention strategy focuses on reducing as many risk factors as possible (risk-focused prevention) without properly addressing the extent to which the identified risk factors (stable

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<sup>127</sup> A common secondary aim of intensive community programmes is its impact on custodial sentencing by providing an 'alternative' to custody. However, the relationship between intensive programmes and custody rates is complex; one needs to take into account the impact of breach, since a potential consequence of breach is imprisonment. High breach rates should be expected however, especially if the conditions of 'robust' community programme are vigorously enforced. As Blomberg and Lucken have concluded: "It appears that, at best, the various intermediate punishment programmes serve only as temporary alternative to incarceration, and may, in fact, generate a need for expanded incarceration capacities" (1994:68-9).

predictors) are causes or mere correlates, there is a danger the prevention efforts will deal largely with factors that are markers or symptoms rather than causes, and waste valuable time and resources on their implementation and testing” (2008:8). It is critical therefore that we aim to unpick the complex and possibly unique influences that prompt and sustain young people’s persistent criminal behaviour, as well as considering what might divert them away from it.

– *Gaps in theoretical and statistical evaluative models*

There are numerous implications to deliberate; we may be mistaken about aspects of the direct and indirect drivers of persistent offending, as well as the potential of traditional responses to remedy them. Additionally, some causal forces may be impossible (or difficult) to reverse (such as the finding that young women desist faster than young men) (Wikström, 2007). Likewise, it may not always be possible to compensate for the effects of poor parental care in early childhood by aiming to improve parenting strategies later in the young person’s life. Moreover, it is unlikely that the causal factors influencing persistent offending remain constant over the life-course, but understanding the dynamic and temporal nature of these relationships remains uncertain from a quantitative perspective.

Other significant considerations are the methodological choices we make. Quantitative analysis relies on the operationalisation of valid concepts; these are subject to mathematical assumptions about both the data and the world, and tests

are conducted to assess whether empirical or theoretical observations should be considered important or valuable from those that are thought to be merely due to chance variation. Thus, the quantitative analysis herein considers multiple deprivation to be statistically unrelated to the frequency or seriousness of offending within the ISSP sample. While theoretically-informed *qualitative* and ethnographic studies have found a relationship between crime and poverty (Hannerz, 1969; Rainwater, 1970; Wilson, 1987; Sampson and Wilson, 1995; Bourgois, 2003) this quantitative exercise has not. Instead, in line with other *quantitative* studies (Soothill et al, 2004; Francis et al, 2007), the above analysis suggest that measures of the length and nature of a young person's criminal history are the most robust predictors of future offending, as are socio-demographic characteristics. However, it should be noted that this study lacked vigorous measures of social-level data. Although IMD is a highly respected methodological tool, we did not have sufficient information on cases in Wales or from the comparison sample, which is a manifest weakness in this study.

Arguably, these results do not take us very far (substantively) beyond what we already know about the young people concerned. What is more, this is not an uncommon methodological pattern; Jarjoura et al, (2002) explored the common lack of *statistical* evidence linking poverty to youth offending behaviour. Using national longitudinal data spanning 14 years to re-examine this finding , the team concluded that long-term area-level poverty (rather than a short-term spell of income deprivation) *was* related to youth offending behaviour, but that one-

dimensional measures of poverty produced unreliable results (Jarjoura et al, 2002). Clearly, operationalising better indicators of the social, political and economic environment must be a priority for future research.

– *The third way – an argument for mixed methods*

So, does the fact that this study failed to find a statistically significant link between persistent and serious offending and multiple deprivation contradict other studies findings? Not necessarily. Social or cultural processes like violence, involvement in gangs and criminal networks are complex to operationalise via questionnaires and are difficult to measure with quantitative precision. The unique and emotional nature of deprivation, crime and violence are difficult to explore in a structured interview and often requires the provision of psychological support for respondents (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). Not least, this sort of data takes a long time to collect and collate. Something many policy evaluations simply do not have the luxury of.

However, if social and cultural processes are not statistically identifiable and are not tested through alternative means, there is a risk that crucial and relevant knowledge about youth offending or youth justice could become marginalised. Such findings may not be subsequently translated into policy recommendations or practice. Instead, putative messages based on behaviours and characteristics that are amenable to quantification may develop a more dominant or convincing voice in the political arena (Bourgois et al, 2004). In sum, capturing the emotional,

cultural and psychological connections to persistent and serious offending was beyond the limits of this particular quantitative evaluation. But we should not assume these issues are extraneous to the matter of persistent and serious offending before we have exhausted our methodological pallet.

This quantitative exercise provided an insightful perspective on the rate and stability of change in criminal activity within the sample. It also unveiled the behavioural diversity between persistent and serious young offenders, and described the impact a young person's criminal history undoubtedly plays in promoting (or, alternatively, subduing) persistent offending. Not least, the data provided important policy-relevant evidence that, in terms of its effect on future offending patterns, ISSP proved no better and certainly no worse than other community or custodial disposals in reducing reoffending. The importance of the finding of 'no difference' is that non-intensive community disposals may be considered just as effective as intensive ones in affecting future behaviour. Meanwhile, these results also suggests that the use of juvenile custody can be carefully restricted to - as recommended by the UN convention on the Rights of the Child - a 'last resort' for the 'shortest possible time'<sup>128</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> Despite being a signatory of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) the failure to use youth custody in England and Wales as a 'measure of last resort' and the failure to protect young people inside custody from 'inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment' is a major source of critical commentary and research (Gray, 2011). The respective UN committee has also voiced its concerns of the wide use of custodial detentions for young people in England and Wales and recommended the development of a broad range of alternative measures to detain children in conflict with the law, as well as the establishment in statute of the principle that detention should be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time (United Nations, 2008).

Certainly, it is important to highlight the major advances that have been made in statistical modelling for analysing developmental trajectories. Growth modelling has now become a standard tool in the examination of change over time and the impact of interventions across time (Davidov et al, 2006). Application of these methodologies, some of which have been employed herein, have grown exponentially in various psychological and social science fields including developmental psychology (Broidy et al., 2003) developmental criminology (Bushway, Brame and Paternoster, 1999), and developmental psychopathology (Lacourse et al., 2003). Moreover, recent analytic advances allow greater headway to be made in identifying multiple populations within longitudinal samples (see Nagin, 2005). Quantitative policy evaluations in youth justice could be strengthened by the adoption of more sophisticated statistical models and longer term frameworks.

At this stage, it is apparent a mixed methods line of enquiry provides the possibility of a more comprehensive appraisal of the correlates and causal relationships associated with persistent and serious youth offending. Mixed or multi-method research has been hailed as a potential solution for the respective short-falls of both quantitative and qualitative research (Roberts, et al 2012). The rationale is that mono-method designs are limited to exploring one aspect of a social phenomenon, while multi-method designs are more flexible and better able to handle complexity such as emotional reactions or public opinion (Morgan, 2007;

Feilzer, 2010). The longitudinal framework of the quantitative data can also be applied to qualitative data. The benefits of including a qualitative aspect to the study is that it is an essentially heuristic methodology (Mitchell, 2000) suited to theory building and exploration of the personal (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) and cultural (Garfinkel, 1967; Cohen, 1973). Indeed, the emphasis in qualitative longitudinal research (Holland and Thompson, 2006; Farrall, 2006) is to examine the how respondents understand changes in their social and personal worlds; to explore shifts in emotions, self-awareness and identity and the legacy of key events for respondents (e.g. victimisation, contact with the police, and so forth). Such methods may throw light on how an individual's feelings towards, and experiences of crime interact with other stimulus within their everyday life, and it is to these ends the following chapters turn.

## **Part 3: Yesterday's rebels: A narrative account of persistent offending from childhood to young adulthood in Liverpool**

### **Chapter 8: Introduction**

Moving on from the quantitative analysis, Part 3 of this mixed methods thesis uses life-history interviews with individual ISSP cases to explore the emotional connections, cognitions and judgments young people express about their childhoods growing up in Liverpool as persistent young offenders. In line with some of the thinking on narrative research and the human experience of emotions outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, the analysis approaches emotions as being complex, episodic and dynamic. Thoughts, perceptions and experiences come and go over time and form an integral part of the evolving order of stimuli which make up the life-world of the individual. This contribution attempts to explore the manner in which crime and criminal justice shaped the individual's lives as children, adolescents and their future as adults. It explores this within the specific context of their locale (Liverpool) and seeks to understand the important influence community and culture had in these young people's everyday lives. Exploring and presenting participant's narratives provides a 'thick' (Ryle, 1949; Lincoln and Guba; 1985) layer of analysis and uncovers further avenues for consideration.

## 8.1 Structure and analytical orientation

Following the lead of Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1994), this section of the thesis aims to produce an account that forges a relationship between structural configurations and individual subjectivities. It thus begins with a socio-historical over-view of the city of Liverpool (Chapter 9), which is ‘where the story begins’. It is important to anchor the participant’s accounts in a specific cultural and geographic space, to “illuminate the intersection of biography, history, and society” (2001:5) (Bourdieu, 2000).

Chapter 10 then moves onto a thematic account of the qualitative data. Riessman (2005) suggests this approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases and locating common elements in the accounts they report. Chapter 11 meanwhile goes into considerably more depth, with the presentation of two detailed case studies. Here the emphasis shifts to describing the *way* a story is told. Although a thematic content remains, the focus is equally on *structure* – for example, how a particular narrative uses devices to make a story persuasive (Riessman, 2005)<sup>129</sup>.

Given the commitment to ‘reflexivity’ (see Section 2.13), the case studies also incorporate *interactional* and *performative* aspects of the interview encounter (Riessman, 2005). Clark and Mishler (1992) maintain that an accurate portrayal of an interview should attend to the pauses, interruptions, topic changing and other

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<sup>129</sup> The case study method is the first method of narrative analysis developed by William Labov and colleagues (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). It’s primary function is to represent the overall narrative and the communicative work it accomplishes.

paralinguistic features of the interaction, including the relationship between the interviewee and the researcher. How I responded to the individuals 'on the ground' will be inevitably reflected in my thoughts about them (Ely et al, 1997). Therefore, how I understood and interpreted an individual's behaviour, particularly in the case studies is included in the analysis. Additionally, interest goes beyond the spoken word to the dramaturgic aspects of how the story was 'performed' (Goffman, 1959, 1971; Riessman, 2003). Individuals inevitably draw on their personal and social histories and seek to involve, persuade and (perhaps) move an audience through language and gesture because, as Langellier (2001a) maintains, when we tell stories about our lives we attempt to perform our (preferred) identities.

## **8.2 Presentation of the data: Two notable reminders**

Chapter 3 provides full details of the qualitative sampling strategy and methodology. However, two issues are worth highlighting again here. First, this chapter analyses data arising from life-history interviews with nine young men from Liverpool who had previously been subject to ISSP, between seven and eight years earlier. It is further enhanced by data collected during the ISSP pilot including one-to-one interviews (with young people and their parents – all of which were completed by myself) and formal youth justice assessments<sup>130</sup>. Updated criminal history data (covering between seven and nine years) from the police national

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<sup>130</sup> Extensive information regarding the young persons' needs and circumstances is documented in the ASSET assessment, the tool used in the youth justice system. Under the YJB's National Standards at the time of the ISSP pilot (Youth Justice Board, 2004), an Asset assessment had to be made prior to any intervention with a young person and, with regard to DTOs, it must be updated prior to the young person's return to the community.

computer (PNC)<sup>131</sup> was also available for each young person, as well as publicised court reports and media data<sup>132</sup>. These additional sources of information play a minor but useful role in identifying consistencies and inconsistencies over time and facilitate a longitudinal perspective through key stages of the participant's young lives.

It is less common for narrative methods to be combined with other forms of qualitative and large-scale quantitative data, although not unheard of (see Riessman 1990; Bourgois et al 2004). In these situations Riessman advises that "Some fancy epistemological footwork is required because the interpretive perspective that typically underlies narrative work is very different than the realist assumptions of many forms of qualitative analysis and certainly of quantification" (Riesmann, 2001:24). Indeed, this thesis represents an exploratory exercise to assess if and how the epistemological, theoretical and logistical gulfs between quantitative and qualitative methods can be bridged. Reflection will be paid on the relative success of this marriage of methods in Chapter 12.

The second point, raised consistently in Part 1, is the challenge of representing the lives of the Liverpoolian sample. The intention to extract a 'thick' and 'authentic' qualitative analysis brings with it responsibilities (Bourgois, 2003). Various scholars

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<sup>131</sup> PNC data refers to the national computer that records police information on those arrested and prosecuted for crimes.

<sup>132</sup> A content analysis of media articles and published court reports was conducted using the Nexis UK website. This database has access to approximately 12,000 publications including UK national and local newspapers from 1975 to the present day.

have criticised traditional public policy research for 'inferiorising' the narratives of participants (Katz, 1986; Ward, 1989; Rainwater, 1994). Bourgois (2003) argues that academics have typically retreated from in-depth accounts of vulnerable populations and those that have engaged with them are fearful of presenting disadvantaged and marginalised people in ways which might prompt negative stereotyping. He uses the example of how Oscar Lewis's (1966) work on the 'culture of poverty' in the 1960's was habitually misinterpreted; Lewis's call for an expansion of public-sector intervention was perceived as an analysis of ethnic, gender and class deficiencies (Bourgois, 2001). This observation is a salient one. Contemporary political culture in the UK remains hostile to the topic of unruly children; Nayak (2003) has identified a dichotomy in the literature which perceives children and young people as either 'angels' who require protection from marauding adult criminals (particularly paedophiles) (Delemont, 2001) or 'anti-social' 'devils' whose public appearance is widely accepted as intimidating (Pain, 2001; Burney, 2005). In this respect, researchers might be wary of how they represent particular populations of people for fear they are succumbing to a pornography of poverty or violence.

Arguably, this situation has been exacerbated by the lack of robust, in-depth qualitative data in the evidence-based research field (Bryman, 1988; Spencer et al, 2003); we simply have very few authentic (Geertz, 1973) accounts of the lived experiences of persistent young offenders. I am concerned the following analyses may appear, in parts, controversial. Some of the young people I interviewed for this

study revealed aspects about their lives I did not and could not predict. Despite having worked alongside the ISSP team during the pilot (nine years earlier) it was not until I completed these follow-up interviews that I came to understand much more about the individual's lives and the environment they were embedded in as children. It is possible their stories will be misread as insalubrious accounts of poverty and a troubled male youth population. However, from an ethical position, it was imperative that I did not ignore or censor the reality of the stories I was told. The following chapters are based on the articulate and remarkable words of the participants, alongside conscious attention to reflexivity.

### **8.3 Note on text**

All transcripts were listened to and transcribed, using the young people's own intonation and vernacular. Pauses and gestures were also noted in the transcripts and are displayed inside the quotes. To give a more specific indication of the presence and length of pauses, their length is noted in seconds in the text rather than with ellipses.

All names and mention of specific locations have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

### **8.4 'Gang' Terminology**

The literature on youth and adults 'gangs' has long debated the definition of gang formation and appropriate terminology (Sanders, 1994; Decker, 2001; Klein, 2001;

Klein and Maxson, 2006; Pitts, 2007; Smithson, 2013). Given the focus of this thesis - on persistent young offenders - clarifying the conceptualisation of gangs was not one of its objectives. However it is necessary to make clear that I rarely use the word 'gang'. This term was seldom used by the participants. The various relationships and networks they described being associated with were unique to their immediate environment, involving networks of young people, often friends, who were associated with more remote groups of adult organised criminals or powerful and established drugs families. Along these lines the concept of criminal embeddedness, introduced by Hagan (1993), is relevant here. Criminal embeddedness refers to immersion, or involvement, in ongoing criminal networks. These networks can consist of more than just peers—they can also contain deviant family members or other acquaintances. The important point is that these individuals comprise a distinct network of which an individual is an “active” member and that this particular set of relationships is oriented toward criminal values, acts, and opportunities. For these reasons I refer to the term 'criminal network' and where possible aim to elaborate on the nature of the relationships where such information was provided.

## Chapter: 9 Liverpool: a brief socio-cultural history

The intimate stories shared by the participants in this thesis cannot be understood in a historical or cultural vacuum. The geographic specificity of the research site - the city of Liverpool - enters the arena as the soil on which the participant's stories were built. The following chapter is an attempt to provide a physical and historical framework of the city the participants grew up in<sup>133</sup>. Its purpose is two-fold; to highlight the significance of place and context within the narrative accounts, and second, to provide some descriptive detail of the area, such that future researchers can draw informed comparisons with related studies. The chapter begins by introducing Liverpool's history as a key international seaport, before looking at its more recent experience of a sharp economic downturn and deprivation; community relations with the police and the role of crime and drugs in providing an underground economy. Finally, the chapter recognises the spatial stereotyping of the city, prior to acknowledging some its unsung achievements.

### 9.1 The story of a seaport

The city of Liverpool and its surrounding region 'Merseyside'<sup>134</sup> is one of the major conurbations of the North West of England. Following five hundred years as a rural fishing village, Liverpool rapidly expanded after the 17th century. It was well placed to trade with new colonies across the Atlantic and the town prospered (Evans,

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<sup>133</sup> All nine participants were brought-up in the City of Liverpool from birth.

<sup>134</sup> The Metropolitan Boroughs of Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens and Wirral form the metropolitan county of Merseyside.

1991; Parkinson, 1991). Subsequently an expansion and urbanisation took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, as the area benefitted from trans-Atlantic trade (Milne, 2006). Its prime location, bridging east and west meant it became one of the world's busiest seaports, which at one point handled up to 40 per cent of the world's trade (Macilwee, 2006). By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool spawned more millionaires than any other British city except London (Rubinstein, 1977). Equally important was the Industrial Revolution; Liverpool benefitted greatly from the growth of the Lancashire cotton industry as well as its own manufacturing industries in shipbuilding, rope making, metal working, sugar refining and machine making. By the early 20th century, it was the second most important port in the UK after London (Parkinson, 1991). The riches generated during its maritime heyday financed much of the city's famous architecture. During this time its population grew significantly from approximately 5,000 in 1700 (Longmore, 2006) to more than 550,000 recorded in the 1881 census (Census, 1881).

Although Liverpool was the trading heart of the British Empire during the 19th Century, the casual nature of dock work, the influx of transient populations and the availability of alcohol meant crime and poverty were common place (Macilwee, 2008). A stark contrast between the abundant wealth of the merchants and the severe poverty of some residents, in particular immigrants who came in from Ireland existed (Gallman, 2000; Macilwee, 2006). The Irish were not the only population that Liverpool inherited courtesy of its bustling port. Liverpool is a key site in the history of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom. For example Britain's

oldest Black community took root in Liverpool around the 1730's (Costello, 2001). The city is also home to the oldest Chinese community in Europe (Pieke et al, 2004). As a legacy of the port, the population became multiethnic, adding to Liverpool's claim as a cosmopolitan city and beginning the tension that characterised race relations and religious sectarianism in Liverpool throughout the 20th century (Neal, F., 2003).

The importance of Liverpool as an active manufacturing centre and port made it an obvious strategic target during World War II, and it became the second most bombed city in Britain. Almost 4,000 people perished and large areas of the city were reduced to rubble. As a result post-war Liverpool suffered a housing crisis (Macilwee, 2008). Compounding the problem, the port ceased to have such a central role in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as market routes changed and Liverpool subsequently entered a period of decline (Milne, 2006).

## **9.2 20<sup>th</sup> century: economic downturn and public protests**

The economic decline which began after World War II continued to impact Liverpool over the course of the 20th century. During the 1970's structural changes in the global economy were beginning to manifest in high unemployment and a series of vitriolic industrial disputes. The effects of a national recession and a depleted business sector intensified problems during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Macilwee, 2008). A further blow to the city's resources was migration; almost half

of its population between 1930 and 2001 moved elsewhere (Garcia et al, 2010). A key source of poverty was the increasing use of containers at the Docks, which swiftly ended thousands of waterfront jobs (Couch, 2003). Particular neighbourhoods suffered multiple deprivation, including low income and economic inactivity<sup>135</sup>, poor educational achievement, inadequate health care and high levels of crime<sup>136</sup> (Couch, 2003). By 1994 Merseyside qualified for European Structural Funding targeted at underperforming regions as it had an average gross domestic product below 75% of the European Union average (Garcia et al, 2010).

It was these circumstances, in part, that gave rise to the riots of 1981 that took place in the L8 postcode area of Liverpool (commonly referred to as the Toxteth Riots in the media<sup>137</sup>). In mid-April 1981 the Brixton area of London experienced serious civil disturbances, involving conflicts with police, destruction of vehicles and buildings and widespread looting. Lord Scarman was appointed to head an inquiry that would examine the antecedents of the disorder (Frost and Phillips, 2011), during which time similar disturbances broke-out in Liverpool as well as in enclaves of Birmingham and Leeds. The four-night eruption in Liverpool resulted approximately 150 buildings being burnt down; 258 police officers needed hospital treatment; 160 people were arrested (Carf, 1981) and 214 police vehicles were

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<sup>135</sup> Unemployment had doubled by June 1979 and some 82,000 people (1 in 8 of the workforce) were out of work. The council claimed a high proportion of these were young unskilled men (Merseyside County Council, 1979).

<sup>136</sup> The recorded crime rate in the city of Liverpool increased from 99 crimes per 1,000 population in 1979 to 151 in 1987 (Parker and Kirby, 1996).

<sup>137</sup> Locally, the area in which the riots took place is referred to as 'L8' and the riots are known as the 'L8 riots'. Toxteth meanwhile is understood by residents to incorporate a smaller collection of streets with a predominantly white population – not the site from which the riots escalated (Frost and Phillips, 2011).

damaged (Liverpool Daily Post, 2011). Merseyside police officers responded with CS gas grenades - the first time it had been employed by police on the British mainland (Frost and Phillips, 2011).

Eventually, Lord Scarman's Inquiry was extended to Liverpool and beyond (1981), while the Gifford Report (1989), which examined deprivation and inequality in Liverpool, and Lord Swann's Inquiry into the education of children from ethnic minorities (1985) took these issues further. The influential<sup>138</sup> Scarman Report (1981) recognised that the riots were the result of a society deeply fragmented along racial lines. He found that "the riots were essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by young black people against the police" (The Scarman Report, 1981: para3.110). He stressed that black and minority ethnic communities had lost confidence and trust in the police whose methods often resulted in 'racial discrimination' and 'racial disadvantage' (The Scarman Report, 1981).

The 1980's involved a second momentous event which further damaged the Liverpoolian communities perception of the police. In 1989, a fatal crush occurred on the terraces at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough Stadium, killing 96 Liverpool fans including men, women and children. This had a traumatic effect on people in both cities, and resulted in legally imposed changes to crowd management at football events. Moreover, a vitriolic blaming of Liverpool fans by high profile

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<sup>138</sup> Neal (S.,2003) argues that in combination with the later Macpherson Report (1999), the Scarman Report provided a new framework for 'race relations' in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK.

media sources incensed the local community; a front-page story in *The Sun* tabloid under the headline 'The Truth' alleged that fans "picked pockets of victims", "urinated on the brave cops" and "beat up PCs giving the kiss of life" (*The Sun*, 1989:1). This led to a local boycott of the newspaper which has continued, albeit to a limited extent, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, there has been persistent parliamentary debate and numerous inquiries<sup>139</sup> on the disaster (Scratton, 1999).

Twenty years later the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports, Andy Burnham requested that the police, ambulance service and all other public bodies release documents which had not been made available to Lord Taylor's judicial inquiry (1989, 1990). This was a critical moment, and the Hillsborough Independent Panel was formed (BBC, 2012a). With access to a wealth of new data they were able to reassess the evidence and concluded that no Liverpool fans were responsible for the disaster; that the main cause of the tragedy had been a 'lack of police control' and that historical overcrowding issues had compromised crowd safety 'at every level' (Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012). More controversially, the panel reported that as many as 164 police statements had been altered with up to 116 having unfavourable comments against the police excoriated or changed. It also found that 41 of the 96 Liverpool fans who were crushed to death could have survived if the authorities had acted with better care and more swiftly.

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<sup>139</sup> There followed a Home Office inquiry, criminal investigations, compensation hearings as far as the House of Lords, a protracted inquest, a judicial review, a judicial scrutiny and private prosecutions.

The importance of the Hillsborough Independent Panel was that its report had formally recognised the professional misconduct of the (South Yorkshire) police and other public services. The subsequent 'cover-up' raised fundamental questions about the legal and political accountability of the police amongst large sections of the Merseyside community and beyond (Scratton, 1999). Loss of confidence and mistrust of the police was thus not limited to a discreet area of Liverpool (L8), in fact, damaged faith in the process and mechanics of justice has underlined the wider community's perception of the police during the last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century (c.f. Loader and Mulcahy, 2003, Tyler, 1990).

### 9.3 Regional politics

The recent history of regional politics in Liverpool follows a remarkable and haphazard trajectory. Traditionally, the Conservatives, Liberals and Irish Nationalists were considered all the more important to local interests. Not until 1955 did Labour first secure any significant profile, then, in the 1980s it became known as a militant bastion of left-wing politics. Between 1983 and 1987, a militant left-wing faction gained control of several Labour councils. These politicians frequently challenged central government policy and created a significant deficit after investing in housing stock and refusing to set an annual budget (Hatton, 1988)<sup>140</sup>. It was a controversial period in which the City Council appeared politically radicalised and financially

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<sup>140</sup> The actions in Liverpool were part of a wider campaign within English Councils. The tactic involved non-compliance in budget setting in order to prompt central government to intervene directly in providing local services, or withdraw new powers to restrict council spending (Loughlin, 1996).

irresponsible (Parkinson, 1988, 1990) despite the progressive nature of some of their policies (Meegan, 1990). More recently Liverpool has a reputation for voter-apathy, with its central wards having some of the lowest turn-outs in the country for the 2001 and 2005 general elections<sup>141</sup>.

Beyond the council, from the 1960s Liverpool also developed a reputation for radical trade unionism (Masden, 1992; Murden, 2006), in fact the three year industrial dispute between the dockers and Mersey Docks and Harbour Company which started in 1985 was most protracted in recent British history (Castree, 2009).

#### **9.4 James Bulger and the rise of popular punitivism**

A series of watershed events took place in Liverpool during the early 1980's and 1990's that cast a long-term influence on matters pertaining to crime, justice and inequality both locally and nationally. After the L8 riots The Scarman Report (1981) was welcomed by the political mainstream and tangible changes to police practices followed. Likewise, the Hillsborough disaster prompted significant adjustments to the ways in which crowd control and safety at sports events was managed. In 1993, a further event took place on Merseyside that had a dramatic effect on the nation's consciousness; attitudes towards youth crime and notions of criminal responsibility were significantly influenced by an unprecedented national display of public grief and anger.

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<sup>141</sup> Liverpool Riverside turnouts at General Elections: 1997 - 51.6% ; 2001 - 34.1%; 2005 - 41.5%; 2010 - 52.1%.

In 1993 Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, at the age of ten, abducted and murdered two-year-old James Bulger. His body was found mutilated on a railway line two days after his murder. Grainy video footage, now infamous, captured James being led away by Thompson and Venables and disappearing into the crowds of the New Strand shopping centre in Bootle (Hay, 1995). As Franklin and Petley describe “the event seemed to symbolise nothing less than the uncertainties, insecurities and moral unease which characterised the central moral infrastructure of society” (1996:138).

Controversially, the case was tried in an adult adversarial setting. Subsequently, Venables and Thompson, both aged 11 at the trial, were found guilty and became the youngest convicted murderers in Britain for almost 250 years (Morrison, 1997). Mr Justice Morland described the abduction and murder of James an act of “unparalleled evil and barbarity” (The Guardian, 1993). At the close of the trial, the judge lifted the usual restrictions and permitted the media to publish photographs of the perpetrators, as well as extensive background information which subsequently identified their families. ‘Boy A’ and ‘Boy B’ became Thompson and Venables and their police ‘mug shots’ became iconic images that fascinated the public’s desire for information on the case (Hay, 1995; Norris and McCahill, 2006).

The trial set a series of legal precedents; after a series of controversial court cases, Home Secretaries were essentially stripped of the power to set tariffs in such cases<sup>142</sup>. In 1999 a European Court of Human Rights judgement supported appeals made on behalf of the two young men that their trial had violated Article 6 of the ECHR because they had been prevented from participating effectively and instructing their lawyers to support and advise them. One of the most contentious developments took place during the trial when the lead prosecution counsel Richard Henriques QC, successfully rebutted the principle of *doli incapax* which presumes that young children (previously between the ages of 10-13) cannot be held legally responsible for their actions, a principle which was formally abolished by the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (Cipriani, 2009).

Cipriani (2009) argued that the case prompted “unprecedented public hysteria” (2009: 115). During the trial large hostile crowds gathered outside to shout taunts and struck the vehicle carrying the boys in and out of the court each day (The Guardian, 1993). Notably, as Morrison (1997) and Green (2008) identified, at the same time as the Bulger trial opened, in France three young boys, one of them aged ten, kicked and beat a tramp to death. In Norway a five-year-old girl, Silje Redergard, was beaten and left to die in freezing conditions. However, these cases did not attract the same level of publicity as the Bulger case. As a point of comparison, in Norway a team of counsellors was set up to work with the two male

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<sup>142</sup> Due to the Court of Appeal ([1997] 2 WLR 67) and House of Lords ([1997] 3 All ER 97) judgments in *R. v. Secretary of State for the Home Department ex parte Venables and Thompson*, as well as in the European Court of Human Rights ([1999] T and V v. UK, 16 December), Howard’s tariff was overruled and the practice was outlawed.

perpetrators in school – to which they had returned within a week. As Green (2008) has studied, Redergard's killers were shielded from public antagonism and carefully reintegrated into the local community. The author contends that the consensual system of politics in Norway fosters informed policy debate and the prioritisation of expert evaluations, which, he claims, avoids the inevitable 'law and order' 'arms race' that is evoked by adversarial politics (Green, 2008).

Nevertheless, in the wake of the James Bulger murder, Labour started to close the Conservatives lead on the issue of 'law and order'. Tony Blair's speech to the 1995 party conference became a landmark in penal history (Windlesham, 2001). In this, he successfully captured the prevailing mood, that 'something must be done about crime' with his desire to move to a system of mandatory minimum sentences; claims that 'prison worked' and a return to economic arguments on deterrence (Hay, 1995). According to Reiner (2007) anxiety about a new generation of lawless children, epitomised by the Bulger case, evoked a curious form of political consensus on criminal justice policy that involved politicians engaging in a game of "anything you can do, I can do tougher" (Reiner, 2007: 122).

### **9.5 Criminal networks and the underground drugs economy**

A legacy of the city's history as a seaport was that Liverpool became a popular site for the trafficking of illegal drugs, courtesy of its well established trade routes (Macilwee, 2008). The development of a buoyant drugs culture inevitably attracted

the formation of criminal networks and the employment of young people, in particular young men (Sergi, 2012). Sergi (2012) maintains that by the 1950's around a third of all drug offences in the UK were committed in the Liverpool area. By the 1960's the vibrant Liverpool cultural scene had driven the use of a broad range of drugs. Later, in the 1980's Liverpool was colloquially known as 'skag' or 'smack' city on account of an explosion in organised crime and heroin use (Sergi, 2012). More recently it has been claimed that Liverpool is one of the central distribution networks for illegal drugs in the UK, as well as Ireland (The Guardian, 2001b) and 'clubland' resorts in Ibiza (Liverpool Echo, 2006). Indeed, when the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)<sup>143</sup> was established the then Deputy Chief Constable Jon Murphy described Liverpool as a "mission critical area", because of its links with Spain, Turkey and South America (Liverpool Daily Post, 2007). Over time, several Liverpool criminal networks emerged and became increasingly wealthy. Recent estimates suggest that local drug magnates Colin 'Smigger' Smith (now deceased) accumulated assets worth £200m (The Guardian, 2008a), while Curtis Warren was once listed on the Sunday Times Rich List<sup>144</sup> (The Telegraph, 2009).

Operating at a different stratum, far below the major players are the street dealers, many of whom are teenagers (The Independent, 2008a), some as young as 13 (Sergi, 2012). According to Steve Watson, a former detective chief superintendent

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<sup>143</sup> SOCA tackles serious organised crime, including Class A drugs trafficking, people smuggling, major gun crime, fraud, computer crime and money laundering.

<sup>144</sup> Curtis Warren is said to be worth anything from £80m-£460m. He appeared on to the Sunday Times Rich List in 1997, listed as a "property developer" (The Telegraph, 2009).

from Merseyside Police, contemporary 'gang' members operate in a collection of loose networks, strictly demarcated by location (The Guardian, 2008b). Typically, the members are young men, and fulfil multiple functions on behalf of the established criminal families and networks in Liverpool; they can be used to hide guns, run drugs and intimidate shopkeepers who refuse to pay for protection, as well as carrying out reconnaissance on police movements and rival gang members (The Guardian, 2008b). Watson stressed that: "Two or three people take a lead role in the gangs. If we take the head off, somebody else comes to prominence" (The Guardian, 2008b). Indeed as indicated in Section 8.4 members of the ISSP sample who were closely linked with criminal networks, rarely used the term 'gang' in association to their criminal behaviour or relationships.

Two gangs who have attracted recent public attention are the Norris Green Strand Gang, also known as the Nogga Dogz, and the Crocky Crew, from Croxteth. Police estimate there are around 40 members in each group (The Guardian, 2008b). Increasing enmity between them led to a series of tit-for-tat attacks which escalated in 2004, when the leader of the Crocky crew, Danny McDonald, 19, was shot dead (The Guardian, 2007). The territorial feud intensified as old scores were settled and more than 70 incidents between the warring groups were noted by the police (The Independent, 2008a). Then, in August 2006, Liam 'Smigger' Smith, a leading member of the 'Nogzy Soldiers' was shot dead at close range directly outside Altcourse Prison in Fazakerley Liverpool. Shop owners in the rival area of Croxteth, some of whom were 'protected' by the Crocky Crew closed temporarily

after Smith's death for fear of violence and retaliation (The Guardian, 2008b). A 10-week trial in 2007, involving 11 defendants, saw three men convicted of murder and one of manslaughter. During the trial Merseyside Police Superintendent Andrew Ward reported the impact the hostility was having on the local community; he claimed local schools were receiving fewer applications and the housing association in Croxteth and Norris Green, for the first time in four years, had more vacant properties than tenants (The Independent, 2007).

A year after Liam 'Smigger' Smith was killed, 11 year-old Rhys Jones was shot dead in a case of suspected mistaken identity<sup>145</sup>. The shooting made headline news and captured the nation's attention; Everton players and fans paid tribute to Rhys in a minute's applause during a home game and over 2,500 mourners attended his funeral at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral. Detectives identified Sean Mercer as the likely killer within a week, but it took officers using techniques honed in counter-terror operations eight-and-a-half months to amass sufficient evidence to bring charges against him (BBC, 2008). Investigators used bugging devices to record conversations held in the days following the murder (BBC, 2008). A breakthrough took place when the police secured a key witness to testify against Mercer, only known as boy-x. The Crown Prosecution Service took the almost unprecedented decision to proceed with granting him immunity from prosecution for his role in the murder under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005. As part of the deal,

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<sup>145</sup> Sean Mercer pleaded not guilty at his trial and offered no information on the motive for the shooting. Since Rhys Jones had no part in local criminal networks or gangs the killing has been assumed to be the result of mistaken identity or 'gang crossfire' (The Guardian, 2008c).

Boy X was provided with a new identity and support to relocate after the trial - such was the continued threat to his life (The Independent, 2008b). The rigorous response of the criminal justice system underlines the serious and violent nature of the crimes young people in enclaves of Liverpoolian criminal networks were implicated in.

The indomitable approaches adopted by Merseyside police and the Crown Prosecution Service to secure convictions— particularly in relation to drugs, firearms and youth justice are worth examining in detail since these developments provide a framework for the criminal justice environment in which ISSP was launched and members of the sample grew-up. As detailed in Chapter 10 crime affected many intimate facets of their daily lives. Certainly, a notable number of the Liverpool ISSP cohort (n=65) were found to be embedded in the underground drugs economy and gang-related networks. From the single ISSP team from which the qualitative sample was drawn, seven years after the evaluation three were in prison for gang-related murders, one had been shot-dead in a much publicised revenge attack and another had been directly involved in a revenge attack that involved the use of an army-issue grenade. Finally, of the nine interviewed four confessed to having direct experience of gangs and using firearms during their teenage years. Indeed, serious crime, violence and firearms had encapsulated the lives of some of the cohort.

## 9.6 Police 'disruption'

In 2005 (one year after the first ISSP evaluation was published - when the Liverpool cohort were on average 18 years old) the 'Matrix Disruption' team was formed within Merseyside Police Force to address gun and drug crime, which had increased exponentially. Over two years from 2003-2005 the total number of firearms incidents had increased from 312 to 426 (+36.5%) (Liverpool Echo, 2004); the number of crimes in which a gun was fired had risen from 119 to 267 (+ 125%) and fatal shootings had increased - nine young men (average age 22.6 years) were killed by firearms during 2004 (Liverpool Echo, 2004). In addition, the new Matrix team was also established to address the populist law and order zeitgeist, anti-social behaviour (c.f. Burney, 2005). The unit claimed it would utilise every legal power available, using a novel range of technologies (such as use of the UK's first 'spy drone' (BBC, 2009)). However, the thrust of their strategy lay in "targeted disruption"<sup>146</sup> - intense surveillance of a selected group of offenders coupled with uncompromising repeated prosecutions, even for minor offences (traditionally dismissed in pursuit of more serious convictions). For example, one young man, thought to be part of the 'Crocky Crew' gang was prosecuted for driving with an under-inflated tyre (The Herald, 2008). Over 12 months to 2005 the Matrix unit conducted 5,800 stop and searches<sup>147</sup> and made 636 arrests of people involved in

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<sup>146</sup> 'Disruption' is a style of policing usually employed in relation to organised crime and drug networks and is often associated with 'intelligence led policing' (van Staden et al, 2011): "Instead of aiming at the detection of crimes that have already occurred, police strategies and tactics increasingly aim to disrupt criminality in such a way as to prevent crime from occurring or to reduce its gravity if it does occur. Disruption has joined the list of quantitative performance indicators of agency success" (Innes and Sheptycki, 2004:2).

<sup>147</sup> To provide some context, a total of 21,354 stop and searches (conducted under s1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) were carried out by Merseyside police (all units) during 12 months from 2004/5, of which 14% resulted in an arrest. A further 1,791 of Stop and searches of persons

gun and gang crime (The Herald, 2008). As one officer stressed “We are in their faces all day long” (The Times, 2008). The team focused on those who met at least one of the following criteria: had been shot at; frequented a house, pub or office that had been attacked by firearms or had been warned by the police of intelligence that his life was in danger. It was also confirmed that those on the list were all male and aged between 16 and 29 (The Times, 2008). Once on that list, the individual received a hand-delivered letter which read;

*“We know you are involved in gun crime. If you don’t stop we will make it our number one priority to put you in jail using every power we have; put you under surveillance; evict you from your home; get an ASBO against you; take your child away; stop and search you whenever we want until we find something” (The Times, 2008).*

Notably, two of the interviewees mentioned The Matrix Unit by name during their interviews. One participant, Luke, referred to their radical strategy of ‘targeted disruption’ which he expressed considerable resentment towards. He claimed, as others in the sample concurred, that repeated stop and searches by Merseyside Police often involved violence and the removal of personal items; he complained that they were excessive and continued regardless of any constructive changes in his circumstances, such as detachment from his criminal peers (See section 10.3 for a fuller consideration of these issues). Certainly, police stop-and-search powers in Britain have a long and controversial history (Miller et al. 2000; Bowling and Phillips

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under s60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, were conducted. No stop and searches under s44 (1) and (2) of the Terrorism Act 2000 took place (Home Office, 2005).

2002; Delsol and Shiner 2006). While the law provides a legal basis on which the police may stop and search an individual (of any age) with<sup>148</sup> or without<sup>149</sup> grounds for suspicion, it remains that their excessive or disproportionate use with ethnic minorities has led to serious public disturbances in Liverpool's recent history, as well as being a point of national tension more broadly (Miller, 2010). Unsurprisingly perhaps, government statistics show that in 2009/10 Merseyside had the third highest stop and search rate in England and Wales (37 per 1,000 of population) (Ministry of Justice, 2011b). However, the legitimacy<sup>150</sup> and utility<sup>151</sup> of its use in relation to children and young adults – a strategy explicitly pursued by the Matrix Unit - is ambiguous. Future research would do well to engage with the character and impact of these stops and searches and the prospects for their regulation with the youth population<sup>152</sup>.

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<sup>148</sup> The laws requiring the police to provide grounds for any 'stop and search' fall under s. 1 of PACE (used to search for stolen goods, items for use in property offences and knives, among other things), s. 23 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and s. 47 of the Firearms Act 1968.

<sup>149</sup> Stop and search also includes searches not requiring grounds; these include s. 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and ss. 44(1) and (2) of the Terrorism Act 2000. However, in 2010 the later was ruled unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights because the power was considered too broad to protect people from potential abuses. (European Court of Human Rights [2010] Gillian and Quinton v. UK, 12 January).

<sup>150</sup> The judgments of Macpherson (1999) along with other commentators have upheld the discriminatory character of contemporary stop and search practices (Bowling and Phillips 2002).

<sup>151</sup> Previous research has raised significant questions about the crime detection and prevention benefits of searches (Miller, et al. 2000).

<sup>152</sup> In August 2012, a campaign group of 15 youth organisations called on the government and the police to radically reduce the use of stop and search on young people in London. They argued that stop and search is ineffective, has a negative effect on police and community relations and is discriminatory (Higgs, 2012).

Today drugs and guns are still very much part of Liverpool's crime scene and a focus for SOCA<sup>153</sup>; Merseyside continues to have the highest rate of police recorded drug offences in England and Wales (10 per 1,000 population, while the national average is 4 per 1,000 and London has 8 per 1,000) (ONS 2012b). It also has the third highest recorded homicide rate in England and Wales (17 homicides per million population) (Home Office, 2012c). The deployment of a broad spectrum of firearms remains problematic: between June 2008 and March 2010 there were seven hand grenade explosions in the UK, five of which took place in Merseyside (The Independent, 2012).

### 9.7 2011 riots

Historical issues pertaining to deprivation, male youth culture<sup>154</sup> and police relations were reignited in 2011 when street disturbances took place across the UK, including Liverpool and Birkenhead. The riots across England lasted for five days in total. Five people were killed and widespread arson and looting led to hundreds of business and properties being damaged (Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, 2011). The subsequent government inquiry concluded that a range of triggers had contributed towards the riots; they believed 'stop and search' was a major source of discontent which hampered community relations with the police. The inquiry also found the young people involved in their research reported a pervasive sense

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<sup>153</sup> SOCA identifies Liverpool, as well as London and Birmingham as one of key cities from which drugs are distributed (SOCA, 2012).

<sup>154</sup> The panel reported that 90% of those involved in the 2011 disturbances were male and 53% were age 20 or under (Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, 2011).

of injustice relating to lack of opportunities and cuts to education<sup>155</sup>. This more abstract, ontological insecurity was summed up as;

*“A sense of injustice, powerlessness and lack of opportunity weighed heavily in their minds. They did not feel they had a stake in society. Young people across the country are worried about the prospect of long-term unemployment”*  
*(Riots, Communities and Victims Panel, 2011:92).*

Although it is still early to make a clear verdict on the origins of the riots, the authors discussed above indicate that the global recession and subsequent austerity measures have sparked fears about precarious and uncertain futures within the sections of the youth population. In combination with weak social bonds and exclusionary activities of the criminal justice system (in particular the police), deep divisions within civil society began to erupt (c.f. Young, 1999).

### **9.8 Deprivation in 21<sup>st</sup> century Liverpool**

In addition to the buoyant underground drugs economy and the concomitant problems of youth crime and the deployment of firearms, Liverpool has struggled to overcome entrenched deprivation. Despite over a decade of economic growth and, in some areas, a narrowing of the gap between Liverpool and the rest of the UK, the city still has considerable progress to make in order to overcome the legacy of decades of socio-economic decline:

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<sup>155</sup> Such as the increase in student tuition fees and the scrapping of the education maintenance allowance.

- Liverpool remains the most deprived Local Authority area in England as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)<sup>156</sup>, 2010. There are persistently high levels of deprivation in the city and<sup>157</sup> its position has not changed from the 2004 and 2007 Indices (Liverpool City Council, 2011).
- The extent of deprivation in Liverpool, as measured by the IMD, stands out from other cities; almost a quarter of England's 100 most deprived small areas are in Liverpool (Liverpool City Council, 2011).
- A third of Liverpool children live 'in poverty'; 34% of youngsters in families survive on less than 60% of median household income (the official government measure)<sup>158</sup>. The picture is replicated around Merseyside with high rates in Knowsley (32%), Wirral (25%) and St Helens (25%) (End Child Poverty, 2012).
- Linking crime with poverty and alienation the UN's International Narcotics Control Board said parts of the Liverpool were considered "no-go areas" (INCB, 2012). Their report claimed that parts of the UK were locked in a downward spiral caused by "a vicious cycle of social exclusion and drugs problems and fractured communities" (The Telegraph, 2012).

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<sup>156</sup> The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 is based on the concept that deprivation consists of more than just poverty, but also a general lack of resources and opportunities. As such, the IMD is the collective name for measures of different aspects of deprivation, including employment; income; health and disability; education, skills and training; crime; living environment; barriers to access to services (Communities and Local Government, 2011).

<sup>157</sup> The IMD is a gauge of relative deprivation that measures how deprived an area is compared with another. It is not a measure of absolute deprivation. Any change over time is a measure of change in relative rank rather than absolute improvement or decline (Communities and Local Government, 2011).

<sup>158</sup> These data were compiled using 'National Indicator 116', an official indicator of child poverty at local level (HMRC, 2011).

- Liverpool has the fifth highest percentage of people living in income deprived households in England and is the second highest ranked local authority area in England for employment deprivation (Liverpool City Council, 2011).
- Areas of Everton and Anfield fall within the most income-deprived one per cent in England. Yet Goodison Park and The Kop, home to Everton and Liverpool Football clubs respectively, are based within these regions. Some of the football players for these teams earn in excess of £70,000 per week<sup>159</sup>.

### 9.9 Redressing the spatial stereotype: deprivation to ‘Merseypride’

Patently, analysing the long-term deprivation in Liverpool is essential to this thesis. Much of the analytical tension surrounding the issue of crime and persistent offending pertains to social and environmental factors (Taylor et al, 1973, 1975; Sampson et al, 1999; Wikström and Loeber, 2000; Savage, 2009). It has therefore been important to situate the members of the sample within the culture and conditions of contemporary Liverpool, particularly the micro-history some of its poorest areas from which either they or their families grew-up in. Contemplating long term deprivation in Liverpool provides an ecological context for their lives; local youth populations have been impeded by poor social and educational resources, limited opportunities and fractured and mistrustful relationships with

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<sup>159</sup> In 2009 Steven Gerrard signed a four-year contract with Liverpool FC with a weekly wage of £140,000 (The Guardian, 2009b). Luis Suarez earns £100,00 per week for the same club (BBC, 2012c), while Marouane Fellaini was Everton’s highest paid player at £70,000 per week (Liverpool Echo, 2011).

the authorities, specifically the police. Within the neighbourhood's long heritage of a substance-driven underground economy, the buying and selling of drugs has provided a material logic to many of its inhabitants. Local criminal networks have exploited the profit-making potential of the city's illegal drugs market and provided many young men with opportunities to make money and earn prestige.

However, it is also essential to address the context in which the cultural identity of Liverpool is understood. The city attracted high levels of negative media coverage for much of the 20th Century and given rise to spatial stereotypes such as aggressive political 'militants'; farcical 'scousers' and young crime-prone 'scallies' (Garcia, 2006; Boland, 2008; Garcia et al, 2010). Examining the national press Garcia (2006) found that, after football, the most frequent reference to Liverpool focussed on crime, drugs and violence. Meanwhile, according to Wilks-Heeg Liverpool has the "dubious claim to have descended from 'world city' to 'pariah city' during the course of the twentieth century" (2003:36). Scholars from various fields have identified the issue of Liverpool's public reputation; geographer Boland (2008) has stressed that after the 1960's powerful negative images and stories of the city emerged across the popular media. Liverpool began to represent a microcosm of Britain's problems: economic decline, urban decay, mass unemployment, political militancy, social unrest and crime<sup>160</sup> (Meegan, 1989, 2003; Murden, 2006). Masden (1992) makes the point that not only did this cause a serious image problem for the

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<sup>160</sup> This problem is not uncommon in the industrialised West. Following the severe economic restructuring and associated social upheaval in the 1970s and 1980s, many cities acquired negative associations. Sheffield, Manchester, Newcastle and Glasgow were also depicted as places of decline, dereliction and degradation which undermined their appeal to investors (Boland, 2008).

city, but it negated attempts to attract investors. Later, businesses established within Liverpool campaigned for the widespread use of CCTV in the city centre and eventually installed a privately funded security network to counter a lack of confidence in investors and shoppers (Coleman and Sim, 2000)<sup>161</sup>.

Notably, Liverpool's struggle to establish a positive image has been recognised by its young residents; Goldson's (2003) study of local young people's relationship with their city discovered that while they reported feeling attached to their cultural uniqueness they "felt that media representations of Liverpool – in both news and drama – serve to perpetuate stereotypical images underpinned by constructions of criminality and fecklessness" (Goldson, 2003: 150). Indeed, spatial stereotypes have not been limited to the written press, but are also found in feature films, television dramas and comedies.

The difficulty with stereotypes is that they can be distorted, simplified and reinforced by the media and entertainment industries to become popularly held beliefs (Avraham, 2004; Gertner and Kotler, 2004). Reflecting on the methodological and ethical issues associated with research in areas of social

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<sup>161</sup> Coleman and Sim (2000) made the significant point that security networks, such as CCTV, gated communities and private security officers are not simply mechanisms of crime prevention technology but also identify gaps left by a series of legitimisation deficits around policing and urban governance generally. Companies who market security products benefit from stereotypical images of 'dangerous' populations such as petty thieves, the long-term unemployed or groups of young men as those who appear "unable to learn the lesson that neo-liberalism now expects of its subjects" (Pratt 1997: 181). Others have written extensively on the process by which neo-liberal and neo-conservative governance sustains economic divisions (c.f. Scheingold et al, 1994; Simon, 1998; Rose, 2000; Gray, 2005).

marginalisation, Bourgois (2003), who conducted ethnographic research in El Barrio (East Harlem, New York), discussed the tension between providing an honest account of his experiences and the potential for fuelling negative impressions of the study site. Researchers, he warns, inevitably encounter serious problems with the politics of representation, particularly in adversarial political environments which increasingly rest on exclusive political discourses (Furedi, 1998; Garland, 1996, 2001; Bourgois, 2003). As the author of this work I am mindful of the life-stories presented herein have the potential to be misread as intolerant portraits of an amoral youth culture. Thus, while it has been crucial to highlight relevant levels of poverty in the city, it is also imperative to acknowledge the discrimination it has suffered. As Bourgois has advised, under the microscope of detailed qualitative research everything and everyone “has warts and can be made to look like a monster” (2003:18).

But it would be misleading to focus solely on the ‘warts’ and ignore the significant accomplishments the city of Liverpool has achieved. As already mentioned, the Hillsborough Independent Panel (2012) redressed the long-term errors of the previous inquests and won moral and tangible support for its cause. Economically, Garcia et al (2010) has emphasised the city is currently enjoying a period of major transformation; the late 20<sup>th</sup> century coincided with a period of continuous economic growth in the UK, during which Liverpool’s economic situation changed considerably, matching, and at times surpassing, the UK-wide growth and narrowing the historic gap in socio-economic performance between Liverpool and

the rest of the country. Simultaneously there has been a development of partnership working by the leaders of Liverpool to regenerate the city (and the wider Liverpool city region), with increased investment from both the public and private sectors and significant national and European funding<sup>162</sup>. This has been particularly evident with the city celebrating its 800th birthday in 2007 and hosting the prestigious 2008 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) (Hudson and Hawkins, 2006; Kokosalakis et al., 2006).

Importantly, local policy makers and practitioners have made groundbreaking inroads in managing some of the city's social problems. In the mid-1980s, Liverpool was the first city in the UK to adopt a large-scale pioneering 'harm reduction' approach to drug use (Ashton and Seymour, 2010). Under the Mersey Harm Reduction Model, services such as the provision of clean needles and prescription methadone were developed to attract all those at risk of blood-borne viruses within the community, not simply the few who wished to stop using drugs. Service uptake was rapid and included many who had never had previous contact with statutory agencies (O'Hare, 2007). Moreover, an HIV epidemic did not happen amongst injecting drug users in Merseyside, as happened most noticeably in Edinburgh (O'Hare, 2007)<sup>163</sup>.

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<sup>162</sup> For example, the city regeneration aspect of the European Capital of Culture programme was funded mainly by private capital to a value of £4billion over eight years (Garcia et al et al, 2010). Meanwhile, main branded programme of events -'Liverpool 08' had a budget of £129.9million over six years.

<sup>163</sup> During the 1980s Edinburgh was at the forefront of the battle against HIV and AIDS, with infection rates in the Lothian area 4 times the national average (LHSA, 2011).

Recorded crime in the city centre (all offence groups) fell by 31 per cent (4,492 offences) from 2005/06 - 2010, outstripping the overall reduction in crime across the UK (Crimestoppers, 2010). In terms of overall crime rates, by Police Force Area, Merseyside scored the least number of recorded offences per person after Newcastle (in line with Nottingham at 71 offences per 1,000 population) (Hansard, 2012). Nevertheless, drug crime rates have remained the highest in the country (Hansard, 2012). Minton (2008) argues that Liverpool serves as a “classic example of a place where fear of crime rather than crime itself is the problem”.

The issue of spatial perception of course is subjective and works in complicated directions. While some may view stories and images of deprivation through a particular lens which associates environmental markers with disorder or crime (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1990), residents and other groups of people may relate to that environment through an entirely different set of criteria (Girling et al, 2000; Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004; Jackson, 2004). Indeed, local research has shown that residents express a great deal of commitment and attachment to the City of Liverpool. While they acknowledge its deep-rotted problems, they continue to display a sense of pride in their neighbourhood (Walklate and Evans, 1999; Belcham, 2000). Challenging the idea that they may be ‘deprived’ or ‘disadvantaged’, local studies in some of the poorest areas of Liverpool have found that marked community and familial bonds provide important networks and sources of community resilience (Anderson and Munck, 1999). Evans has warned that “it would be a mistake to see the similarity in these

neighbourhood's physical and economic fabric as resulting in correspondingly similar community structures or local mechanisms of social control" (2003: 30). Speaking of a 'Merseypride' historian Belcham (2000) explains how Liverpool has long been a place of 'exceptionalism'. Located at the intersection of competing cultural, economic and geo-political formations the city he maintains, stands outside the main narrative frameworks of modern British history:

*"While repudiated by some as an external imposition, an unmerited stigma originating from the days of the slave trade or the Irish famine, Liverpool's 'otherness' has been upheld in self referential myth, a 'Mersypride' that has shown considerable ingenuity in adjusting to the city's changing fortunes". (2000:232).*

## **Chapter 10: What happened to yesterday's rebels? A thematic account of narratives from formerly persistent and serious young offenders.**

Life-history interviews hand over considerable responsibility to the interviewee (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007). There is no interview schedule, instead participants are asked to tell 'the story of their life' (Rosenthal, 1993; Atkinson, 1998; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007) (see section 3.5). As such responses can be varied and haphazard. Nevertheless, analysis of the nine transcripts resulted in six superordinate themes. Perhaps because of the nature of the study, interviews typically began with the participant's memories of ISSP, and the first section of the chapter examines their long-term memories and experiences of supervision and surveillance, before exploring the role of education and social welfare agencies from childhood to adulthood. Naturally, discussion of the broader apparatus of the criminal justice system was common, in particular, the interviewee's relationship to custody and the local constabulary, which is considered in the third theme. The fourth theme embarks upon an understanding of 'everyday life' as a persistent and serious young offender; exploring the presence of criminal networks and violence, as well as broader cultural plateau of offending relationships. The fifth theme seeks to identify examples of both persistence and desistance within the sample, before the sixth theme describes the effects on participants of difficult life experiences and the comprehensive changes that need to occur to support a move away from crime.

## 10.1 Memories and legacies of ISSP

### – *Memory of ISSP*

In all cases, despite the passing of seven years and even where participants only spent a short time on the programme, memories of ISSP remained lucid. Memories focused on aspects of the daily programme – the amount of hours one had to complete, the office (Liverpool ISSP was located in a dedicated centre), particular activities (going to college, football, cooking) and relationships with staff. Overall, this suggests ISSP was distinctive from other youth justice and probation orders (of which this cohort had considerable experience) and had strong ‘programme integrity’<sup>164</sup>. In five cases interview data from the initial evaluation was available and notably, similar issues arose in these follow-up discussions. Reassuringly, this would indicate young people had consistent and clear opinions of their time on the programme.

### – *Perceptions of supervision and surveillance*

Despite the tough configuration of ISSP, it would seem the majority of participants had a sense - perhaps in retrospect, if not at the time - that ISSP staff were motivated by welfare orientated goals. In Liverpool, and in many other parts of the ISSP pilot, the majority of young people were assigned a dedicated supervising officer to over-see their progress. Scholars have identified relationship-building as a

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<sup>164</sup> Programme integrity refers to the delivery of rehabilitative programmes so that they are delivered as consistently as possible, in accordance with their theory and design (Hollin, 1995).

classic, but essential component of probation work (Burnett, 1996; McNeill, 2001; Rex, 1999) – and it was often the presence of quality relationships that mediated the young people’s perception of the programme. For example, Amos and Jamie stressed that their ISSP officers pressured them to comply, but tempered their approach with warmth and encouragement. Conversely, many had been subject to probation or other youth justice programmes which were often perceived to involve nothing more than an administrative task of ‘signing the book’.

“It didn’t feel like punishment. It felt like they were trying to help.” *Leon.*

“Yeah, right, they learn ya how to cook and all that. What you need, cos like when you go to normal probation, you just sign your name in. And then you’re off aren’t ya? They was like doing things, like skills and all that, like learning ya how to cook, and do things on your own, put you in the right direction and that.” *Jamie.*

“Patrice, he was alright, he was me ISSP officer, err, he used to, like, sometimes, he used to, he’d just be there, even for little things, when I got in trouble, he’d be there, even family things, he’d come in the house and talk to me mum and that. Sort things out.” *Amos.*

As Nellis (2003) has highlighted, contemporary criminal justice interventions frequently rely on the use of ‘tracking’ and ‘tagging’ which prioritises surveillance and ‘locatability’ in the community, rather than in custody (c.f. Ball and Webster, 2003). Indeed, surveillance was a defining feature of ISSP. In Liverpool this aspect of

the programme was managed by a distinct service (Securicor/ the police). As such, memories of electronic monitoring were often disconnected from memories of supervision, and, in this manner, ISSP operated on a dualist structure of 'care' (supervision) and 'control' (surveillance), the balance of which varied for each participant. Notably, memories of electronic monitoring were more likely to be fused with punishing and punitive sentiments.

"I *hated* it, me [laughs]. I only hated it because you've got to be in at a certain time. And plus, the police were coming to my house every single day to see if I was there, do you know what I mean. [4]. I got arrested a few times, you know for breaching it. I think, what, I was 6 minutes late and I was breached."

*Kieran*

The practical and symbolic imposition of the tag was of such significance for two participants (Luke and Grant) that they consistently referred to the ISSP programme as 'the tag' during their interviews. Moreover, electronic monitoring was perceived by many to be a criminal justice instrument that they were able to circumvent during their time on ISSP. Demonstrating that they were not 'passive subjects' (Foucault, 1977; Staples and Decker, 2008), but active agents, participants recounted stories in which they used a range of methods to challenge being tracked and surveyed.

“Yeah, yeah, [the tag] was so hard. I couldn’t do it. I ended up taking me tag off. [Laughs] I just got that fed up, I could see everyone going out and I just thought, I’ve got to get out, and I just took it off and climbed out of the window, so me mum didn’t know.” *Leon*.

“I just took it off. (5) [laughs] Yeah, the first week they put it on, and I took it off. .. the day they put it on, the fellas were still in the house, I think they were putting the box upstairs, but at the time I was able to just get it off and put it in me pocket. And when they went, they set it up, they set it up and then went, and I never had it on. That lasted about six weeks I think, I just kept it in me pocket.” *Ricky*.

#### – *Relationships and care*

Care and attention from a dedicated ISSP officer was the significant factor in the compliance and subsequent ‘break’ in offending for some of the interviewees. Two participants in particular (Jamie and Amos) had unambiguously positive memories of ISSP on account of the relationships developed with individual staff members. Both young men were able to name their ISSP officer without prompting. These relationships appeared to mirror the attention of a pseudo-parent, for example Jamie enjoyed the homely aspects of his supervision - being picked up and dropped off, cooking, going to football and swimming – activities he said his parents never did with him. Notably, both young people felt the relationship with their supervising officer was reciprocal – they considered the relationship genuinely close and that their respective officers had high expectations of them and instilled clear

boundaries. Specifically, it was the allowance of one-to-one time rather than certain activities that allowed these relationships to flourish. Both Jamie and Amos had been predicted to breach the programme early, but were 'surprise' completions and sustained periods of desistance in the aftermath.

"I've never, never, never had a worker like that again. No one as good as Patrice. No one. The one I have now, he's alright, he's a good man, but no one has been as good as Patrice. No one. I don't know no probation officer mate, or anyone that has been as good as that man. He's the best one I could have had....he'd tell me off, you know, like I was his kid or something... He was a probation worker, or ISSP worker, but he was a mentor to me too."

*Amos.*

"It was Tina McBreen, she was good yeah, and she picked me up every-day of the week. She was just a really nice person. She'd pick you up, drop you off, do things and that. Cos, if she weren't doing that, then I probably wouldn't have got through the order anyway.... No, probably would have breached it.

(5) Its good the way they work with you and that." *Jamie.*

Recent probation and youth justice practice has involved a shift away from the one-to-one relationship towards structured group-based work, risk management discourses and community based 'punishment' (Worrall, 1997; Rex, 2002). However, an emphasis on 'relationship-based supervision' (Burnett and McNeil, 2005) may be key to maintaining compliance during intensive programmes;

certainly for Amos and Jamie, the development of a consistent and supportive relationship with a dedicated officer facilitated an emotional bond which sustained their motivation to complete the programme. This was a significant achievement; prior to ISSP both had been at risk of custodial sentences; Jamie had failed to complete previous community based programmes and had been held on remand for repeated offending on bail. Similarly, the severity of Amos's offending had escalated from theft to domestic burglary, and a previous custodial sentence had not deterred him. The significance of these emotional bonds has been replicated elsewhere; Rex (1999) found evidence that probationers were motivated to avoid disappointing committed supervisors. Likewise, Bottoms (2001) found 'working alliances' between a social worker and offender were more likely to elicit 'normative compliance' on the basis of moral obligation and a desire to maintain the relationship, compared to an 'instrumental compliance' premised on material deterrents/ incentives. More recent research within the mental health literature has found that the development of such an alliance, often referred to as a 'therapeutic relationship', is a common characteristic in effective interventions aimed at changing behaviour (Horvath and Greenberg, 1994; Norcross, 2002; Lambert and Ogles, 2004).

– *Suitability of staff*

An important factor was the suitability of the officer, Amos, who had experienced racist abuse as he was growing up - was very grateful to have an older black man as his officer; 'Patrice' and the family bonded immediately over their shared heritage.

Similarly, Jamie, whose mother played a very distant role in his life, enjoyed having an older woman as his overseeing officer. Beyond this there was some feeling that ISSP officers should be well matched in terms of their social grouping. Sean and Ricky both mentioned a future desire to work with young offenders; they felt they would be able to offer young people unique insights and might be listened to because of their personal experiences. Indeed, Sean had already worked with a local youth charity and given talks about homelessness. Along these lines Kieran told me he had been motivated to participate in the research because he felt he was at a stage to 'give something back'. These examples demonstrate that ex-offenders often find value in professionalising rather than abandoning a deviant identity, which can be beneficial for them as well as their communities (Brown, 1991; Maruna, 2001).

– *Relationship resistance*

The substantial one-to-one contact time with ISSP staff facilitated the development of quality relationships and allowed the young person space away from their peers to engage with professionals on a neutral and individualised basis. However, this form of supervision was not a panacea; in other cases trust issues remained insurmountable and some young people were simply unable to make connections with staff or engage in what the programme had to offer.

“I think all it was, I just didn’t want to listen to him [the ISSP officer], I just couldn’t be bothered. I was just dead lazy, and back then, I was just a kid, so I was dead ignorant, dead cheeky, I just didn’t want to listen to him.” *Sean*.

Specifically, Mark stressed that he felt probation officers, (as well as social workers and education staff) could not relate to him, and that university education was an abstract qualification for working with persistent offenders. In the example of Mark, the development of a working alliance proved impossible; he had little or no trust in professional adults and resented efforts that morally obliged him to behave in a prescriptive fashion (c.f. Rex, 1999).

“They should go and get fucking probation workers, do you know what I mean, should use people who’ve been in trouble, at the end of the day who know a thing or two. Do you know what I mean? About reality, instead of sticking their fucking noses up; them ones, you know, who wouldn’t fucking ever talk to me in the street, do you know what I mean, in their day to day lives. Do you know what I mean? It’s only that it’s their job - they have to come in and do that. Do you know what I mean? Otherwise they want nothing to do with you. You know, and that’s the true facts of it.” *Mark*.

#### – *Full-time activities*

Besides the development of a quality bond, Leon and Kieran indicated the benefit of ISSP related to the provision of full-time educational placements. Both had

completed a three-month basic-skills course, which had proved a palatable and important transition back into education. This had the added benefit for Leon that it introduced him to a new set of friends, and for Kieran it was the first education he had willingly participated in since the age of 11. However, benefits were short-lived for Kieran when he concluded that the course he'd completed had not translated into any meaningful qualification and would lead him 'nowhere'. In fact, underlining the potency of this belief, Kieran had expressed considerable frustration about this same issue during an interview with me while he was on ISSP, some seven years earlier.

"When I was on that ISSP programme, and they got me into college, I was alright for 12 weeks, you know what I mean? I was getting paid, it weren't much but I was getting something and I was living off it. I was happy doing it, I didn't miss it, not once, I went every single day. But it was just a 12 week course, and once that finished, I asked them to try and get me into another college, or another placement, but it didn't happen. And so I was back to square one." *Kieran.*

As Gray (2005) has identified, pathways towards desistance in contemporary youth justice practice have typically focused on creating opportunities for offenders, - mainly in the employment field through the expansion of education and training. However, lack of attention to wider structural inequalities (particularly in areas of

persistent deprivation, as in Liverpool<sup>165</sup>), coupled with the difficulties offenders face securing work<sup>166</sup> prevents the full realisation of this policy. In fact, Gray (2005) has stressed that instead of operating as a form of social justice, these strategies lay 'responsibility' for managing ones employability at the foot of the young person (c.f. Jordan 1998; Bryne, 1999).

## 10.2 Growing up outside civil structures

### – Education

Education among the sample was uniformly negligible. All participants had failed to complete secondary school in mainstream education, either because they had been expelled officially or unofficially 'stopped attending'. Alternative provision was occasionally attempted but rarely successful. The vast majority had disengaged with school as pre-teens, following disappointing experiences of primary education. Leon suffered consistent racist and homophobic bullying from primary school, while others had specific learning disabilities which teachers were either not aware of, or struggled to address (Mark, Sean, Jamie and Grant). However, it was also evident that education services had failed to inspire the participants as children; learning was 'boring', teachers were universally 'hated' authority figures and the educational environment was not one many of the participants could relate to.

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<sup>165</sup> Liverpool has the fifth highest percentage of people living in income deprived households in England and is the second highest ranked local authority area in England for employment deprivation (Liverpool City Council, 2011).

<sup>166</sup> A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005) demonstrated that people with a criminal record formed part of a 'core jobless group' that more than 60% of employers deliberately excluded when recruiting. Similarly, a study by the Barrow Cadbury Trust (2007) found 53% of employers surveyed declared that a prior conviction for theft would automatically bar an applicant from employment.

Interviewee's complained about having to 'sit down with your head in a book' – and preferred life on the street – where they escaped to 'run wild'.

"It just weren't for me. I just wanted to be going out, running wild. I didn't want to be sitting in sitting in, like, erm, oh, what was the name of the unit? I don't know, but with some social workers or something like that. Yeah, I didn't want to be sitting with them, I wanted to be out, having a good time and that". *Ricky*.

Many used strong words in relation to their experience of school and teachers. 'Hate' was not an uncommon adjective and likewise, Leon said the walk to school used to make him feel 'sick'.

"I *hated* school. I couldn't concentrate, do you know what I mean? By the age of 13, I had probably been to about six schools or something....The first time I got expelled from school. I threw a chair at the teacher didn't I? He was trying to tell me to do work I couldn't do. I explained 'sir, I can't do this work, too hard for me'. 'Well, everyone else is doing it, you do it'.... and I just got frustrated and I just got up and threw a chair at him. And that was it, and I never went back again." *Mark*.

"I'd just feel sick [on the walk to school] and I'd just, just, I'd be in the playground, and I'd just run out of the playground. And I'd run that fast that I'd be spewing up, I was that scared. That's all I remember really. [6] And then me brother trying to get me back there (exhales heavily)." *Leon*.

Nevertheless, as adults a number of young people regretted not working harder at their education; some were embarrassed about having no qualifications and lacked confidence in the work place.

“I wish I had stayed on, at school, and got some qualifications or whatever. I think that now, but, at the time I didn’t think like that, I wasn’t interested in stuff like that. But I keep saying I wish I could go back to school and that. [4]. But it’s been the way it has. [5].” *Kieran*.

It was telling that two of the participants were reluctant to complete any forms or correspond by mail in relation to the study due to reading and writing problems; Grant was self-conscious of his dyslexia and initially asked his mother to communicate with me on his behalf. Naturally, the thought of returning to education as adults was an unusually daunting one for most, although two members had undertaken NVQs in cooking (Sean and Grant), while Ricky displayed a keen interest in learning and had completed a basic maths course at his local college of his own accord.

One cannot ignore the role of education as a potential gateway to adult employment and self sufficiency (Giroux, 1983; Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). As such, exclusionary responses to problem behaviour in school have an effect on life course trajectories - a key proposition of labelling theory (Sampson and Laub, 1997). Seen within a context of

long-term deprivation, the consistent positioning of the young men in this study - uniformly outside mainstream education and beyond the reach of important sources of cultural capital (education, qualifications) – demonstrates the broader function of education in reproducing social exclusion (Willis, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990a). Indeed, France et al (2012) have argued that contemporary education policy does not pay sufficient attention to matters of social justice; problem behaviour, low commitment, low attainment and low aspiration are perceived as *individual* flaws. Both France et al (2012) and Smith (2000) have called for critical and interpretive research on the schooling experiences of marginalised youth populations to understand how the educational system may be implicated in reproducing their academic failure and delinquency. Smith (2000) stresses that “Such critical research would investigate how the substantive content and processes of schools correspond with student’s everyday lives and values. Such an approach will enable us to learn how to make “better” schools that serve marginalized youths and create more effective learning environments” (2000: 293).

#### – **Employment**

Given that no one in the sample had completed their education, the traditional transition from school into employment was not evident in the interviewee’s life-stories. While all participants, excluding Kieran (who had spent most of his early adulthood in prison) had been able to find employment during their adult years, no one from the sample was in full or part-time employment at the time of interview. Sean had trained as a chef, which he considered a vocation and spent an unusual

amount of time discussing food and recipes with me. Even so, he had not succeeded in staying in employment for any length of time. Others had managed to find temporary and low-paid casual work in manual trades, such as plastering, removals and gardening. Engagement in sporadic and minimum-wage work failed to provide routes away from poverty and crime; these jobs did not provide a stepping stone to better employment or a means for supporting oneself on a consistent basis. Informal contacts were the most effective source of work; this confirmed participant's perceptions that qualifications were irrelevant to getting a job. Wider aspects of disadvantage were also a barrier to finding employment, largely because few opportunities were available in the local job market. As related studies have consistently identified, persistent offending in adolescence yields a negative dividend and reduces educational and occupational attainments in adulthood (Cohen, 1955; Willis, 1977; Mehan, 1992; Lawrence, 1998; France et al, 2012).

– *Care and social housing*

Five of the nine participants had disrupted living arrangements as they were growing up. Relationship breakdown led three (Jamie, Ricky and Luke) to move in with external family members or friends during their teenage years. Meanwhile, as preteens (before ISSP) Sean and Mark were both taken into local authority care with the agreement of their parents who reported that they could not manage their increasingly disorderly behaviour. Being placed in care was emotionally traumatic and had long-term consequences for both individuals; they were moved around

numerous residential placements - in and out of the city, moreover, it disrupted schooling and fractured family relationships. In Mark's case it led to extremely negative and distrustful attitudes towards all professionals with whom he clashed and physically fought. He also claimed he had been sexually abused by one male member of care staff when he was 14, an allegation he eventually reported to the police in his twenties, although the Crown Prosecution Service did not pursue the case.

It is clear all participants with unstable living arrangements required considerable support with the practical aspects of housing and independent living. Where this was not received, the additional issues they had to contend with - such as substance abuse or relationship breakdown - would intensify and tip the balance against them establishing a crime-free lifestyle.

"If I went to jail now, I'd lose me flat, and I have worked so hard to get that flat, I've waited so long. Four years it took me. I was on Property Pool for four years before I eventually got me flat. It's just, it's err, given me more independence, getting me own flat, has given me more stability, I can look for work, and like in hostels you've got to pay about £75 for all of the extra services, staff and meals, so getting me own flat, it's easier, I can make what I want, do what I want, it's more homely, and it's more, like back to normal, back to normal life." *Sean.*

– *Other health and welfare agencies.*

The young men in this study typically came into contact with a broad range of agencies and staff across all social welfare domains from childhood through to adulthood. The experience of this sample was that there were often lengthy delays in accessing and responding to their needs. There appeared to be few mechanisms for the joint exploration of issues arising from individual cases or for feeding this into strategic planning and preventative work. In fact, a number of young people commented on how they were released from custody or probation orders with very little support, despite critical needs such as homelessness, addiction and mental ill-health.

– *Becoming fathers*

While some studies have shown a link between becoming a parent and desistance from crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Moore and Hagedorn, 1999), of the five participants who were fathers only Amos presented as emotionally and practically connected to his offspring. The arrival of his son prompted him to find employment and, with the assistance of his family, he took seriously the need to provide time, care and resources for his child – which appeared to have a positive effect on his offending behaviour. Nevertheless, Amos was returned to prison on a three year sentence when historical charges for a domestic burglary “came back to haunt” him. During that sentence Amos and his girlfriend spilt up, although he maintained some contact with his son (see chapter 11).

Meanwhile, Mark, Ricky and Luke admitted that having dependants made little or no difference to their everyday lives or behaviour. In fact, all three had very limited contact with their children. Two of Ricky's three children were placed in foster care, Mark had only ever seen pictures of his daughter, and Luke lost contact with his son when he escaped the city.

"I don't think it's affected anything that I do. I'll be honest, I know it's going to sound selfish, but it's never stopped me going to prison. I always thought it would, when me x-partner was pregnant with me little girl, I always thought: 'Yeah, I'll make a change now, I won't go back away'. I thought, I'll be staying out of prison, but then, a couple of months later I got done for drink-driving and I was back in prison for it, and then, we had me little lad, and I went back to prison again. So, like, having kids just hasn't affected me at all, like, I haven't changed for them. I don't think I'll change for anyone". *Ricky*

### 10.3 Growing up in the criminal justice system

#### – *The 'soft' option - youth custody*

All but one member of the sample (Leon) had spent time in young offender's institutions from their mid-teens. Mark had also spent time in a secure children's home for disruptive behaviour<sup>167</sup>. What was striking about the group's experiences of youth custody was the distinct familiarity and casualness they associated with it.

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<sup>167</sup> Secure children's homes provide care and accommodation for young people who have been placed by local authorities under secure accommodation welfare orders (section 25 of the Children Act 1989) for their welfare and protection, or who have been placed under criminal justice legislation by the Youth Justice Board.

Asked about their first memories of going into the secure estate, their uniform responses were that after a period of initial apprehension, all found it possible to adapt effectively; many had friends, family or neighbours inside the same institution, were knowledgeable about what to expect, met like-minded peers and indeed even felt 'at home' inside.

"Coming to jail [the first time], like, on the way in the sweat box, I was scared. But, when I got there, I knew some of the people that were already there like, so, I just fitted in, kinda thing. Like there was always loads of people from Liverpool there, and like in for the same sorts of crime things, robbing cars and that, that I was into. So, like, it just came together and I just fitted in. I fitted in so easy, and then, all the other times, it's always the same faces. It's just like, every time I've been to jail, most of the people that you see, you already know. It's a big circle." *Kieran*.

"[The first time I went to prison] I felt, because, cos, I was on my own, I felt a bit lonely, but then, like, after, after about a week or two in there, it was strange it was. Cos, again, inside the prison, there was loads of people who I knew. And it was just like, it wasn't, it wasn't like prison anyway." *Luke*.

What was striking about the nature of the group's response to custody is the lack of punitive, deterrent or rehabilitative impact it had. Moreover, when one compares their memories of custody to their experiences of probation, youth offending

teams, education and social work – which many said they “*hated*”, it is somewhat surprising that prison failed to elicit similarly resentful or emotional opinions. Upon further inspection, it became clear that prison occupied a unique space for the young people in this sample, distinct from all other services. While many would admit they did not actively enjoy young offender institutions and looked forward to their release, custody was often perceived as the ‘easy option’ in comparison to community-based orders. A particularly curious finding that seemed related to feelings of depression and/ or anxiety was that Grant and Mark did not want to leave custody. Both described feeling secure and relaxed in prison, and their accounts told a story of a life on the outside that was impoverished both financially and emotionally. Mark described feeling that the outside world had nothing to offer. Meanwhile, for others prison was not emotionally or cognitively demanding as other services were, particularly not ISSP – which required them to ‘set goals’, ‘review’ their ‘behaviour’ and ‘reflect’ on their lives. By contrast, the youth custody environment was not experienced as a service that was ‘trying to change them’. In fact as Ricky ironically, but eloquently commented, prison actually afforded him more psychological freedom than community youth justice or probation orders did, as well as physical respite from his hectic life on the outside:

“I think, in a way, like when I am in prison, sometimes I *do* like being in prison. I know it sounds strange, but I do like being in prison. I like, a bit of me own space, a bit of me own time. When I am in prison, I’m like, I can chill on me own. Do me own thing. And, all me mates are there as well. So, it’s the best of both worlds in one way – I get to see all me mates and that, well, back then it

was. And I get to spend time on me own. So, I weren't really missing out on much (6) so it weren't really, it weren't hard work really (4). There's no people that I don't like, telling you what to do or anything like that. At least in prison, you've got a set of rules and you stick to them and it, jail flies then. You can just, you can just be as free as you want, even though you are locked up. I know it sounds strange. .... You don't have to sit down with anyone, you don't have to be anywhere at a certain time, you don't have to get out of bed if you don't want to. So, it's just a lot easier than being told what to do...(4) In a way, you had a lot more freedom in prison, yeah. I know, I know it does sound strange, [laughs] but you didn't have to show that you were staying away from crime, if you were in prison, you could always say, 'well as soon as I get out I am going to rob someone and there's nothing you can do about it'. So it was alright. If I said to someone on probation, 'I'm going to rob someone' – I'd get breached and I'll be back to prison anyway. So it was just was just easier to go to prison. When you get out you are free. And it does sound strange, you know, saying it out loud. And what I am thinking about it, it sounds strange, and getting it across is strange. (6) It's not, it's not. I do wish now, like, I did try harder with probation, because at least it tries to rehabilitate you and it does show you right from wrong. Whereas prison, well, you've probably heard this a hundred times, but it's a university for criminals. You learn a lot of things there. You know, it's a meeting place, it's like a college and you can learn how to rob lots of different things. While probation is actually hard work. You've got to set goals and you've got to try and stick to them. I think now, prison doesn't rehabilitate me in any way. Never has, I

don't think it ever would. I think it's probation that tries to turn you around, it tries to rehabilitate ya". *Ricky*.

In sum, the cultural and personal benefits of prison often outweighed the practical drawbacks. Many participants achieved a valuable status among their peers once they had been inside; it strengthened their criminal identity, increased their circle of friends and was an institution they could 'fit into'. Many were pleasantly surprised that prison was not as arduous as they expected. In this (limited) sense, prison represented an 'easy' option to members of the sample. By contrast, ISSP was experienced as psychologically challenging and premised on the concept of personal and social change; whilst it provided useful opportunities for the receptive candidates, others found it very difficult to relate to, indeed some considered it an imposition.

Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'field' (1977) enables a useful exploration of the common patterns within the participant's narratives accounts of youth custody. Habitus is close to what has otherwise been described as cultural knowledge (Sandberg, 2008). It is a system of 'dispositions', which integrate past experience and enable individuals to cope with a diversity of unforeseen situations (Wacquant, 1992). Habitus generates strategies which are coherent and systematic, but they are also "ad hoc because they are 'triggered' by the encounter with a particular 'field'" (Wacquant, 1992: 19). In the experience of the participants in this study,

young offender's institutions represented a unique space. They differed from many other agencies; they were passive and amoral spaces that did not impose a punitive atmosphere or insist that in-mates must change psychologically or attend activities. Conversely, the 'field' of community-based youth justice demanded they 'reflect' 'redress' and 'repair' – all the while (on ISSP at least) subject to very strict physical and electronically monitored movements. This more demanding form of intervention was often less suited to their skills, or habitus.

Habitus can be described as a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990b); for the persistent young offenders in this study, they had little traditional cultural capital, in the form of education or work skills. But they had other experiences that could be of use in street culture, crime and also in prison, where they could swap information about how to avoid the police, how to break into particular brands of car and how to better negotiate the criminal justice system. Some knew how to fight and had experience of violence. Others had contacts with criminal alliances or other individuals who may be able to protect them. In prison culture, the young men's embodied skills could be converted into symbolic capital in a way that their habitus hardly allowed in other social contexts. Meanwhile, for some, ISSP or other 'rehabilitative' style programmes reinforced a 'negative symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1999: 185) due to the demands that they must change their behaviour, and more importantly, their identity.

– *Recidivist premium sentences and poor conditions in adults prisons*

There was some limited evidence among the sample of a deterrent effect of adult, but not juvenile custodial sentencing. Two factors seemed to have an aversive influence, one of which was ill-treatment. Indeed, some, although not all of the participants found the conditions within adult prisons extremely harsh. In particular, over-crowding, 'slopping out' and bullying were cited. Sean was seriously assaulted and strangled during an adult custodial sentence, while Kieran reported that he had been involved in two major fights and numerous altercations with prison officers. The second source of deterrence originated from the very real prospect of extended or life-sentences two participants potentially faced (Amos and Kieran) during their offending careers. Perhaps because both participants had substantial experience of custody, the prospect of a 'life in prison' was both intimidating and suitably galvanizing. However, it remains unclear whether (and to what extent) the threat of a future 'recidivist premium' sentence will have a real and lasting effect on either individual.

– *Stubborn reputations: Police violence and harassment*

One of the most significant relationships the sample had with the criminal justice system was via the police. The police effectively represent the 'front line' of criminal sanctions since they are often the first agency young people come into contact with during the onset of offending (Muncie, 2004). Indeed their role should not be underestimated given their position to scrutinise, classify and curtail young people's behaviour. Moreover, police now contribute to the multi-agency approach

towards youth offending (Burnett and Appleton, 2004). However, from a young age the participants in this study demonstrated a deep distrust of the local police force and described a 'warfare' dynamic which was equally rancorous on both sides. While the causes of the young people's distrust of the Merseyside police may be multifaceted (incorporating personal, cultural and practical influences – see Chapter 9), controversially, five of the nine participants interviewed as part of this study spontaneously volunteered<sup>168</sup> information that they had direct experience of police harassment and violence as children (under 18). In most cases this took place before ISSP started and followed on into early adulthood. Kieran spoke about the first time he was arrested; at age 11 he claimed he was knocked off his bike by a police car, taken to the station and questioned without the presence of a parent or responsible adult. Other examples range from 'beatings'; being followed and subjected to unwarranted drugs and firearms raids involving CS gas. Respondents stated that such treatment was 'par for the course', and explained that sometimes the police would administer these assaults as alternative forms of punishments which the young people accepted (at the time) as preferable to a conviction. Indeed only one young person (Kieran and his mother) eventually made an official complaint of harm caused when their home was damaged in an overtly aggressive morning raid.

Kieran: There's been times, where they've got me out of our car, and threw me in the back of their car, drove round the corner and given me a beating

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<sup>168</sup> The nature of the biographical interview does not involve a structured or even semi-structured interview questions and participants are at liberty to raise issues they consider important in terms of telling the 'story' of their life (Rosenthal, 1993; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Gadd and Jefferson, 2007).

and let me out. Do you know what I mean? But I never used to be bothered. Because at least I wasn't getting arrested. That was all that I used to think, do you know what I mean? And then I still carry on doing what I was doing. I just weren't bothered about getting beatings, as long as I wasn't getting arrested. Do you know what I mean?

EG: Can you remember a time when something like that happened?

Kieran: Yeah. I was about 14. Me and me old mate we were in a robbed car, we'd been chased in a robbed car. By the big field near West Street. We've jumped out of the car there and run across the field. But when we've got across the other side of the field, they've been there, and they've jumped out on us, and they battered the both of us, you know, with their truncheons, and they didn't arrest us, cos, they knew that they'd hurt us that bad. Do you know what I mean? We were only kids really. They left us on the field. [5]. But they proper battered us, like, I could just about walk. I remember that.

As mentioned above, these incidences started during childhood and continued into adulthood, in spite of changes in the participant's criminal behaviour. For example, Ricky had long since moved on from volume persistent offending (theft of cars and criminal damage), although he continued to be convicted for sporadic violent assaults (a claim verified by his PNC record). Nevertheless, he described the regularity with which he was stopped by the police and the potency of his teenage reputation.

“In Liverpool, the police know me very well, I don’t think a week goes by without me getting stopped. Like, not a week – when was it? Sunday, or Saturday, I was in the chippy getting something to eat with me girl and her little baby. And I was sitting with me back to the window and seven of them ran in and dragged me out. And they told me girl she had to come out and they were searching all round the baby and the pram and everything, they had me in the back of the van, with handcuffs on, and I was like ‘what’s this for?’, and they just said, ‘shut-up!’ – they wouldn’t tell me what they were stopping me for. And that’s like, because of what I’ve done in the past, you know, cos I’ve been nicked so many times, they just always expect me to be on a warrant, even when I’ve done nothing wrong, so when they see me they stop me. They think ‘come on let’s get him back in again’. All the people in the chippy were all shocked, there was a few people in there as well, and they just came in and took me and me girl out, and me girl has never been in trouble in her life. You know, she was crying her eyes out. They were shouting at her to ‘bring the baby out now’, searching her and the baby, and it was a load of fuss over nothing. Ten minutes later they said, ‘right, you can go now’, they had nothing.” *Ricky*.

As many desistance scholars have demonstrated (Maruna, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Farrall and Calverley, 2006) one of the crucial processes involved in moving away from crime is the ‘subjective’ changes that take place among offenders including an ability to develop “a new perspective on the self” (Shover,

1985: 92–96). But as these stories show, the persistent offenders in this study not only have to find a way of leaving the ‘old’ self behind; they must also contend with the permanence of their reputation in the criminal justice system. The difficulty of laying their past to rest calls into question the long-term effectiveness of Merseyside Police Force’s practice of applying ‘targeted disruption’ and aggressive ‘stop and search’ to children and young people (see Section 9.6).

It should be recalled that this study was not designed to address young people’s experience of, or views of the police; these stories emerged freely as the participants recounted their life stories. As such, there is no way to verify the accuracy or context of the reported events. Admittedly, these young people were persistent offenders and presented a small but challenging population for Merseyside Police Force to handle. Nevertheless the lack of age-appropriate policing of this group is disturbing exactly because they are children and represent the sort of individuals the police are responsible for managing on an everyday basis (persistent offenders). Furthermore, because the police represent the operational face of the criminal justice system any unfair or physical mistreatment of children and their families could have both immediate and long term negative consequences – in terms of the young people’s understanding of justice, fairness and respect for authority (Tyler, 1990; Hirschfield and Piquero, 2010; Bradford and Jackson, 2011).

The participants may have accepted this treatment when they were younger, but at the time of interview, intense monitoring and on-going scrutiny from the police was perceived as 'unfair harassment'. In relation to the feelings of 'injustice' felt by young people subject to intense police attention, Jock Young (2007: 62) has argued that "the classic combination is to be marginalised economically and treated as a second rate citizen on the street by the police". Recent debates around police culture have, quite rightly, been concerned with police perceptions and treatment of differing groups along axes of ethnicity (Chan, 1997), gender (Westmarland, 2001) and sexuality (Burke, 1993). However, while there has been a great deal of academic debate concerning the policing of these social divisions, police perceptions of children, young people and more specifically young offenders, and their treatment of them has been largely ignored (McAra and McVie, 2005). But in equal measure to gender, ethnicity and sexuality, permeating as it does all daily human interactions, inequitable treatment of young people also has the potential to be a source of long-term injury (McAra and McVie, 2005).

#### **10.4 Everyday life as a persistent young offender**

##### ***– Reflecting on everyday life***

From childhood, crime was undoubtedly an ingrained part of the culture of the persistent young offenders interviewed for this study; all had friends, family and/ or neighbours who either made money or increased their social standing through crime. Young offenders institutions were often populated by people they knew and the initial anxiety of going into custody was surprisingly fleeting. In this sense, as

they were growing up, crime and the culture surrounding it occupied large portions of the young people's time, particularly since all had ceased attending full-time education around the age of 12. Crime provided a means for making friends, progressing socially and financially, acquiring girlfriends and 'maturing' at an accelerated rate. Many of the young men spent their teenage years with older peers in an effort to climb the criminal career ladder, forgoing more age-appropriate activities. Notably however, reflecting on their youth a number of interviewees admitted the innocence and potential of their childhoods was 'lost' to crime.

"A normal 15 year old is going to school, playing football in the park. It's never been me, I've never ever done things like that. Like, I stopped going to school when I was 12, like I said, I wish I had stayed on." *Kieran*.

"I do [wish I'd tried harder at school] now. But everyone does though, everyone says 'oh, I wish I could go back'. Everyone says it 'oh, I wish I could go back – do things differently'. But, you know. (4) I'd be the first one to go back now if I could. Get me GCSEs and things, but, it's not going to happen now. (4) Yeah. (5) There was erm (4), a lot of things back then, that I probably shouldn't have been doing, all because, err, I decided to go out and rob things. (7) I don't know, it's all been a big, waste of time hasn't it?" *Ricky*.

– *The (limited) thrill of the chase*

Despite bemoaning lost opportunities from childhood, it remains that as children, crime offered a means to an exciting and empowering lifestyle. Asked about the onset of offending in their youth, all of the young people interviewed, with the exception of Leon, spoke exclusively about the enjoyment of offending. Being chased by the police; acquiring goods and money, driving stolen cars gave them an intense thrill or adrenaline rush. Offending often afforded them a sense of power and liberation – a feeling they were ‘special’ or ‘other’.

“There would never be a day go by when we were younger, from when I was about 14, that we weren’t driving round in all different cars, like we got new cars – all other people’s cars obviously. But, we felt like, we were better than everyone else. I don’t know, we just thought we were different, do you know what I mean? We weren’t the sort you could tie down, we wouldn’t go to school or go the YOT or anything like that, we just thought, ‘we’re going to do what we want to do’. And we thought we could get away with it as well... I just wanted to be going out, running wild. I didn’t want to be sitting in some office, sitting in, like, erm, oh, what was the name of the unit? I don’t know, but with some social workers or something like that. Yeah, I didn’t want to be sitting with them, I wanted to be out, having a good time and that.” *Ricky*.

“Now, when I think about it, yeah. Like, some of the chases that I’ve took, have been heavy. [3] But some of them, when I think about them know. It’s mad. [5] I don’t know, I used to love it though, I used to like getting chased. As

long as you stay calm, you'll get away. You won't crash, do you know what I mean? If you panic, you'll either end up dead or arrested." *Kieran*.

It was common for participants to use phrases such as 'being free' to do 'what they want' and 'running wild'.

"We'd go out getting stuff, we'd break into places... That's probably why I thought, 'this is easy money – why do I need to go to school?' It was a lot more fun than school, and school was a lot more boring. That's how I thought of it, boring. School was boring, all the teachers were strict and boring". *Sean*.

"At the time, I didn't care, we just did what we wanted, do you know what I mean? You go out. You do a robbery. You get chased. You do all mad stuff, ramming police cars, jumping out ...then you get away, you get home, put your money away." *Grant*.

However, as the young people grew up, these inflated ideas became increasingly challenged; adulthood brought some cold and stark realisations. Unable to find a dependable source of income (legitimate or illegitimate), few were in a position to support themselves financially, leaving them dependent on family or social welfare. Banned from driving as youths, insurance premiums precluded the affordability of a car. Recreational drug and alcohol use in their teens had turned into addiction for three members of the sample by their early twenties. Finally, as adults many of these formerly persistent young offenders were subject to on-going attention from

the police and high-premium sentences. After they grow up, the out-look for persistent young offenders can be unexpectedly difficult emotionally, financially and practically.

While it is important to acknowledge the participant's assertions of autonomy during the on-set of offending, it is also essential to note that agency is intimately associated with risk (Mayock, 2005). The findings from this study indicate that once young people are embedded (Hagan, 1993) into the socio-spatial processes of a persistent criminal lifestyle, it is remarkably hard for them to withdraw. As they grew up, many of the young people found themselves unexpectedly entrenched in an environment they no longer wanted to be part of (for various reasons). In contrast to their experiences in childhood, most participants expressed a de-sensationalised view of crime in adulthood; they emphasised that although street-life had initially afforded them enjoyment and resources, these benefits were time-limited and often replaced by violence, isolation, fragmented futures and emotional suffering as they grew up.

#### – *Criminal networks*

During the course of the interviews, it became apparent that four of the participants (Amos, Kieran, Luke and Grant) were embedded in local criminal networks as persistent young offenders. Others were aware of, or perhaps on the periphery of local alliances. As stated at the introduction of this section (Section

8.4), a decision was made to avoid the use of the term 'gang', since it was an adjective rarely used by the interviewees themselves. Instead, the data described chaotic and interlinked networks that shared with gangs elsewhere 'ephemeral leadership, high turnover, and only moderate cohesiveness' (Klein and Maxson 2006:164) (c.f. Sanders, 1994; Huff, 1996; Klein and Maxson, 2006; Smithson et al, 2012; 2013). This data suggest that gangs in Liverpool do not have formal structures; the term 'membership' is useful, but carries potentially misleading connotations about the nature of these groups. The relationships participants described were very much like informal friendship networks whose boundaries might vary according to whom you addressed. Notably, there were several distinct networks in the city, and the drugs networks were firmly delineated by region.

Criminal activities in the networks typically began with menial but risky (in terms of being identified by the police and convicted) tasks, such as delivering goods or driving older more established peers around, before taking on additional responsibilities to make more money. Both Amos and Luke were involved in local drugs networks, while Kieran and Grant were associated with commercial and armed robbery and organised car theft. However, these divisions were not strict and participants were often involved in other types of crime with external groups of people, or as solitary ventures over the course of their offending trajectories. One participant explained he eventually became involved in stealing money and drugs from various 'gangs' across Liverpool - a particularly hazardous enterprise.

Initially, criminal networks provided the respective participants a sense of freedom and lack of restrictions, whilst simultaneously supplying the security of a solid peer group with shared interests. Through these relationships the young people learnt 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990b); participants were required to show a readiness to use violence (Anderson 1999; Vigil 2002; Bourgois 2003); develop a knowledge of their 'trade' (be it cars or drugs); an ability to organise 'deals', understand and respond to their 'market' and navigate the criminal justice system and avoid arrests (Jacobs, 1999). However, while the literature often depicts drug dealing as a 'career' (VanNostrand and Tewksbury, 1997), it became apparent that not all of the participants developed the skills and ambitions necessary to climb the criminal career ladder. Some remained at the bottom of a harsh hierarchy, exposed to the riskiest tasks, such as street dealing and reckless and opportunistic robberies. For example, Amos attempted to set-up a satellite drugs outlet in a neighbouring city, an enterprise Luke successfully established elsewhere, however Amos was unable to get his project off the ground before the police identified him and threatened him with action. Meanwhile Grant claimed to be making large sums of money through armed robberies, yet consistently took the lowliest role, with the most exposure and least financial dividend, a strategy which resulted in him being given an eight year prison sentence.

– *Criminal networks and violence*

The topic of gang violence frequently punctured interviewee's life-stories. Participants reported that especially in the north part of the city – gang and drug networks were conspicuously influential. Indeed, there had been a number of high profile gang related murders in this area over recent years, the most prominent being the killing of Rhys Jones<sup>169</sup>. Notably, of the Liverpool ISSP cohort (n=65) seven years on from the pilot, three were in prison for gang-related murders, one had been shot-dead in a much publicised and significant revenge attack, and of those interviewed four revealed to having direct experience of gangs and using firearms during their teenage years. For example, Luke's narration included a story of him and a friend being ambushed by masked rivals with firearms. Both escaped, but a few days Luke's friend was shot-dead in the street.

“Yeah! There was a few times it [being killed] nearly did happen. There was a few times it nearly did. And like, I've been scared in me life before, but I've never been more scared than that night, coming out of me local pub at, err, I think it was about half three, 3 o'clock in the morning. And I was with me mate, one of the older boys, and we had a little argument about who was going to drive the car, and like, two boys came, from, from round the back, and erm, they had scream masks on (5). And then they started shooting at us [embarrassed laugh]. (4) They started shooting. And that that, from then on, I just fucked it off. (5). It's not worth losing your life over – a stupid gang. And, yeah, well that's just like, that's, that's that the worst, that's the one worst

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<sup>169</sup> In a suspected case of mistaken identity, Rhys Jones, 11, was shot and killed in Croxteth Park, Liverpool, as he walked home from football training in 2007. An 18-year-old Sean Mercer, was convicted of murder on 16 December 2008.

moment. The worst time, like you know, but there's been a few other times I've been shot at, but that's the worst. That's the closet I've come to, erm, (3) actually getting killed." *Luke*.

Although Luke admitted the occasion described above (an altercation that later resulted in his friend's death) was a turning point in his life, during the interview he spoke casually about other instances in which he'd been 'shot at' (also noted above), and admitted that access to firearms in his immediate peer group was standard. Other participants (Amos, Grant and Kieran) recounted similar experiences and attitudes. These narratives demonstrated how some participants considered violence to be a commonsensical way for resolving problems and for asserting hierarchies of prestige and belongingness (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967; Anderson 1999; Vigil 2002; Bourgois 2003)<sup>170</sup>. Moreover, while violence was common in between-gang disputes, it also emanated from within-gang interpersonal disputes regarding friends, romantic relationships, jealousy and debt.

The nature of gang activity generated patterns of interaction, daily behaviours, and belief systems that influenced the activities and habitus of those within it. Indeed, these life stories illuminated the ways in which different forms of capital and habitus (Bourdieu; 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) became trajectories to drug dealing and youth crime. Their embodied skills and status - the product of taking various risks and making useful alliances – earned them respect, power and

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<sup>170</sup> It should be noted that research conducted across various disciplinary fields have noted that adolescent boys *and* girls are frequently involved in incidents that meet the criteria of violent criminal offences (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Kershaw et al, 2000; Phillips, 2003).

status in the social context of their locale. Moreover, it gave them a sense of community. Again, it is not the habitus in itself, but the relational meeting between habitus and different social contexts that produce action. In meetings with mainstream society, particularly in school, these young men with reputations as persistent offenders experienced marginalisation and humiliation, while, on the streets of their immediate neighbourhood, they got status and power. In the words of Bourgois (2003), street dealing and crime can be seen as a ‘search of respect’.

#### – *Trauma*

There is considerable evidence that young offenders are at increased risk of mental health problems (The Audit Commission, 2004; Social exclusion Unit, 2005; Douglas and Plugge, 2006; Brooker and Fox, 2009). Correspondingly, all of the participants shared experiences that they found ‘difficult’ or distressing. A range of traumatic stressors were reported, including periods of instability and transition; experiences of emotional and socioeconomic deprivation, drug addiction and homelessness. Moreover, some participants had been exposed to multiple traumatic experiences from early childhood. Accounts conveyed a range of strong emotions that were associated with difficult experiences including anger, fear, shock, loss, upset, helplessness, powerlessness and depression. For example, Mark expressed rage towards his parents and social workers after being placed in local authority care (see Section 11.3 – Mark Case study), while Leon indicated that he had experienced some form of “breakdown” during his teens. A variety of cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses were identified, including a blocking out of painful

experiences, insomnia, anxiety, social phobia, violence and depression. However, it was noteworthy that some of these young people also denied that they experienced any worry or sadness at all, despite descriptions of traumatic events and emotions.

“I think, back then, I’m sure I must have had a breakdown or something, cos it’s like it happened to someone else.... Before, I couldn’t go in a shop and ask for a packet of ciggies or anything like that. It had started making me paranoid. And I became housebound like.” *Leon*.

“It was, it was horrible you know. Like, and sometimes, me girlfriend, that I was seeing at the time, used to come stay with me, but she had enough of me. Do you know what I mean? [6] Mad. I just changed completely.” *Kieran*.

Notably, while the above accounts are not untypical of this population, there is a paucity of data on the emotional impacts of a persistent offending lifestyle *per se* (Paton et al, 2009). Participants described feelings and displayed emotions that indicated they were negatively affected by the violence, suspicion and fraught relationships endemic in persistent offending routines. Indeed, what became evident through interpreting the transcripts was a predominance of stories that involved violence. Participants inhabited hostile worlds where they were exposed to physical and emotional violence as victims *and* perpetrators. In some cases, participants spoke about instances of extreme violence with almost no emotional affect (See Section 11.2 – Amos Case study). Nevertheless, while *discreet sections of*

these stories may have portrayed flippant attitudes towards firearms, 'shootings' and kidnapping, on reflection of the complete narrative there was a broader sense that these experiences had been emotionally damaging. Conspicuously, Amos became noticeably anxious when he discussed witnessing stabbings and shootings, and his experiences in 'drug-houses'. As well as others in the sample, Amos continued to face a future with the constant threat of unpredictable violence from rivals, which left him visibly concerned. On a small number of occasions it was necessary to curtail stories that were distressing participants, and on one occasion brought a young man to tears. Participant's accounts also reflected marked difficulties in trusting others and establishing relationships. Several participants described not having any close friends, while others had fragmented and distinctly cool relationships with their families and children. Finally, when recounting more traumatic stories, some participants began to display nervous verbal tics, rapidly repeating idioms such as 'do you know what I mean' or consistently stuttering over their words.

Many of the above issues were compounded by barriers to accessing support services, such as an assumption that professionals would not understand 'street issues'; previous negative experiences or ineffectual treatment. Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles for those involved in criminal networks was an implicit policy to conceal details relating to the gang. These participants stressed that 'certain things' had to remain private, even from family and girlfriends. Nor could they provide full details about their involvement in crime to me. In particular, at the end of the

interviews both Kieran and Amos emphasised that they had enjoyed participating in the study, but felt compelled to inhibit their responses for fear of implicating themselves and others, a process which had been frustrating for them.

“It’s [the research interview] been mad to tell you the truth. So many things have come into me head, that I’ve wanted to tell you, but something just stops them, do you know what I mean? [6] I don’t know. It’s not that I don’t want to tell you, it’s just. [5] It’s just the way I am. Do you know what I mean? It’s. Like, I. I know what I can say, and I know what I shouldn’t. I don’t know. [5] But like, I’m one of them people, me. Like, you shouldn’t be telling people stuff. Like specific things do you know what I mean? You know, you’ve got to know where to stop.” *Kieran.*

– ***Offending relationships: betrayal and exploitation***

A recurring feature across all of the life history interviews was the role of nameless ‘older men’ in co-opting or coercing the participants into criminal behaviour and/ or criminal networks. It was a pattern that repeated itself across various domains of offending behaviour, and some participants also had the experience of recruiting younger boys to ‘work for them’. The nature of these relationships was commonly based on an unequal power dynamic, in which the older or more experienced individual(s) would facilitate ‘openings’ for younger men. These openings were gratefully received and were perceived by participants as opportunities to climb the criminal career ladder or gain the security of being associated with powerful individuals. However, evidently there was also an exploitative undertone to these

relationships. In many instances participants were not financially rewarded, but were obliged to offer their services as 'favours' in exchange for "a spliff" or protection. For example, Leon was persuaded into selling drugs by an older associate of a group of young people who had bullied him at school. His new affiliation with the drug-dealer brought an end to that bullying, although he claimed it was not an activity he ever felt comfortable with and was "relieved" when he was convicted and sentenced to ISSP. Likewise, Amos described how he worked as a chauffeur driving stolen cars for more senior members of his network before he was in a position to make money. In many instances, the participants were utilised to minimise the 'older men's' risk of police identification, thereby increasing the potential for their own criminalisation. Kieran defended using younger boys to fulfil the riskiest tasks involved in stealing and selling on cars (i.e. housebreaking to steal car keys/ driving the car to the buyer), as something that he had done at the early stages of his criminal career.

Uniformly these 'older', dominant men exerted considerable influence, but remained nameless in participant's accounts.

"so I've got in with the wrong crowd. Just to make me better, do you know what I mean? So I weren't getting bullied and stuff. And *then*, it probably become me doing the bullying....I'd rather not say who [gave me drugs to sell], but I'd met some of them through school, and then, some of them through the people I'd met in school, older boys, men and that.... I just learnt to mix in, I would share drugs with them." *Leon*.

“when I was on the streets, well, you get to know people and one things leads to another. And before you know it you’re selling drugs, for someone, when I was young and stupid - selling drugs for older boys – making money for them.” *Luke.*

“All of them, they were like a lot older than me, when I was 15 all my mates were like 21, 25 [3] I was like always wanting to be one of the lads you know”.  
*Kieran.*

This subtle exploitation occurred in a social context of normalised violence; revenge and physical conflict were frequently present in criminal relationships and criminal networks. Violent interaction was also a common feature of some participant’s relationship with the police. Connell and Farrington (1996) make the point that bullying is in fact a valued behaviour in prison where bullies are often given a certain degree of status by both prisoners and staff, whereas stigmas are reserved for the victims (Connell and Farrington, 1996, c.f. Grapendaal, 1990). In the current research it was clear from the participant’s reflections that aggressive or exploitative behaviour could be legitimised (and effectively neutralised) because it was located within in criminal context. It was ‘par for the course’.

The notion that violent behaviour can be legitimised is not new. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) stressed that a system of norms, values and attitudes sustained the use of violence in particular subcultures. Likewise, similar findings have also

emerged in studies of gang violence (Klein and Maxson, 2006; Papachristos, 2009) and in accounts of hegemonic masculinities (Epstein et al, 2001). Correspondingly, Bourgois (2003) documented that crack and heroin distributors systematically recruited unemployed, mono-lingual Spanish-speaking immigrants for hand-to-hand street sales operations which entailed the highest risk of arrest and violence.

However, while 'legitimation' may be common, it remains important not to render the finding of a broad level of exploitation of young men in offending relationships as harmless. Not least, because as Phillips (2003) stresses, the body of work exploring bullying in education has drawn attention to "the deleterious effects of verbal, indirect and physical bullying on academic performance, health and well-being, and noted the link between bullying and adult criminality" (2003: 724). As such, this finding raises important questions about the analysis of exploitation of children and young people in criminal cultures, and the potential for young people experience long term ill-effects.

Thus far, the manipulation of young offenders by adult males has not received much in the way of dedicated academic or policy attention (for an exception see Scott, 2004). As Smith and Ecob (2007) have stressed, criminology has struggled to locate a single explanatory framework that includes offenders as victims and vice versa - particularly in relation to children. Perhaps because, as Nayak (2003) has noted, sensibilities concerning English children often focus on a dichotomy of

'angels' who need adult protection from predatory agents (Delemont, 2001) or 'devils', whose very presence in public space evokes fear (Pain, 2001). The challenge for future researchers will be to formulate a coherent analysis of the relationships in criminal networks that take into account the age and nature of the actors, including the subtle exchange of favours and risks. That violent or intimidatory behaviour is seen as 'normal' within gangs should not obscure the finding that exploitation of young men has a taken-for-granted quality, despite the harm it may cause vulnerable and marginalised young people.

### 10.5 The cycle of persistence and desistance

#### – *Desistance: A many splintered thing.*

As the quantitative data has revealed, there was evidence of persistence *and* desistance within the sample. Three participants claimed that they had not offended for approximately two years prior to interview (Leon, Jamie and Sean) – this information was verified by the PNC data but it is impossible to confirm whether any undetected crimes had been committed. Leon's offending career was atypical from the rest of the sample, it had been limited to a concentrated period in his youth (which resulted an ISSP order); he had been convicted on one more occasion post-ISSP, for which he served a short sentence on probation. Amos and Grant sustained periods of desistance in excess of one year, in Amos's case this was immediately following ISSP, but was not sustained. At the time of interview Kieran had resolved to move away from crime and had gone through a drug-detox programme in prison, trained as a gym instructor and cut ties with his former

offending peers. However, this decision had taken place during an EPP<sup>171</sup> prison sentence and he had subsequently spent no time in the community as an active desister.

The interview data suggests that desistance was a precarious process and the desire to 'go straight' was often a very personal and occasionally temporary journey. A move away from crime may be prompted after a young person experiences a personal crisis, in other examples it may be a conscious decision to change or simply a fleeting 'break' from an otherwise consistent offending lifestyle. Indeed, as Glaser (1969) has suggested, criminal behaviour is often best viewed as an unstable or 'zigzag' process, consisting of crime and non-crime cycles.

Partial forms of desistance were established by some, whereby a particular activity was surrendered, while other forms of (often less serious) offending were maintained. What is clear is that, for persistent offenders in this study at least, desistance was an exceptionally difficult rite of passage and rarely happened independently. Indeed, the young people in this sample were overwhelmed by the changes they needed to make in order to turn their lives around. The move towards a crime-free routine invariably required an overhaul of their lifestyle: friendships were severed, relationships re-evaluated, some young people made the decision to

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<sup>171</sup> Extended sentences for public protection (EPP) were introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2003. They were intended for offenders who the courts believed represented a significant risk of harm to others. In these circumstances, release from prison is dependent on a Parole Board decision and they have the power to extend the period in custody beyond standard maximum penalty for the given offence if they believe the risk has not reduced.

move out of the area or face reprisal attacks, and others had to accept a significant reduction in their income and criminal status. In sum, desistance involved a large degree of personal, financial, cultural and physical risk.

– *Desistance: A temporary hiatus.*

Two members of the sample (Kieran and Grant) described how a period of desistance occurred by virtue of an enforced break in their offending routines. For Kieran this happened during his ISSP, where the daily demands of the programme took him out of his usual cycle of offending. But this was a temporary hiatus and he returned to offending or “square one” as he called it shortly after completing a fulltime educational placement and the ISSP programme. Grant meanwhile was forced to ‘lie-low’ in Europe after going ‘on the run’ following an arrest for armed robbery. He described how much he enjoyed the more relaxed lifestyle afforded by his need to avoid police attention. A new environment, away from his co-offending peers provided a much needed break from the usual influences and contexts of Liverpool.

– *False positive desistance*

It should be noted that two individuals who were contacted to take part in the study had been identified as desisting from crime shortly after ISSP - according to officially recorded PNC data. However, their lack of involvement in official statistics was not an accurate indication of change. As young adults, both became involved in

serious and organised crime – beyond the immediate street-level reach of the police. After committing an armed robbery and additional money laundering offences, Grant skipped bail and went on the run to a British enclave in Europe for a number of years. His whereabouts were eventually exposed by a neighbour who saw his photo-fit on the BBC television programme *Crimewatch*. He was captured and sentenced shortly after the request for PNC data for this study had been submitted (and therefore presented as a desister).

Meanwhile, arrangements to interview Alex fell through after he was remanded for grievous bodily harm. Further investigations through local print media<sup>172</sup> revealed the assault Alex was remanded for - as well as a conviction for arson seven years previously - were related to a long-term feud between two well-established drugs 'families'. At the time of the planned interview, Alex was arrested alongside a senior member of a family who were one of the main drug suppliers in the city. The earlier charge of arson involved a night-time petrol-bomb attack on a rival's family home that housed two young children. The aforementioned drugs family had been involved in a series of high-profile disturbances including murder and car and nail-bomb attacks. It is impossible to know what broader role, if any, Alex played here, although his arrest flanking a high-status member indicates some level of association. Given that it is common for gangs to avoid co-operating with the authorities (Howell, 1994; Porteous et al, 2007), even where their own safety is concerned, Alex may have been involved in further drug and violent crimes without

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<sup>172</sup> A content analysis of local newspapers was conducted through LexisNexis. This database has access to approximately 12,000 publications including UK national and local newspapers.

coming to the attention of the police, although this is speculation. Nevertheless, this pattern underscores a well recognised limitation of official statistics, which do not offer a complete picture of crime because much of it – especially drug-related offences, as well as violence *between* criminals – goes unreported (Golding and McClory, 2008).

– *Offending patterns and partial desistance*

Predictably, offending patterns changed as the interviewees grew up, shifting away from offences typically associated with adolescence (criminal damage, car theft, assaults). These trajectories represented both ends of the scale. In some instances, offending patterns transitioned into lower gravity offences, such as driving offences and petty theft while, in others, they demonstrated an intensification of offending behaviour, towards armed robbery, violence and domestic burglary. These patterns were extremely complex and unpredictable.

The life stories of two participants, Ricky and Kieran, suggested that desistance was sometimes a frustrating, disjointed process. These young men were (separately) involved in organised car thefts during their youth, an activity both claimed to have abandoned as they reached their early twenties. However, having developed drug or alcohol addictions as they were growing up, each became embroiled in violent altercations as adults, which resulted in consistent and lengthy custodial sentences. In these cases, desisting from crime was a slow and partial process, whereby

particular offences were renounced before others. These stories also underline how difficult it is to disengage from crime and the criminal justice system when associated lifestyle behaviours create exit obstructions.

“I just decided I am not going to drive anymore, and I stay away from cars. It’s been about four or five years since I’ve driven a car, I wouldn’t even get in a robbed car now. So I’ve made a change in a way. But it’s the violence that I can’t get away from...The last three times I’ve been away...Yeah, I was back in in January for two racially aggravated assaults, then I got out – I think that was the autumn. Then I went back away at the end of last year – for another assault. So it’s been violence all the time. I can’t get away from it”. *Ricky*.

#### – *Persistence*

Only one young person in the sample admitted he had no genuine desire to desist from crime (Mark). All the remaining participants suggested or reported, or perhaps felt compelled for one reason or another, to say they intended to stay out of crime. By contrast Mark clearly stated he was not deterred by repeated custodial sentences – in fact throughout the interview he indicated that he took pleasure in prison life (see Section 11.3). He also stressed that he enjoyed offending, and believed it was the only way for him to support himself financially.

“I’d love to live a life like most people, like most others out there, law abiding and all that. But, it just doesn’t happen, do you know what I mean? You know, I’ve sat here before telling someone, telling meself, “oh, I’m going to get out, I’m going to get a job” and behave meself. But I’d be lying to say all that to ya,

cos, I say it every time really, do you know what I mean? [laughs] It doesn't happen like that you know, once I get out it's a whole different ball game Just back to me old ways and back to no good and back to jail." *Mark*.

During their interviews both Ricky and Grant claimed they were aiming to 'go straight', but it was ambiguous how realistic these goals were. Several reasons were identified; Ricky's offending was mostly alcohol-related and although he recognised this, he had not sought any professional help for his addiction. He also acknowledged that he experienced prison as a place of respite (see Section 10.3). Meanwhile, Grant admitted that at least minor infringements of the law would be a 'necessary evil' once he was released from prison; as a persistent young offender growing up he had made many enemies in Liverpool and his post-release licence conditions would likely require him to move back to the area. He stated that to remain safe he would need to acquire and carry a weapon.

"It sounds mad, but, when you, when you live like we live, when you get out, it's not as easy as everyone thinks, they just go 'go and get a job' and (5) you can't, do you know what I mean? For instance, if I got a job in McDonalds, or wherever, you've got problems, people come to McDonalds everyday and you've got a lot of enemies, so you're in McDonalds and someone comes in (4), they see ya (4), when you're walking out of there at night you're getting shot, or – for instance, do you know what I mean? So you've got to be, it's, it's hard. Do you know what I mean?" *Grant*.

## 10.6 Desistance: A painful rite of passage

### – *Crisis; the tipping point*

In this study, a concerted motivation to change was regularly born out of a crisis point. Sean reached a point where he was effectively destitute before he considered giving up offending; Kieran, addicted to cocaine, had begun to experience bouts of debilitating paranoia. On the run from the police, he locked himself in a flat for around three months and set up CCTV to monitor who came to his door – a situation he described as “horrible” and “mad” that ultimately prompted him to seek help.

“I just stayed in the flat. And then I got a camera put in the flat. Which is the worst thing I could have done. [laughs]. I got a camera put outside the flat and I had a little telly thing, you know, that I used to watch it on. And when I was snorting coke and that I used to find meself like that [twists neck right round], just staring at it. Do you know what I mean? And so, the next day, I’d wake up and they’d be a cloth over it and everything, and I’d have a sore neck from just sitting there looking at it. I’d see the trees and all that outside, moving because of the wind, but I’d be running to the window, to see out the blinds and that. It just sent me mad. It did. It was horrible. I swear. I couldn’t sleep. Everything, every noise I heard, I was looking out the door, looking out the windows. [5] [laughs]”. *Kieran*.

Likewise, Luke had been forced out of the city, following a series of gang-related shootings in which he and his friend were targets. When his friend was indeed shot dead Luke escaped Liverpool all together and lived rough in various cities and towns, committing petty offences to fund his addiction before eventually seeking drug treatment. At the time of interview he said he would not return to Liverpool, despite his family and son living there.

“The last five years of me life yeah, I’ve spent what – as a smackhead. I’m like what? I just hit rock-bottom, I was living on the street, and I was really ill. Like, you know, I was basically nearly dying. I told ya, I was using needles, I lost all touch with me family, none of them wanted to know, and like, all them, all them little pieces, you know, I decided for meself, it was time to do something different. I’d spent enough time, fucking around, taking drugs, selling drugs, and you know, I’m 26 now. And it’s about time, exactly, I thought about doing something different with me life”. *Luke*.

For participants whose offending had become part of an established routine – it was a mounting sense of personal, financial, psychological and physical crisis that proved a decisive turning point in their lives. At these crucial moments, where their personal resources were at their lowest ebb, they became receptive to the possibilities of change. Namely, in order to lead more contented lives, crucial choices would need to be made – including the decision to give up crime. As well as identifying defining moments in their lives, these stories underline the complex mental health issues that can occur disproportionately in this population (Audit

Commission, 2004; Douglas and Plugge, 2006; Brooker and Fox, 2009) as well as the often overlooked psychological and physical trauma associated with persistent offending lifestyles<sup>173</sup>.

– *Extreme vulnerability and dependence on services*

It became clear, for the formerly persistent young offenders in this study, the route towards a new set of behaviours and lifestyle was an exceptionally difficult one. It was often a decision that became to be perceived as ‘inevitable’, rather than an explicit and assertive choice. Emotionally, the process was described as demanding, demoralising and lonely. Practically, moving away from an offending lifestyle highlighted numerous resource gaps; the sample had precious few (if any) qualifications, limited education, and extensive criminal records. Some struggled with housing, drug addictions and other health problems, and many lacked adequate family or peer support. In some cases, young people felt they had no option but to physically move away from their neighbourhood, or indeed the wider city, to break ties with both former allies and enemies and reduce the risk of offending (c.f. Kirk, 2008) or violent victimisation. In so doing, contact with family or other supportive relationships was further damaged. For others, learning to adapt to a life on a much lower income and associated reduction in ‘status’ required considerable commitment.

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<sup>173</sup> Young people in the criminal justice system report having been exposed to multiple types of traumatic violence, and suffer from various elevated rates of diagnosable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Steiner et al, 1997; Ruchkin et al, 2002;), with imprisoned young offenders representing a particularly traumatised group (Steiner et al., 1997; Ruchkin et al., 2002; Dixon et al, 2005).

It is worth pointing out that, despite their desires to 'go straight' and their obvious attempts to better themselves, some young people simply had very little idea of how to negotiate everyday life on 'civvy street', for example how to register with a GP practice or employment service. With only modest experience of the non-criminal social world, at the stage of wanting to change their lives, they presented as incredibly dependent on their probation officers or other professionals. For example, Kieran left school at 11, but had shown remarkable resourcefulness and skills as a child offender. He had taught himself basic mechanics and developed a niche for stealing "high-spec cars" from wealthy areas in Cheshire 'to order', often using younger men to execute the riskier elements of the crime. At the time of interview, he had already taken essential steps to change the direction of his life; he had completed a drug-detox programme and claimed to be 'clean' from an addiction to cocaine, he had also cut ties with his former associates and gained qualifications whilst in prison. I was somewhat surprised therefore to hear this otherwise independent and assertive individual explain how anxious he was to secure the long-term support of a probation officer for his upcoming release from prison.

"I was saying to me probation officer last week, like how are you going to help me when I get out if I am only on probation for six months. And he said you know: 'It's going to be hard, but you know, if you get your parole I'll be able to help you a bit more, because you'll be on licence for longer'. So I am hoping I do get me parole, just so I can get help when I do get out 'cause if I am only on licence for six months, who knows where I am going to be? I am just going

to be on me own again aren't I? With no help 'cause every other time I've got out of jail I've just gone to probation and they've just told me to sign on, and I've signed on and that's it. I've never had no help before. But on this [prison] sentence I've had loads of help, with Carats<sup>174</sup> and things. I've never had none of that before" *Kieran*.

On a practice level, these stories highlight the distinctive and complicated levels of need among the sample. Clearly, when formerly persistent young offenders are ready to change, significant and intensive assistance is required – both practically and emotionally. Moreover, the narratives of these young adults demonstrate how some offenders may perceive the process of desistance as disorientating and 'other'. Viewing society as made up of Bourdieuan fragmented 'fields' (Bourdieu, 1984) makes it easier to understand how Kieran struggled to feel confident in wider society – an environment, or field, he was unfamiliar with and was not geared around the habitus and cultural capital he had developed as a persistent offender. The life stories in this study demonstrate how lacking cultural capital (education, qualifications, contacts etc) and possessing a habitus that operates at street level, can potentially trap the young men into criminal lifestyles.

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<sup>174</sup> Carats is an abbreviation for the 'Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare' service – a drug treatment provision in secure establishments for young people and adult prisons.

– *A complete break*

As described above, a complete break from their environment was essential for some young men who wanted to desist from crime. Ricky, Sean and Amos relocated to new parts of the city, while Luke and Grant had moved further afield. Luke to another part of England, while Grant, on the run from the Police, moved to Europe. In most cases, participants were convinced that their original neighbourhoods would provide chronic temptations. Speaking about returning to Liverpool, Luke explained the environment would “inevitably” disrupt his current abstinence from opiate-use and drug dealing.

“Like, I know what I’ll end up doing [if I went back to Liverpool]. (5) And I don’t want to do it. I could, probably resist for an amount of time, probably. But then, like, you know, like, what’s the word, it’s inevitable. It’s bound to happen, because like, everyone, *everyone* I grew up with - they’re still doing the same thing.” *Luke*.

Moreover, three of the young men, Amos, Luke and Grant, believed their personal health and safety was at risk, and that their ability to remain crime-free would be undermined by the need to carry weapons to protect themselves. To compound this threat, Amos was also concerned about the safety of his child and his ex-girlfriend, who moved back to live with her parents in an area Amos considered highly dangerous.

“She moved back, that’s what she’s done, knowing all the problems I had. Do you know what I mean? She’s brought the baby back there, cos her family were there and that. She did it one other time as well, when we were arguing and that, and I was going mad mate. And she went back cos she knew I wouldn’t go there, it wasn’t safe. Do you know what I mean? I don’t mind if anything happens to me on my own. But if, if someone done something to me, if someone shot me or something, when I’m on me own, I don’t, you know, that’s me, I’m ok with that. But if something happened to me kid, or me girl through me walking through that area, then, then, you know, god, that’d kill me that. Do you know what I mean? Cos, that’s my fault. And this is why I took her away.” *Amos*.

Embedded in the above quote are broader details about the everyday lives of persistent offenders in Liverpool. Amos refers matter-of-factly to the risk of him being “shot”. Indeed, despite the sometimes hyperbolic popular commentary of youth gangs and aggression (Burney, 2005), this study found violence and firearms were a common feature in the lives of the participants. Certainly, serious and fatal gun crime is an ongoing concern for authorities in Liverpool (as discussed in Section 9.6)<sup>175</sup>. As mentioned above, the particular ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1984) in which many of the young people operated had its own frames of reference (Papachristos, 2009). Strict demarcations controlled movement and behaviours around the city, and the

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<sup>175</sup> Merseyside has the third highest recorded homicide rate in England and Wales (17 homicides per million population) (Home Office, 2012a). Regional disputes between criminal networks have consistently reignited; since 2005 28 people on Merseyside have been shot dead, and in February 2012 shots were fired outside a Kirkby primary school, followed by eight firearms attacks in nine days – including one on a 15-year-old boy in April 2012 (Liverpool Echo, 2012).

boundaries of certain neighbourhoods were expected to be adhered to or risk a reprisal attack. In sum, a set of informal behavioural precepts regulated public movement and interaction between the various criminal networks (Wilkinson and Fagan, 1996; Anderson, 1999). Subsequently, in order to change their lives, some of the young men in this study not only had to physically move away from crime, but they also needed to be prepared to learn the habitus - or modus operandi of - a whole new field.

– *Rehabilitation: the passive expectation of transformation*

Interestingly, at least three of the nine participants (Kieran, Mark and Ricky) expressed sentiments in their life history interviews that they were somewhat surprised – and perhaps disappointed - that community-based criminal justice, as well as in-house programmes in prison, did not have an automatic and discernible effect on their behaviour. I got the sense they had expected to be passively transformed by these courses and were confused as to why they did not experience a shift in perspective after completing them. As Kieran described – after each criminal justice intervention –(which includes ISSP, probation, custody and a drug-detox programme) he was incredulous to find himself simply back to “square one”, a feeling echoed by Mark.

“I just remember the course stopping and then I fell back into robbing cars again. Robbing cars and selling them. I can’t remember really. I know I went back to jail not long after that. But it’s always been the same, every time, I’ve just gone back to square one. [5] Like, I’d like some help to get a job and what

have you. Be stable. Help us do things that we like doing. You know. But I've never really been pointed in the right direction". *Kieran*.

"I mean I don't think that they [courses] benefit ya, none of them, I don't get nothing out of it. I get a certificate. Oh, wow, big deal. It makes no odds to me though. Do, do you know what I mean? It don't matter how hard you try. Do you know what I mean? So, it's just a pointless task, and you always end up back to square one." *Mark*.

Expressively, Ricky explains that while he was able to cognitively follow various courses he took in prison, he recognised that he would need to make changes in his life, but remained emotionally unable to fulfil those requirements,

"I did this 'focus on resettlement' course. And then, when I finished it, I just thought, I don't know why I've done that – everything on it I already know, everything they tell you to do to stop committing further offences, I already know, you know.. (5) they don't tell you how to make these changes in your life, *how* to do it. It's not as easy as they make it out it is". *Ricky*

Indeed, rather than being a passive recipient of 'treatment', the process of desistance is a remarkably demanding one and requires participants to be active agents.

## 10.7 Discussion

Public policy research generally involves a search for behavioural patterns and generalities within large representative populations (Harper and Chitty, 2004). This chapter underlines how detailed, small-scale exploratory work is crucial in moving away from those broader brush strokes to reveal the subjective underbelly of everyday life, as well as marking out the terrain of enquiry for more focused research. Thick descriptive narratives (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) can reveal how structural factors and social discourses operate at the individual level and how social patterns are reproduced through actions that are often experienced as free and unrestricted (Willis 1977; Bourdieu 1984).

In sum, it is not simply examination of the criminal justice intervention, or the statistical shape of offending behaviour that is essential to the appraisal of 'what works', but also biographical narratives and motivations of the recipients themselves. One piece of a jigsaw is difficult to accurately appraise without consideration of the other interlocking pieces. France et al (2012) have argued for criminological analyses to recognise and include the important contribution young people themselves can make to theorising and understanding of their relationship with crime.

Bourdieu (1990b) has argued elsewhere that the exclusion of marginalised groups affords them a privileged insight into the structures that impinge on them (McNay,

2000). The participants in this study, with extensive experience of youth justice interventions and local deprivation, have something that those with traditional social capital (such as academics and policy makers) are denied. Examining their unique responses to these power relations provided a functional insight into the efficacy of the criminal justice system. For example, we discovered that electronic monitoring apparatus that constrained their movement in the community could be circumvented; prison was often a place of respite rather than deterrence; intensive community-based interventions were sometimes perceived as unwelcome attempts to remodel their identity, and the local police force were frequently interpreted as being an active adversary with whom they engaged in physical and emotional battles.

In this respect we began to see the degree of agency that young people exercised, even in relation to 'intensive' interventions and how they contested situations and professionals that were skewed against them. It is important to acknowledge the participant's assertions of autonomy throughout their stories of childhood persistent offending. The excitement and meaning young people took from offending, especially during their teenage years was marked. The interviews reflected how deeply seductive and enjoyable it was to 'run wild' and 'please yourself'. As Katz has emphasised there are "positive, often wonderful attractions within the lived experience of criminality" (1988:3). These stimulating dimensions are often sublimated in public policy research. Katz continues "the social science literature contains only scattered evidence of what it means, feels, sounds, tastes

or looks like to commit a particular crime” (1988:3). However, in-depth offender narratives were able to demonstrate the veracity of crime and the criminal justice system from the participant’s perspective. Their life histories often included rich and seductive memories of childhood offending. Notably, Bourdieu has recognised how important childhood is in terms of character formation; he stressed that habitus is “laid down in each agent” in their “earliest upbringing” and from then it continues to reverberate throughout a person’s lifetime (Bourdieu, 1977:81). Given this conceptualisation, a key to understanding young people’s engagement in crime then, may be to precisely explore, rather than bypass their narrative identities.

Employing Bourdieu’s theoretical lens was constructive in understanding how the participant’s knowledge, skills and motivations were influenced by structural forces. Specifically, habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977) depends on shared, though contested, understandings of how the local environment operates, in such a way that there is no need to make explicit references to one’s intentions. The participant’s narratives detailed how they had a real appreciation of ‘the game’ (Bourdieu, 1977); as children they learnt how to raise their status, acquire goods, protect themselves from the police and rivals, and network with more powerful elders for example. Similarly, taking a lead from Bourdieu, Bourgois (2003) refers to street culture as: “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society” (2003: 8). As he sees it, street culture is an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity.

However, the capital accumulation that took place during the early stages of persistent offending had either a negligible or negative value in other social arenas (Bourdieu, 1999). All members of the sample faced low-paid, low-skilled and low-status jobs in the legal economy as adults. A poor education, inadequate work experience and a lack of local employment opportunities were tangible obstacles to finding a secure work. In addition, participants had to down-shift their expectations; childhood persistent offending had afforded many an accelerated high-status, in terms of reputation, friends and social connections - a context that contrasted sharply with the task of finding employment as an uneducated adult. Along similar lines, Glaser's (1969) study of parolees and recidivism showed that "men in prison have expectations of extremely rapid occupational advancement during the years immediately following their release, expectations which are unrealistic in light of their limited work experience and lack of vocational skills" (Glaser 1969: 238).

Participants in this study also lost credit in established criminal networks as they grew up, having developed addictions, been sentenced to long-term custodial sentences or made enemies. Not only was material-based capital on a decline into adulthood, but relationships with peers and friends transitioned from being extremely close to fractured. The transcripts revealed important experiences of betrayal and disloyalty; between participants and their friends, and also their families and the professional agencies who intervened to control them. One of the

notable breaches of trust was found in the allegations that members of Merseyside Police Force had subjected five members of the sample to excessive surveillance and violence when they were children – a pattern that continued on into adulthood regardless of whether the individuals posed an on-going criminal threat. As Sunshine and Tyler (2003) have stressed, unfairness in the exercise of authority by the police can lead to alienation, defiance, and noncooperation (c.f. Tyler, 1990). This finding that calls into question the official use of ‘disruption’ tactics (see Section 9.6) on children and young adults by the police.

Those interviewed had been exposed to violence in their communities, in their homes and as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. In many instances violence was considered difficult but was also down-played and perceived as ‘normal’. This is in keeping with prior research, which has suggested that young people make light of traumatic events as being ‘just life’ (McMackin et al, 1998). It has been suggested that the meaning of traumatic experiences often includes feelings of inevitable loss, anger, betrayal and helplessness (Van der Kolk et al., 1996) – all of which emerged through the interviews.

Reflecting on the transcripts, a conflict in the participant’s accounts began to emerge. At the point of interview many were at the stage of ‘burn out’ (Shover, 1983); they described being ‘worn down’ or ‘tired’ of relentless criminal justice interventions and wanted to move on with their lives. But interviewees presented

what seemed to be real internal tension between wanting to move away from crime (and making the comprehensive changes necessary to turn their lives around) or sticking with a previously well-worn path. Various temptations to make 'easy money', use drugs, hang-out with old friends, contrasted with opposite desires to return to education, get clean, get a legitimate job and adapt to a more traditional lifestyle. Preferences often shifted as young people moved from one context to another. However, those preferences remained deeply at odds with one another, and left the participants in an uncomfortable position.

Such tensions were compounded by statutory agencies who often challenged the process of desistance by not acknowledging the changed status of an individual from 'persistent offender' or 'gang member' to civilian (Bennett, 1979). Continuing threats of violence from rivals, as well as opportunities to broker 'deals' with offending peers also surrounded participants. Moreover, remodelling relationships with friends and relatives was often awkward and time-consuming. Leaving one's previous identity behind was remarkably difficult, indeed, the contrails of a persistent offender's reputation were found to be exceptionally resilient. Meanwhile, those who remained engaged with some degree of offending behaviour had various and complex reasons for doing so. Factors referred to money, habit, the need to protect one's self, and a more general sense of fatalism and being 'stuck' (Bernburg et al, 2006).

For Bourdieu (1990b) these long-term processes reflect the “unresolvable contradiction of resistance” (cited in Couzens Hoy, 2005: 135); while early persistent offending might have begun as a form of resistance and assertion of agency, it inevitably trapped the young people into multiple layers of poverty as adults. Capital accumulation accelerated in youth but went into reverse in adulthood. As associated studies have reliably identified, persistent offending in adolescence yields a negative dividend and reduces educational and occupational attainments (Cohen, 1955; Willis, 1977; Mehan, 1992; Lawrence, 1998; France et al, 2012) as well as increasing wider social and economic marginalisation and in adulthood (Willis, 1977; Laub and Sampson, 1994; Tanner, 1999).

While it might not be possible to generalise the findings to the wider population, paying attention to collecting high-quality in-depth accounts has facilitated a more authentic portrayal of the lived experience of childhood persistent offending (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Assigning a central role to narratives in theories of crime does not imply that other factors are unimportant. Narrative analysis has undoubtedly increased our understanding of crime and criminal justice, but by no means completely - empirical and theoretical shadows remain. As Harcourt (2006) noted in his qualitative study of youth offenders relationship with firearms, data from life-history interviews frequently raises further questions. For example, the participants in this study are still young, how they develop, and whether social or individual factors take precedence in influencing their trajectories remains to be seen.

Moving on from the thematic analysis conducted above, the next task will dedicate itself to exploring the personal trajectories of two participants in further subjective detail. Exploring individual narratives can provide an insightful means for representing and analysing identity in its multiple guises in different contexts (Presser, 2009). As a method it allows for systematic study of experience and the changing meaning of conditions over time. Attention to personal narratives in interviews opens discursive spaces for research subjects; they can represent themselves as “agents acting in life worlds of moral complexity” (Reismann, 2001:24).

## Chapter 11: The pleasure and the pain: intimate stories of capital accumulation and loss from two historic ISSP cases.

The aim of this thesis has been to draw attention to the methodological and epistemological contours of research with persistent young offenders, its complexities and the opportunities for *verstehen*<sup>176</sup> (Weber, 1968). Using two case studies and an interpretative approach, I have examined the ways in which subjectivities inform, frame and mediate relationships within the field, and also manifest in the reflexive process of understanding and writing up life-history interviews. Case studies provide an essential role in exploring how issues identified in the thematic chapter (10) manifested in the participant's everyday lives; moving topics from an abstracted context to one in which the emotional and practical reality becomes alive. Such an approach risks a lack of generalisability, but even for the sceptics, working in this manner can provide criminologists with a "deeper understanding both of the conditions of existence of which they are a product and of the social effects that can be exercised by the research relationship" (Bourdieu 1999: 621). Indeed, highlighting the "revival of complex subjectivity" Smith (2006) commented that a striking feature of recent developments in criminological research was "attention to the individual biographies of people who offend, to their inner, sometimes unconscious, experiences, and to the importance of emotion as a source of action" (2006: 361).

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<sup>176</sup> The method of *verstehen* strives to understand the meanings that human beings attribute to their experiences, interactions, and actions. Weber construed *verstehen* as a methodical, systematic, and rigorous form of inquiry that could be employed in both macro- and micro-sociological analysis (Ritzer and Goodman, 2003).

### 11.1 Sampling and methodology

The two young people chosen to be case studies – Amos and Mark - differed considerably in their response to ISSP, and their attitudes towards the future. While they shared many historical and baseline characteristics, such length of career, age at first offence and various socio-demographics, at the point of interview they were at emotionally and practically divergent stages of life. Amos, who had previously been part of a wide-scale drugs network was actively determined to move away from crime; he had not offended for approximately 12-18 months, had severed ties with his criminal peers and found employment in a local factory on the opposite side of the city. Charges which pre-dated this turning point however had returned him to custody. Mark, meanwhile, who had generally committed small scale property and public order offences either on his own or with an arbitrary accessory remained reliant on crime and prison life as a means of emotional satisfaction and economic security. Mark also had a long and unique experience of the social care sector. In sum, the context and content of their criminal histories and alternative passageways towards desistance and persistence made them theoretically valuable for the task at hand.

Notably, as previously stressed (see Section 3.5) these case studies do not aim to be generalisable to wider groups of persistent young offenders (although aspects of

the findings, where appropriate, may well be ‘transferable’<sup>177</sup> to other settings). Sighting Mitchell he writes that well chosen and carefully constructed case studies will reflect “some general theoretical principal” (2000:170). Certainly, the selection of the following case studies was based on the need to facilitate an expansion of the theoretical framework and achieve strong interpretative validity. The interviews with both Mark and Amos resulted in ‘thick’ descriptive accounts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of their lives through adolescence to young adulthood and incorporated a wide range of relevant, but diverse issues. Using their life stories as a starting point, the following analyses aims to re-present their narratives as accurately and fully as possible, whilst trying to ensure that the inevitable reduction does not detract from the task at hand – to explore what the impact of childhood persistent offending and youth justice has on young people as they grow up.

### **11.2 Case study 1: Amos, a story of persistence and desistance**

Amos was 23 and a half years old when we met to complete the life-history interviews presented below. Because he was serving a three year sentence for domestic burglary and dangerous driving the two interviews took place in prison and were conducted in a small private room with no officers present. Amos had no recollection of us meeting some six years earlier, when I had interviewed him as part of the large-scale evaluation of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) – for

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<sup>177</sup> Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. The concepts of external validity and transferability are said to be similar because both processes involve determining whether a study’s conclusions may be extrapolated beyond the particular conditions of the research study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

which his mother was also interviewed. While it was impossible to authenticate the entirety of Amos's story, these interviews benefitted from access to additional data sources which made it possible to verify the accuracy of some details. Amos's narration was measured against PNC data, court and media reports and data collected by the youth offending team at the time of ISSP as well as the interview with his mother<sup>178</sup> (see Section 3.2). The comparisons indicated that Amos did not misrepresent his story in any significant way. Indeed, he often corrected himself during the interviews and also warned me that he was unable to provide full details of some aspects of his offending behaviour for fear he might implicate himself or other people. While I have a sense that he presented his story honestly, it is not known what he chose to conceal, or to what extent he revised his feelings about his past or restructured other facts to make it more palatable for the purposes of the research. The analysis highlights any areas where it is suspected that Amos presented a particular sanitised 'version' of events.

At both points in his life, as a teenage persistent young offender and then as an adult convicted prisoner Amos presented as consistently personable and forthcoming. At 17 he was notably more talkative than other young people on the programme who were typically monosyllabic in the company of researchers or staff. Amos actively sought out and enjoyed interpersonal contact with adults; he exchanged jokes and conversed with staff at break times - successfully softening

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<sup>178</sup> Data collected from the first evaluation included two interviews with Amos at the start and end of his ISSP, Assessments completed by his overseeing officer during his programme and a one-to-one interview with his mother.

the boundaries between young offender and youth justice officer/ professional. Markedly, during both follow-up interviews he referred to me as 'mate' – an affectionate term he also used in relation to his friends.

The geniality of Amos's interviews as a teenager gave way to a young man eager to tell me his life-story as an adult. In both follow-up interviews he spoke profusely, rarely pausing and sometimes thinking out loud before correcting himself and continuing on. When asked to tell me the story of his life, he spent the first 12 minutes of a one hour interview on the circumstances of his current conviction. He poured over explicit details of the case indicating why the legality of his conviction, in his opinion, was unsafe and unfair. Demonstrably riled, he fidgeted in his chair, threw his arms up and exhaled loudly. While Amos admitted to being in the 'get-away' car (of which there was reliable proof) he conceded no responsibility for the remaining crimes where the evidence was debatable. But what mostly unsettled him was the refusal of the sentencing Judge to take into account the significant changes he had made in his life since the crimes had been committed – approximately 18 months earlier. Since this time Amos had made a radical decision to move away from crime and settle down with his new family. The combination of becoming a father, pressure from his mother and an increasing fear he might follow in the footsteps of his peers – three of whom had been given life sentences for murder - had prompted Amos to turn his back on his friends and acquaintances, move to a part of the city where he was unknown and hold down a job in order 'get back on track'. Undeniably, the turnaround was an important personal achievement

for Amos and he was devastated when “those old charges came back to haunt me”. The legacy of his history as a persistent young offender meant Amos was not afforded any leniency and he was sentenced to three years in prison. Being separated from his son, the relationship with his girlfriend broke down and she moved back in with her parents in a gang-area Amos considered a “no-go”. He was incredulous that he had lost his job, his home and his new lifestyle so easily. This poignant narrative - about his striving efforts to change against a tide of resistance and an unforgiving criminal justice system - provided a powerful moral setting to frame Amos’s identity as a young man endeavouring to desist from crime. The depiction of this ‘moral character’ contrasted sharply with the additional ‘layers’ of his identity that emerged in the course of the interview.

Amos is the second youngest of four children. He spent his early years in a mixed but ‘up and coming’ suburb of Merseyside, initially with both parents. He says he wanted for nothing materially as a young boy; his father sold drugs for a living and would often leave “carrier bags stuffed full of money” and large quantities of cannabis resin around the house. At one point his father was given a ten year prison sentence for supplying Class A drugs and Amos recalls brief memories of travelling across the country to visit him. His parents eventually separated when he was in secondary school – which he says came as a relief since his father was “never there” and “didn’t give a fuck”, in fact each time his father came up in conversation Amos criticised him. By stark contrast, his mother was described as “decent” and “hardworking”; once she became a single parent she held down a fulltime job to

provide legitimately for her children, in turn, exerting consistent pressure on them to apply themselves in school and the workplace.

When asked about school, Amos struggled to recall memories of what he learnt or any teachers or pupils he had relationships with; “school just didn’t bother me” he said. Instead, what memories he had related to the reasons for his frequent expulsions – fighting. He was expelled from a primary school for fighting and again in his first week of secondary school for assaulting a teacher. Eventually he was moved to a specialist unit where he attended on a part time basis. Amos benefitted from the smaller class sizes and increased professional attention and was eventually moved back into mainstream education. Two years later (age fifteen) Amos’s mother took the decision to move the family to a new area, in part, to divert Amos’s attention from a local peer group she considered responsible for his offending . The move was not successful however and Amos was unable to access a suitable school at short notice, the delays meant that he “never went back to school after that – that was it”.

As we began discussing his transition from petty offending in his early teens into persistent and serious crime as a young adult, Amos summarised his everyday life with sparse, blunt adjectives such as “bad” and “trouble”.

“Growing up, it was kinda bad. [3] My lifestyle. It was bad. It’s kinda bad still.

It’s been bad all the way up until [5]. I was always in trouble.”

But he also stressed that his offending behaviour did not become problematic until around the age of sixteen. Prior to this he describes himself as a typical young boy “getting into fights and that - I was just normal”. Reliably, his reported memory corresponds to the official data collected by the police on him; the PNC data lists his first offence, a single theft, as taking place when he was 13 years old. But his next offence did not occur for another two years which, again, was a one-off offence for possession of an offensive weapon. However, when he turned sixteen the frequency and severity of his offending quickly escalated to domestic burglary, aggravated theft of a car and dangerous driving – a year in which he was sentenced on five occasions, including three spells in custody (one remand and two sentenced).

Throughout the interviews Amos linked his acceleration in crime to hanging about with ‘older’ men who created opportunities to persist in crime as a way of life. He began to associate with a group of older peers who sold drugs for a local criminal network, some of whom knew his father (who dealt drugs locally). One friend in particular who, at thirty, was almost double Amos’s age at the time, began by encouraging him to act as his chauffeur and drive him to places in various stolen cars. As a means of compensation they would “hangout at his place and smoke some weed and that” afterwards (see Section 10.4 for further discussion of exploitation and ‘grooming’). Amos admitted that he would do “whatever they did” (his peers). Certainly, by the age of sixteen he became rooted into a culture of more serious crime; he committed domestic burglaries, began selling drugs and became

well known to the local police and magistrates, alongside the inevitable spells in custody.

“When I was younger I got involved with bad lads, you know, and that’s what we used to do when we were younger, we’d go out and we’d take cars and we’d burgle and we’d run off [4] and that’s what we’d done for ages. A long time. I was always in trouble. Trouble, and I was young. And that’s how I kept getting those small DTOs<sup>179</sup>. Going in and out of prison. And that’s why, as I was getting older, as you get older you start doing er, doing, err, stuff that’s a bit more worse. And that’s what happened, I started doing things that were a bit more worse.[3] Some of me mates ended up going the same way as me, and we, we ended up hanging round with some of the lads that were older.”

The circle of friends around Amos were extremely important to him while he was growing up; since they did not engage with education or employment, for many years their lives revolved simply around each other. They would spend day and night driving around, selling drugs and socialising together. He admits that he preferred the company of his friends over his family and refused family holidays to avoid being separated from his peer group. He illustrates a hedonistic night-time culture:

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<sup>179</sup> DTO refers to ‘Detention and Training Order’ – a youth custodial sentence.

“We used to go out, drink all the time, smoke weed, and we’d meet girls, I was going to clubs, selling drugs. Stuff like that. Just trouble. And, er, that’s how, it went on for years mate, a long time, that’s all we did. None of us had no job, would never have thought of having a job. We’d just sell drugs and chill out, and sell drugs and drink and drive around. That was it.”

But these relationships were put under strain once Amos became absorbed in the world of drug-dealing; arguments over money and status became common, the prevalence of weapons and drugs made conflicts more violent and unpredictable, a precarious maze of alliances and codes existed and a sense of distrust that co-offenders and even close friends might betray each other to the police or rivals was rife. Over time Amos’s principal fear was not of being caught and convicted by the criminal justice system, but of being suspected or found guilty of ‘grassing’ or treachery by any one of his peers or rivals who might meter out their own brand of violent justice. As Amos grew older, partnerships rather than friendships were formed, loyalties became fluid and friends he could rely on became fewer.

Notably, Amos does not appear to have misused or become dependent on any class of drugs up to the point of interview. Intriguingly, he says he continually “refused” to smoke cannabis until the age of 18, when he finally became curious. He stressed that, although he eventually “smoked a bit of weed” on a regular basis he rarely felt

the inclination to experiment with other drugs and was happy “just to be there” with his friends and “just have a drink and a spliff”.

As Amos’s offending behaviour accelerated, so the response from the criminal justice system became tougher. Between the ages of 16 and 17 Amos was sentenced on six different occasions including three prison sentences and ISSP. Of these first spells in custody Amos said they were “no problem” and “didn’t really bother” him. Indeed, apart from the sentence he was serving at the time of interview, periods in custody did not warrant much commentary from Amos. His historical failure to adhere to police bail conditions prompted the ISSP team to question his suitability for the highly structured programme and curfew. Nevertheless, Amos was recommended for an ISSP order upon being found guilty of domestic burglary. Because of the generous hours afforded by the programme Patrice, the overseeing officer, began by spending a considerable amount of one-to-one time with Amos which he immediately responded to. It was clear that Patrice was deeply invested in helping Amos succeed; one night when Amos broke his curfew, Patrice waited outside his home until 1am when he eventually returned so he could reprimand him in person and mitigate any problems Amos may have created. He went “beyond the call of duty” said Amos’s mother. Notably, six years on Amos affectionately recalled clear memories of his time on ISSP and the warm relationship he formed with Patrice, who he affirmed was a “good” man:

“He was good Patrice. [4]. He’d come round to the house and see me, check up on me. Ask me if I was ok. He was a good man. And he got on really well

with me mum. If I ever had a problem he'd speak to me mum, even like, even just like little things. Even if I was in bits of trouble I could talk to him about it, and he'd come in, sometimes you know, he'd tell me off, you know, like I was his kid or something, or like if he was a copper. But he'd help me, he'd help me a lot mate. So I would never diss the man or tell him to fuck off, I would never say to him, "you know you're just a probation officer, you're nothing to do with me, you don't know, you're just.." He was more than that, do you know what I mean? He was a probation worker, or ISSP worker, but he was a mentor to me too. We all got on. It was nice. He's a good man."

Undoubtedly, this flexible and trusting relationship was influential in securing Amos's compliance and he was able to complete six months on the programme, including a three month curfew. Amos claimed that while he was on ISSP he had so little free-time he was able to avoid reoffending (PNC data verifies that he was not charged, warned or convicted of any offences during this time). However, the longer term influence of ISSP was subtle; Amos managed a further three months of desistance before a fight resulted in a conviction for ABH and an 18-month prison sentence. At this stage Amos confirmed his reputation as a recidivist adult offender; all subsequent convictions, including driving offences resulted custodial, rather than community-based disposals.

Although hesitant, it did not take Amos long to mention his involvement in more serious crime and drug networks, and immediately the internal conflict caused by this topic was clear. He explained how he needed to hold back, worried about the consequences of divulging information that might implicate himself – or more specifically other people who might seek revenge. Simultaneously he stressed how he wanted me to “understand what his life had really been like” - he was plainly frustrated by these self-imposed boundaries. Indeed, after completing the interviews I was left with the feeling that Amos was emotionally burdened by his experiences of crime, particularly those related to the brutal drug and gang culture in Liverpool.

“I don’t know how to put it across to you, or what to say. I don’t want to get anyone in trouble [3]. There’s things I want to tell you, to make you understand, but, well. I probably shouldn’t. I don’t know, do you know what I mean? But on the other hand, this has been my life, my life. This is what I’ve seen. This is the type of people I’ve been round and this is the type of thing that we have done. And, do you know what I mean? I don’t, I just, don’t want to go into too much detail.”

At the time of interview Amos had cut ties with the vast majority of his childhood friends. Nevertheless he remained threatened by the belief that “bad” information he had from the past meant other people considered him an ongoing risk. In fact “remembering too much” might prove a fatal mistake; he mentioned that even walking through certain areas of the city might result in him being “shot”.

“See the thing is. I know stuff. I know stuff. I’ve told you stuff. And it’s like, it’s like, it’s like. I can tell you small bits, but I can’t go much further. These things, they are just small bits, small bits, of what it was really like. Cos, I don’t want to. [3] [exhales] [5]. Some stuff I have been round and seen. [4]. Do you know what I mean, even from young, some stuff has been bad mate. Bad. And people might not have been convicted of it. And I know that. But if I said anything. Well. I’d be in trouble.”

On this and associated topics Amos would sit forward in his chair, speak quietly in hushed tones, sometimes so low I could not make out the words on the recording. As he spoke, he often stopped mid-sentence, changed his mind about divulging some particular detail before returning to the subject later on and continuing the story. I reiterated the details of our confidentiality agreement on three occasions and reassured him we could remove any details he felt would be inappropriate for publication. Certainly, Amos wanted to talk, and while the platform of the interview gave him some limited space to express himself, I believe he would have valued the opportunity to speak to someone in an entirely confidential capacity.

From his account, Amos’s own drug-dealing was small-scale and he continued to commit a range of additional offences – some of which were acquisitive – throughout. Nevertheless selling drugs to people he knew locally and in clubs allowed him to make an income sufficient to entertain himself and avoid

employment. At around the age of twenty Amos spent a brief period attempting to set up a satellite outpost supplying Ecstasy and other Class A substances in new city, although working without the knowledge and infrastructure of his locale he was soon identified by the local police and driven out. Nevertheless he makes the point, which is verified by his PNC records, that he was never convicted in relation to supplying any class of drugs. In this respect, dealing drugs was less risky than burglary (for which Amos was convicted and sentenced three times); it provided a stable and regular income effectively beyond the reach of the police.

But, relative security from a police conviction was just one hazard Amos had to navigate. While he alternated between restraint and revelation, over the course of the interviews it became clear that Amos had, at the very least, spent a long time on the periphery of a large-scale drug network and witnessed its inner machinations. The experience of being part of this complex structure had been formative; the culture of drugs, gangs and firearms he witnessed in Liverpool was brutal, deadly and often outside the scope of the authorities. The rivalry between drug networks or families meant very young boys - such as Amos - became the potential targets of firearms or 'torture' attacks. Amos describes one traumatic event in which he witnessed a young boy being shot at point blank range.

"I've seen loads of mad shit mate. The worst things are always to do with drugs. Not just the drug itself. Drugs yeah, but everything around it. Or the way people fight over it. And I've seen a kid get shot one time up there. A kid got smoked mate. He was in the flat and we were just having a drink.

Everyone was just chilling, drinking. It's where they sold drugs, and everyone was just having a drink. And the bell went. And me mate said to the kid, "call downstairs and get the door". And as the kids' gone downstairs to get the door, and there was a gate on the other side, and whoever it was shot the kid in the stomach. He was only a young kid, so you know, it was bad, cos he was only a young, young kid. But up there all the young kids are taking drugs, and smoking drugs, and their mum's are all the same, all on drugs, they don't care mate, they don't care. It's just bad. It's the worst place I've ever seen. And this kid just got shot."

He then began to broach the sensitive issue of his own involvement in this culture: he explained how he had been invited to take part in a revenge attack with two other assailants - a request he eventually declined on advice. Meanwhile, one of his best friends accepted the request to "kidnap and torture" an individual rival, but his involvement with the two 'ring-leaders' later lead to an additional fatality and in due course all three were arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. Adamant that his friend had been exploited and would never have killed anyone, this event proved a highly significant one in Amos's recent life. Not only did it underline the seriousness of the criminal culture he had become embedded in (Hagan, 1993), he pondered what might have happened to him if he'd made a different decision about being involved in the planned attack.

"What happened was, I think they got done for a kidnapping and torture. And err, they asked me, you know, one time to do this with them. Do you know

what I mean, take the man, and obviously do whatever they done to him. And take his money and that, so I said, yeah. Do you know what I mean. But, me mate he said, [muffled]... he said, "don't, don't, don't do that, you'll end up in really serious trouble, don't" . So I never, I never done it. But I find out later on, supposedly, that he'd, he'd gone out with them, he's supposed to have murdered, murdered another lad. Do you know what I mean. But, we, we was good mates, good mates anyway, do you know what I mean. And I thank him for that still, do you know what I mean. Cos, I could have been doing serious jail if, he hadn't of, didn't have stepped in and 'nah, don't, don't do that'. Do you know what I mean? But he, but, what I was thinking was why, why, you know why did he go out and do something else with those same people. You know, and now they're getting locked up for murder. The two lads, they were kind of mates, but I don't talk to them no more. Because, they basically took him, me proper mate, took him with them, but they didn't need to. No way. As far as I am concerned he never told me he'd murdered the person, do you know what I mean, but they said he did, do you know what I mean, cos. I don't think he done it meself. I don't know, I don't know what happened really. That was me mate. That was me mate. I still speak to him, like, I still write to him."

As evidenced in the passage above, Amos's reluctance to "remember too much" meant that the narration of his criminal-life, particularly some of the most controversial episodes, were austere and atemporal. The finer detail of names,

places and times were carefully omitted. The harsh vocabulary of “kidnap”, “torture” and “murder” appear as normative terms. The victim’s identity remains opaque as the brutality of the murder is similarly abstracted. The nature of relationships between the assailants and Amos are objectified; the two ring-leaders are referred to as “lads” who are “not mates anymore”: impersonal and generic. The seeming coldness of this story-telling was betrayed by Amos’s demeanour however, he was visibly nervous recounting this story. As he spoke and he wrung his hands over and over, unable to keep still. While there were few pauses in this extract, he stuttered over his words, mumbled and sought to gauge my response to each sentence by repeating “do you know what I mean?” throughout.

Since he admitted during the interview that he could only impart “bits of what me life has really been like” it is impossible to know to what extent Amos had been involved in other violent episodes (that failed to come to the attention of the police) or what broader role, if any, he had played in this or other criminal networks. However, it was clear that the murder, in combination with the life-sentences his friends received, was a turning point in Amos’s understanding of the violent environment he lived in. Up to this point he seemed unconnected to the harsh realities of the gun and drug culture in Liverpool and the inevitable punishments the local justice system would meter out. Certainly in terms of selling drugs, Amos and his friends had been able to operate quite successfully without police detection and this had afforded him a false sense of security.

The realities of the coal-face of serious-drug dependency also appeared to surprise Amos. Memories of visiting “crack-dens” remained lucid in his mind as he recalled the sight of a girl younger than himself injecting heroin alongside her mother and sister:

“I remember this girl, a young girl, she was about 14 or something, injecting herself with heroin. Do you know what I mean? I remember thinking that was mad. When we got to the place, we got there, we’ve come up, come into the house. It was a crack den [5]. And I was there and I’ve seen this young girl injecting something into her hand. And I’ve said, “what the fuck is she doing?” She’s, she’s. And they go, “this is what they do up here,” and I’ve said “what do you mean this is what they do?” and he’s said “you know like, you smoke weed, and you sit down with people and you smoke weed. Well this is what these do. They sit here with their people and take their drugs, their heroin and their crack”. But you know, even the girl’s older sister was on it as well, and their mum. The mum was totally messed up, messed up. She was there. She was sitting there, with the daughters, taking drugs, laid out. And I was just like, whoaaa. That is mad. And that wasn’t the only time I’d seen it. I’d seen them plenty more times round the house, I’d seen that young girl, running round the streets too, do you know what I mean, selling herself. Everything, anything for money to get drugs and stuff. Bad mate.”

The passage above illustrates Amos’s inclination to dissociate himself from the people who bought the drugs he sold. Curiously, he expressed mixed feelings about

drugs as he was growing up. Although he was surrounded by his dad's "blocks" of cannabis resin as a child, and the majority of his friends smoked cannabis from their early teens, he "refused" to experiment until he reached 18. After this he seemingly limited his drug-use to "a bit of weed" despite working within a poly-drug use culture. As he spoke he described the "young kids" and "mums" and "fucking crack-heads" from the estate who used drugs as "bad" and "scum". The narration of these memories evokes a sense of Amos entering another world, a world he was both excited and disgusted by. Yet he fails to recognise the role he played in this culture himself. It is likely the contradictory influences of his parents were at play; Amos's father – a long time drug dealer was vilified by his mother whose anti-drugs stance intensified over Amos's lifetime following their divorce and again after losing her brother to a drugs overdose. Fiercely against the idea that he may be perceived as following in his father's footsteps, Amos appeared to distance himself from the realities of his (previous) occupation and identity as a drug dealer. In this sense Amos displayed a capacity towards alterity; casting his role as a drug dealer to something that happened 'off-stage' and beyond the judgement of others (including himself).

Throughout his life Amos's mother aimed to steer him onto the 'straight and narrow'; endeavouring to distract him, seeking professional help and pressuring him to find legitimate employment. Few of these efforts made any tangible impact on his behaviour growing up, although it is clear Amos and his mother maintained a strong relationship and he continued to seek her approval. To manage her

expectations, Amos would hide details of his everyday lifestyle and make excuses not to follow-up any job opportunities she found. Eventually she threatened to 'disown' him if he committed any further crimes, a threat which she carried out for a period of nine months. This bold step unsettled and wounded Amos, although, again, upon reconciliation he returned to leading a 'double life' and concealed his involvement in the local underground drugs and crime economy.

Notably, his mother's determination to help him find work finally paid dividends around the age of 21 when Amos announced he wanted to get "a proper job" and move away from crime. This radical turning point he says, was prompted by his new responsibilities as a parent. He admits that while he was initially apprehensive about becoming a father and encouraged his girlfriend to consider an abortion, once the child arrived, for the first time in his life he was "proper, proper happy, really buzzing". Determined not to replicate his own father's example, but follow the lead of his mother, Amos stressed his intentions to provide, be a "good" father and most importantly "be there". Indeed, the interrelated topics of his father's bad character and Amos's own sense of responsibility toward son were mentioned in both follow-up interviews.

*"I don't speak to the man [dad] no more, I don't want anything to do with him. He's no good mate. Do you know what I mean ... He doesn't give a fuck! He doesn't care, he can't be arsed, he'd just be yeah, go out commit crime, sell drugs, do what you want. As long as I'm bringing in money he couldn't give a fuck. He doesn't care. With my mum, mate, with my mum, that's different, I*

*know, I know what side my bread is buttered, and if I live with my mum, I know I won't be in jail. I don't want to be away from my kid, I want to be there for me kid, I love my kid. I want to be there."*

While there is little doubt that the arrival of Amos's child proved a pivotal moment in his life, it is also likely that other factors which coincided with this event strengthened his resolve to desist from crime. As already mentioned, one of his best friends and other close acquaintances were sentenced to extended prison sentences shortly after his son was born. The impact of this was two-fold; not only did it cause him concern for his own liberty, but it removed a circle of allies with whom Amos might continue offending. The vast majority of Amos's crimes were committed with other people, specifically with Amos providing a secondary or supportive function while his peers, often older than him lead the way. When these connections were significantly impacted, Amos had fewer occasions to offend. Moreover, it became apparent that there was increasing levels of danger attached to selling drugs within Liverpool at the time (see Section 9.6). He mentioned that shortly before his friends were sentenced to life one of them had done some other "stupid things", and he might be considered a suitable target for revenge. In sum, his presence within the local culture was distinctly weakened without access to his peer group, his rivals considered him a target and he lacked the motivation and confidence to find alternative routes back into crime.

Like other persistent offenders in this study the path away from crime was not an easy one for Amos. He realised he would need to comprehensively renovate his life; he disconnected himself from his remaining friends, stopped visiting those who were in custody, moved away from key drug and gang areas of Liverpool and back in with his mother. His income was dramatically reduced, just at a time when he wanted to 'provide' all the items necessary for a new baby. Certainly, he had to adapt to an utterly different lifestyle with new priorities and modes of acceptable behaviour. Finally, following his mother's wish, he wanted to 'provide' legitimately - a particularly hard task with no qualifications, a criminal record and no relevant work experience. Nevertheless, he eventually found his first job working nights in a factory doing "heavy work". It was a drastic and demanding rite of passage. But he said the adjustment to his new life felt "worth it", in fact he experienced a sense of relief to be away from the "madness" of his previous lifestyle.

Amos remained employed in his factory job for three months before finding another office-based post in sales. He and his girlfriend moved into a small flat on the outskirts of the city and everyday life took on a domestic quality, one that made him "happy" he said. It was at this point the introduction to his story began; old charges for a domestic burglary and dangerous driving were being reinvestigated by the police. A mobile phone found in the getaway car had finally been linked to Amos, and he was charged and convicted within the space of two months. His employer had provided a character reference to verify his good record at work and had promised to keep the post open for him while he was held on remand. But

Amos's reputation as a recidivist offender proved to be an unremitting obstacle; no leniency was extended and he was sentenced to three years custody. Amos was stunned; as he returned to this part of his life-story his language and animated manner expressed the resentment he felt towards the police and court staff, who he felt were motivated by not by welfare goals, but an emotional desire to wreak revenge. For the first time he was deeply affected by the loss of his liberty, which on this occasion involved so many additional losses – access to his child, his job, his home and his new way of life.

*"I could have fought it. They said I could fight it. But, I said, no. ...They put me back in prison, that was the wrong move mate. That was wrong. When someone's doing good like that, when they turned things around like that. I mean, prison has never really bothered me, do you know what I mean, I can come to prison, I can do me time, no problem, and that's it, it didn't really bother me before, but since I've had me kid, this has been hard. Because, I love me kid, and I want to be there for him. And I haven't been. I haven't been able to now because I've been locked up. Do you know what I mean. I want to see him. I want a job, and I want to stop coming to prison. I want to come out and show them, get a job, be there. I could never do life here. Do you know what I mean?"*

As the long final interview was ending I asked Amos to think about his future and where he saw himself in a year's time. He returned to the '*determined desister*' he described at the beginning of the interview – the responsible parent who was wary of his former friends and indifferent to the attraction of an offending lifestyle. He remained wedded to the idea that 'getting a job' was the key to desisting successfully from crime. Throughout the interviews he evangelised his mother's belief in the benefits of a law-abiding *working* lifestyle.

*"My mum works, her boyfriend works, do you know what I mean? She doesn't like nothing to do with crime, do you know what I mean? And that's the people I want to be around. I don't want to be around anyone to do with crime, I don't even want to be around me mates anymore. I, I, don't. If, if I see them I'd say hello and that, and I would never diss them or that, maybe have a drink or that, but nothing else, I don't want to be around anything, I don't want to know about any deals, I don't want to be around them selling drugs or that. I just don't want to be around that. Finished. [3] I don't want to come back to prison. I've got a little kid to look after now. I don't want to end up doing life or something. I want to do alright, I want to be there for me kid. My dad was never there, I don't want to be the same. You know, for my little boy. His dad needs to be there for him. Not in and out of prison. I want to see him. I want a job, and I want to stop coming to prison."*

Predicting Amos's future post-release is of course an impossible task. His circumstances will have changed dramatically with access to almost none of the

resources he had before entering prison. The relationship with his girlfriend had broken down and she moved back to the area Amos frequented when he and his friends were deeply involved in drug and gang-related crime. This would pose countless problems; not only did it mean he could no longer live full-time with his son, but re-entering this part of the city might be dangerous for Amos and by default put his son at risk. The logistics of arranging access were already troubling him greatly. After the passive security of prison Amos would be in unfamiliar territory and would need to navigate himself through various complications and challenges. One reason he may have been so keen to get a job could go beyond the need for an income but the need for a new circle of friends, an occupation and something to define his worth to his family and his public self-image. That he introduced the topic of work over and over again highlights how central he believed it to be to the creation of his 'good' self and the complicated journey towards desistance.

### **11.3 Case study 2: Mark, a story of persistence.**

The life history interviews that form the basis of this case-study were conducted when Mark was almost 23 years old. At the time, he was serving a five year sentence for two burglaries (one domestic, one commercial) which represented his ninth prison sentence since the age of 14. By the end of this latest sentence, Mark will have spent approximately five years and ten months in custody – almost one quarter of his life and the majority of his young adulthood. Mark was the first ISSP

case for his respective youth offending team which he began at age 15. Although he was not formally interviewed for the evaluation I met Mark on a number of occasions during his four months on the programme – which he failed to complete after being remanded in custody following fresh offences.

Each interview lasted around one hour and took place in a secure and confidential space within the prison. Mark's slackened physical presence contrasted with his more energetic vocal performance; in both interviews Mark slumped low down in his chair, he was unable to sustain eye-contact for very long, choosing instead to look past me or out of the window. However, he was linguistically expressive, making jokes, laughing and choosing different voices to play the various characters in his life. He also confessed intimate details about his experiences of sexual abuse and physical altercations with adults in authority as a child. Nevertheless, by the second interview there were indications he wanted to distance himself from me. Although he continued to put forward his opinions and no awkward pauses occurred, instead of referring to me as 'mate' as he had done initially, Mark greeted me with a 'Morning *Miss*'. He continued to refer to me in by this pseudo title throughout the interview – conferring a professional status that suggested he considered me to be part of an condescending professional 'other' whom he did not trust. Finally, on reflection, inconsistencies in Mark's life story were common, as were methods to deflect questions and change topic.

Mark began his life-story with the blunt statements that he had been placed in care by his parents when he was 12 and he was excluded from “loads of schools”. Directly after he laughed and joked that his mother had “spent a fortune” on different school uniforms, before stressing that he had intended to get expelled in order to get “all the moaning over and done with all in one go innit? [laughs] So I didn’t have to go back”. These efforts to assert his autonomy over adults who made decisions about him as a child were a common feature of Mark’s narration. Indeed, for the first ten minutes of the interview Mark described a series of very tense and distrustful relationships with the scores of professional staff he had come into contact with over his lifetime. He recalled a bitter memory, age nine, of having to stand in the “naughty corner” at school for being disruptive, although Mark claims, he simply could not keep up with the work:

“I was about nine or something and the teacher used to make me stand in the corner and look at the wall for being naughty. And he’s say ‘face the other way!’ and all that. Cheeky bastard. And I always remember that. Sometimes, you’re just not as clever as everyone else in the class. ... but, if, they’re not going to help ya, you just think ‘fuck this’, I’m just going to arse around. ..I know I’m only a kid, but, at the end of the day, you shouldn’t be made to feel stupid. Makes you want to be naughty don’t it? You think fucking hell, you’ve seen nothing yet!”

Assessments which took place on ISSP noted that Mark had been formerly diagnosed with special educational needs in primary school and provided with a

'Statement'<sup>180</sup> of the additional help he required. Nevertheless, he believed his needs were ignored by teachers. Eventually, Mark was permanently expelled from two schools for fighting, disruption, theft and truancy. Although he continued to receive various styles of education after his first expulsion at 11 (he went to alternative secondary schools, a Pupil Referral Unit, a boarding school and at age 15 received 6 hours education a week on ISSP), he was unable to engage with these resources for more than a few weeks. Consequently, Mark had few memories of these sporadic interventions and they failed to make an impact on his life or learning ability.

Perhaps one further reason he felt betrayed by education staff was identified by his ISSP officer who reported that Mark had been bullied by older children during his secondary education. Casting himself, again, in a more assertive role, Mark claimed that he had been expelled for threatening a well-known bully with a knife, but stressed he had not been bullied personally. Over the course of both interviews Mark spat passionate words such as "hate" and "horrible" to describe his experiences of education, and this was often directed ad-hominem at teachers who were "cunts" and "bastards"; "I *hated* school for some reason, especially the teachers". Notably, this appeared – in combination with other factors - to have a damaging long-term impact on his general perception of education and educated professionals (including researchers). He indiscriminately mocked teachers,

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<sup>180</sup> A statement of special educational needs (SEN) is a legally binding statutory assessment and plan for a child's educational requirements (beyond the standard provision within mainstream school). It is conducted by an Educational Psychologist on behalf of the Local Authority and should be reviewed annually to ensure that any extra support given continues to meet the child's requirements (IPSEA, 2012).

probation and social work staff who, in his opinion, led pampered lives which disqualified them from understanding the “real life” that Mark lived:

“They’ve just come out of university or wherever they’ve been, do you know what I mean, from their cushy little life and they just come into work thinking they can just tell me what to do and how my life is and they understand and all that. Fuck off, they understand nothing, I am not fucking stupid. Them, them, with all their little lives, things being perfect for them, they’ve been to school, and went to university and - fair enough, good on them, but they can’t sit there and tell me on a level what my life’s been like, saying they understand. Do you know what I mean? Cos they don’t. I know for a fact they don’t.”

Mark’s attempts to resist and frustrate relationships with professionals belied a deep and long-held distrust of all adults in authority. He reported no positive relationships, memories or moments with education, social welfare or criminal justice staff. His anger towards these characters was palpable; he sat forward in his chair contorting his face and using stereotypical gruff voices to impersonate them. While conflicts with teachers and education staff marked his early years, as he entered adolescence social workers became ‘the enemy’. Specifically, he believed they had manipulated his parents into agreeing to place Mark in care when he was 12. Up to this point Mark had lived at home with his mother, father and three siblings in a large Merseyside estate. But from around the age of ten, Mark says he frequently truanted from school and spent time hanging about with older kids,

drinking, smoking weed and “being a nuisance” on the estate. He often went missing for “several days or weeks” at a time staying with friends or wandering the streets. He mentions that various members of his family would be out looking for him and would report him missing to the police. “I just used to wander the streets drinking...The amount of times me mum and dad had found me, do you know what I mean, in the street, drunk, off me head”. Unable to maintain clear boundaries for Mark, his parents agreed with social workers to place him in care. Critically, this decision was not discussed with Mark, and instead, at age 12 after returning home from his latest “disappearing act” he was informed by the police (not his parents) that he would very shortly be taken into local authority care. To ensure his safe removal from the family house, at 12pm the same evening he was escorted in a police car to the children’s home. Mark was devastated:

“..so, the Police come over this night and they said, ‘pack your stuff’. And I said ‘oh yeah, where do you think I am going?’ kinda thing. And they said, ‘no, pack your stuff you’re moving’. And I was like oh yeah, ‘I’m going to bed mate’ [laughs]. And they just grabbed me and put me in the back of the car and took me to the children’s home...[5] Back then it seemed like miles and miles away down country lanes and that. But it was only about 7, 8 miles. That’s all that it is. Do you know what I mean? But, to me, back then, in the night time, going down country lanes it seemed like another world. I mean the first night was a shock though, do you know what I mean [6] and I just go in there, in this big house, the big old house, and it was like, do you know what I mean, they just dropped me off, and that was it mate, I think it was about 2 o’clock in the

morning when I got dropped off. So I went in there and the woman said, no, it was a fella and he said, 'nice to meet ya, your room's up there, and we'll sort you tomorrow', you know. And I was thinking, I couldn't believe it. I was thinking 'fffaaaaaahwww, what's going on here?!' Do you know what I mean? He took me to this room, it was about 2 o'clock in the morning, and he said 'there's your room, there's the toilet and the staff will see you tomorrow – night'. Me head fell off! I didn't know where I was mate. And I got in that room mate and I cried me heart out mate, I cried me heart out."

This exert closed with what appeared to be a genuine expression of fear and loneliness. Defensively however, Mark's next sentence asserted that he had the emotional competence to overcome this dramatic event and turn it to his advantage; "[laughs] it was a shock at first. But it weren't that much of a shock, I realised it weren't that bad, I didn't have to worry about me mum or dad shouting at me anymore, do you know what I mean?" Clearly however, this event *did* have an overwhelming and long-term impact on Mark, his sense of security and his relationship with his family. He alternated between saying he 'loved' living in care and refused family visits, to admitting he pleaded with his parents to let him come home. But they did not accept his request and as a result he was made subject to a Care Order and placed on the child protection register<sup>181</sup> until the age of 15.

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<sup>181</sup> Before April 2008, children at risk would have been placed on the child protection register. The child protection register no longer exists.

If the move to a children's home had been an attempt to curtail Mark's behaviour with a 'short, sharp, shock', he claimed it had the opposite effect. Angered and resentful at his parent's decision, Mark's behaviour became more chaotic. He began using a broader range of drugs, including ecstasy and amphetamines, he absconded for longer periods of time and on frequent occasions would lash-out, smashing windows and breaking through the doors of the children's home. As staff struggled to contain him, he would be moved into a new facility; he said he never stayed anywhere for more than a few months before being "kicked out". At age 13 he was placed in a residential school approximately 150 miles away from home. This was followed by a secure training centre, and lastly, at age 15 social services moved him into a small flat where staff worked with him on a one-to-one basis. As each placement failed a more 'intensive' solution was sought but these measures seemed be counter-productive, instead of delivering more care and closer attention, Mark strengthened his resistance and refused to accept the increasing levels of intervention. During his three years in care Mark says he was moved around six or seven schools in addition to eight or nine care homes. He typically "trashed" all of his placements and threatened the teachers and staff, who later refused to work with him:

"It just made me 20 times worse. I weren't going to listen to anyone, once they did that, I was thinking, oh my god, they put me in a children's home, while me brothers and sister were back home and all that, do you know what I mean? [5] I just thought 'fuck youse mate, think I am going to listen to anything you say again!' And then I started going with people who really

didn't care, who really didn't give a fuck. I just started going off the rails mate, I caused havoc, I smashed it up, running away and causing trouble with the neighbours round there and just being a nuisance. They always had the police there, I was always going missing. Always staying out, a week, two weeks at a time. So then they moved me to another one, then another one, but it just made me worsen."

While Mark's behaviour became more challenging for social services, he inevitably attracted the attention of the police and criminal justice system. His first conviction, for theft, took place when he was 11 and since then until the age of 23 there has only ever been a few months before further offences took place (excepting periods in custody), fortifying his reputation as a persistent offender. In the 12 months before he started ISSP (at age 15) he was convicted of 24 offences. Minor volume offences (theft, criminal damage, car-theft) turned into property crimes and burglary as he reached his late teens and beyond.

Defending his behaviour Mark explained that he simply liked to 'do as he pleased' and took considerable pleasure from disobeying authority; "I just liked to do what I want, do you know what I mean ..? I just liked doing what I wasn't allowed. [5] What I got told not to do. [3] I'd do it." Indeed, Mark described an almost pathological response to the boundaries that were laid down for him as he was growing up. In particular, he seemed unable to discuss or negotiate matters with

the staff that were left in charge of him. Instead he ended up in physical conflict with staff or vandalising property. These acts of constant resistance seemed to have provided Mark with an out-let for his anger as well a sense of power following his parent's radical decision to remove him from their home. He giggled as he told me how his unrelenting behaviour provided him with a form of leverage to "get what I wanted" and that he had been able to "get away with murder":

"Social services and all that, if I asked for anything and said I'd be good, they'd give me it, do you know what I mean? They'd do anything. Do you know what I mean? They would give me anything to be good. I had their heads up the fucking wall mate. They couldn't - they didn't know what was going on. They didn't know what to do with me. They used to give me little bribes, twenty quids and all this shite, do you know what I mean? Just anything. I got flying lessons and everything. Anything. Anything. Anything. I don't know. They just wanted me to be good. So much. They, they, they were trying everything. Every book in - every trick in the book they had. Do you know what I mean? But obviously it didn't work did it? Cos I'm sitting here now. Do you know what I mean! [Laughs] Do you know what I mean?"

Not only did Mark consider himself beyond the physical control of staff, he also believed he was outside everyone else's cultural, emotional and cerebral understanding. From the beginning of the first interview and throughout Mark referred to himself as "different". Although he struggled to explain exactly what he meant by being "different" he indicated that his life experiences, the decisions he

had taken and his apparent capacity to “do as he pleased” marked him out from everyone else he knew – including staff, family and friends:

“Me brothers and sisters and that were always in the house, in bed, do you know what I mean? Do you know what I mean? They, they, they never, they always listened to me mum and dad, do you know what I mean? All me mates listened to their mum and dad, as well, but I never. .. I’m different. I’m not like none of me mates. Or any of them. ...Just me as a person. I’m different. I’ve never met anyone who’s had a life similar to mine. In any way. No one gets me [laughs].”

Superficially, Mark appeared to enjoy the idea that professionals could not ‘work him out’ and that he was somehow beyond their comprehension. From his perspective, his ability to defy authority and “please himself” marked him out as different, perhaps ‘untouchable’ compared to others. While he savoured the belief that he played the role of puppet-master over those who were officially ‘in-charge’ of him, he patently felt very frustrated at his parent’s decision to place him in care and powerless to make them change their minds. Such was his desire to appear indifferent to their refusal, in the same sentence as admitting how much he wanted to go home, Mark said the “big mansion” he was moved out of county (and over 150 miles away) at age 14 was “ace” and “had everything”.

Putting his 'resistance' into some context, towards the end of the first interview he declared three separate occasions of physical and sexual assaults by adults in a professional capacity. Firstly, he claimed from the age of approximately 13, he regularly experienced police beatings – which he says was a common feature of local policing and continued throughout his criminal career (a report which was reiterated by other members of the sample – see Section 10.3) “Fucking hell. They fucking leather you where I come from. Ask any kid from round here mate. Bizzies will give you a hiding... proper whack you everywhere. No messing round”. Secondly, at age 14 he stated that he was assaulted – head-butted and punched by a teacher at the boarding school who “lost it” after learning that Mark had broken a number of stained-glass windows and disrupted a class. After this incident, he asked to be returned home, but instead was quickly sent to another institution, while the teacher claimed he only showed “reasonable force” to restrain Mark – and “got away with it” in Mark’s opinion. Lastly, he revealed that while in one-to-one care, age 15, he was given alcohol to subdue him while a worker took photos of him naked and “interfered” with him while he was in bed. When the sexual abuse took place, Mark said he was so ashamed, he didn’t tell anyone until he was 19. Contradicting this report slightly, ISSP staff were aware of the alleged abuse when Mark was 15 and referred him to a Children’s and Adolescent Mental Health team. Nevertheless Mark said he became so distressed that his parents eventually agreed that he could return home. At age 20, he decided to press charges for the sexual abuse, but the Crown Prosecution Service decided there was insufficient evidence. He said; “I’m still angry to this day. I should’ve killed the cunt”.

Although these interviews were self-directed and Mark volunteered the information, he found it very difficult to elucidate beyond the outline of what *happened*, particularly in relation to the sexual abuse allegations. When asked how he *felt* about recounting these events as an adult, he became uncomfortable, stuttered and repeated the phrase “do you know what I mean?” after almost every sentence. While this expression is a local idiom and was repeated through each of Mark’s interviews, its regularity dramatically increased during his confession of the sexual abuse. In fact he repeated it 32 times in less than five minutes<sup>182</sup> - suggesting it was a verbal nervous tic. Recognising his discomfort, I reassured him any details could be removed from the transcript if he wished, but he declined before changing the subject. These short stories were fleeting but poignant; they provided a framework to the intense distrust of adults that Mark described from primary school, after being humiliated in class. Later the rejection by his parents, the alliance of social workers and teachers with whom he literally fought, the police brutality and his sexual exploitation at the hands of a care worker appears to have firmly cemented his distrust of adults as he himself became one (see Section 10.1). More than that, these experiences are likely to have undermined the legitimacy of the rules and boundaries these agencies represented; if he could not relate to the custodians he could not relate to the rules either. This pattern was vigorously sustained from his childhood into adulthood; he was unable to distinguish his experience of teachers, police, social care practitioners and probation officers –

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<sup>182</sup> Overall Mark used the phrase ‘do you know what I mean?’ 110 times in the first interview (62 minutes) and 337 times in the second interview (55 minutes).

they were all part of a group he refused to acquiesce to. Poignantly, when he greeted me at the second interview he said “Hello *Miss*” –placing me firmly within the professional field he was suspicious of. At times he lamented that he “never had anyone to talk to”, but also claimed he doesn’t trust “*anyone, ever*” and would not deliberately reveal any personal detail about himself to anyone, not even his parents. He says he has always been this way:

“I could tell me mam and dad anything, and I know, for a million per cent that, they’re trustworthy, do you know what I mean? But, I still don’t trust them. I don’t trust no one. Absolutely no one at all. That’s the way I’ve always been though innit? Do, do you know what I mean? [6] I’ve seen, I’ve seen what happens to people who put their trust in people. It always ends up turning on them. Do you know what I mean? So I think ‘fuck that, keep yer gob shut’, do you know what I mean, ‘I’m not doing that’.”

Explicitly contradicting his claim that he kept his “gob shut”, in the process of the interview, Mark had voluntarily disclosed intimate and personal details about his life. Moreover, it is clear much of this information had been shared willingly with his family and the professionals who worked with him over the years. In the above passage Mark insists he *could* trust his parents, but *choose* not to. Patently however, it was *not* clear that he could trust his parents; he was placed in care without warning or discussion and his pleas to return home were repeatedly rejected by them. It is more likely that Mark wanted to trust his parents more than he felt was possible, and in the absence of their unconditional security he preferred

the idea that it was his choice to 'hold back'. This strategy - to present himself as one step ahead of the people who made decisions about his life - and his strong desire to be perceived as 'in charge' was a central feature of Mark's narration. From some of his first sentences to his last, he used psychological tactics to dissociate himself from an uncomfortable reality. He strove to uphold an image of a detached and self-determined individual capable of out-witting the majority of adults around him and exacting revenge on them by breaking their rules.

Mark claims he did not tell his parents about the sexual abuse in one-to-one care until he was 19, although this information was known to the ISSP staff at age 15, who would have been under a duty of care to inform them (if they did not already know). Nevertheless, it was around this time that his parents agreed that Mark could return to live at home – shortly after which he was sentenced to ISSP. Mark had little to say about ISSP; he remembered some of the staff by name, some activities he completed during supervision and recalled that he had been the first case the new team received. Beyond these brief details he was unable to be drawn on anything other than criticisms of rehabilitative interventions in general. This was typical of Mark's general approach to the interviews; a few key stories emerged (or escaped), but they were clipped and remote, they rarely involved friends, feelings, times or the trivial details common within a life-history interview. Instead his narration was dominated by his low opinions of the staff that populated his young life. He said the ISSP staff "knew nothing" and the "whole thing was a joke" before ridiculing the didactic methods of community based programmes in general. But,

for all of Mark's vitriol, I got the sense at one point in the interview that he felt somewhat frustrated that he had not been changed any of the services he had been subject to over the years. He said:

“and the thing is, I stuck to ISSP as well, I stuck to it. But no one else can force ya. That's just the way it is. All your programmes, all your courses and workers and all that, none of that matters unless you want to change yourself. And if you don't then, do you know what I mean, nothing is going to change. Nothing [4].”

While Mark astutely identified the importance of personal motivation and commitment, a dejected tone in his voice indicated that this realisation had been a somewhat painful one; as if he had once believed that by simply attending “all your courses” he should have been transformed in some way – without any investment on his part. Perhaps confirming this assumption, Mark later said he refused to work or do education in prison before complaining that “There's no rehabilitation in these places, you don't learn anything. They, they send you here, meant to be doing you good, meant to be teaching ya a lesson, nothing gets taught to ya coming to these places”. However, Mark was not the first young person in the sample to believe that rehabilitation was a passive process which *happened to you* (see Section 10.6). Finally, and contradicting his earlier claim that he “stuck” to ISSP, Mark completed four of his six month sentence before being sent back to prison for fresh offences.

ISSP was one of the last significant community based programmes Mark participated on - as his offending behaviour persisted into adulthood prison became the default disposal. Notably, the various youth offending programmes and adult post-custody supervision he received became indistinguishable from each other in his memory. He dismissively commented: "I forget the names of all the courses I've done like..I've done loads of courses. They're just useless. Cos, at the end of the day they're pointless". Between the ages of 14 and 23 Mark was held in custody for almost six years. His first comment after greeting me was that he did "nothing" during the day and had opted out of work or courses as his parents sent him money. The prison officer confirmed he mostly stayed in his cell and smoked tobacco. Despite opting for this sedentary lifestyle Mark condemned the prison regime and its lack of rehabilitation. Still, he said he was not tired of the routine and saw prison as an inevitable, even comfortable aspect of his life; "Obviously one day I might get fed up of it. But I can't wait for the day to come like, do you know what I mean?" Considering the enraged and frustrated response Mark had to being in care and the restrictions placed on him by various social work and youth justice interventions, it was somewhat surprising that he related to prison through an entirely different emotional framework. Indeed, he made very few direct or indirect negative comments about prison life, and admitted he fully expected to receive more custodial sentences in the on-coming years. Patently, the prison environment was not as emotionally or cognitively challenging as other community-based interventions were for Mark. Unlike ISSP, he was not required to set goals, review

his behaviour or plan for his future; prison was not 'trying to change him'. In fact, other than limiting his physical geography, Mark did not experience prison as a receptacle of punishment, rehabilitation or deterrence. As he had already commented, having opted out of work and education, Mark was at liberty to ignore any rehabilitative objectives in prison and do "nothing" (see Section 10.3).

In addition to social care and criminal justice professionals – the main protagonists in Mark's narration - the only other people who featured regularly were his parents. Clearly, as a child he was truly hurt and angry at their decision to place him in a children's home, describing how much he "hated" them for it and refused contact appointments. As he grew up and their relationship began to improve he transferred the blame onto social services, the police and youth offending team workers for manipulating his parents and telling them a children's home would be the most appropriate method to curb Mark's reckless behaviour:

*"me ma and da were just doing what they were told by professionals. Which I always think was the worst fucking mistake they ever done. Listening to people like the police, erm, the Youth Justice Board, the social services, do you know what I mean. That was the worst advice they could have ever been given."*

In an attempt to defend his parents and comfort himself, Mark went to great lengths to describe how much his mother and father continued to support and

“love” him during his time in care. He said they visited him every weekend, sent him money and “the best stuff”, even when he repeatedly told them to “fuck off”. He says they no longer pass judgement on his offending behaviour and support him “100 per cent”. Despite these declarations about his committed and devoted parents, Mark did not describe any pleasant or warm memories spent with them as he was growing up and almost no mention was made of his three siblings (Mark was the third of four children), who like most people in his story remained nameless. When asked, Mark conceded he did not get on with his two brothers, in particular the youngest – whom he was closest in age to. Overall, his descriptions of his family relationships were distinctly cool and vague:

“I never mixed with [my brothers and sister] much, do you know what I mean? Or had a conversation with them, it was the same with me mum and dad. I never really had time to have conversations with them, or anything like that. You know, cos I was never in. And I didn’t live at home. I wasn’t really close to anyone in me house”

The only warm relationship Mark described during the two interviews was with his grandmother – who was “boss”. He recalled watching films together and her spoiling him with “lots of little cakes”. This relationship was also identified by ISSP staff as a positive influence in his life. However, it would seem Mark sentimentalised aspects of this bond during the interview; he claimed to have taken refuge at her house and was the only family member who took “proper” care of her when she suffered and later died of cancer - the timescales of which do not match

with his custodial detentions. Undeniably though, she was the only person he expressed any love and care towards during the interviews.

While the majority of Mark's wider family played a minor role in his narration, so did his friends. During both interviews he failed to mention any specific friends – only nameless 'lads' and groups of unidentified sexless 'friends'. Similarly, not until the second interview, when prompted, did Mark confirm that he was a father. Embarrassed, he giggled, and said he had only ever seen pictures of his, again nameless, daughter, but stressed he gave her "all the best stuff" – which his parents purchased on his behalf. He quickly declared that he wanted nothing to do with his daughter; "I'm a dad, but it doesn't feel like it. Do you know what I mean? ...I don't feel nothing inside for the baby. It's like, strange. But, I've got no feelings for the baby." Typically, the mother of his child played a very small and anonymous role in his life-story; he recalled no loving or positive memories of their time together, despite being in a relationship with her for five years - four of which were spent in custody.

At the end of each long interview I asked Mark how he felt about recalling and revealing his life-story. He said it was "hard work" but the details had eventually just "popped out". Certainly, while I felt frustrated at times that Mark had deflected many of my questions, in fact he *had* also been co-operative and responsive at times. He had revealed sensitive details about his life - being placed in a children's

home and later sexually exploited by his carer - the retelling of which had caused him obvious discomfort.

As the end of the final interview approached I introduced the subject of where Mark saw himself in 12 months time. He responded honestly that he had no intentions of desisting from crime, even though he frequently made these sorts of pledges to his parents. While he was frank about his intentions, Mark felt compelled to rationalise this state of affairs; he complained that no one would give him a job and that “robbing off the rich to give to meself” was morally and socially justifiable:

“[After this sentence] I’ll just go back to me old ways and back to no good. You know, no one out there is prepared to give me a job. Do you know what I mean? No one out there is prepared to, to fucking to, try with me. I live on a real estate, and live a real life – live in the real world, where it’s not as fucking simple as that. Do you know what I mean?[5]. I always say to me mum and dad when they come, “oh, this is the last time, this time, I mean it this time, I’m going to get a job” well, actually, [laughs] I don’t say the job bit, but I do say “ I’m not coming back to jail, I mean it, I’m going to change” and all that. But I don’t though. [laughs] Do you know what I mean? [5] you know, and that’s just the way it is. I don’t know why. [4] I’m just addicted to getting into trouble, [laughs] and I don’t know why it is like that, but it is. Do you know what I mean? Well, I do know why. I do it to survive, do you know what I mean? I do what I do to survive out there. You know, I don’t like asking

people for things, so, you know, I suppose that's why I rob. I don't have to rob like, me mum and dad would give me things, give me money, but it's not good living of your mum and dad, do you know what I mean? So I rob off the rich to give to meself. Do you know what I mean? [laughs]"

During the above passage Mark made a passing but significant comment about being "addicted to getting into trouble" which provided a meaningful insight into his motivations. Undoubtedly, since childhood Mark's behaviour (criminal and otherwise) had satisfied a strong emotional desire to test boundaries, defy convention and infuriate his audience of family and professionals. His need to out-manoeuvre authority figures appeared to be the driving force behind his behaviour, more prominent than a desire to climb the criminal career ladder into more serious or organised crime – as was evident in other members of the sample<sup>183</sup>. His personal vendetta against 'authority' had paid little dividends over his life, but this had not deterred him, neither had increasingly long prison sentences. It struck me that Mark was locked in to a childish game of 'chicken' - in a power-struggle with everyday conventions as personified by welfare professionals and police. Notably, when I conducted a media search<sup>184</sup> on Mark shortly before finalising this case study, I discovered a public request from the police for information on his whereabouts, including a photograph, as he had broken the conditions of his post-release licence (from the sentence he was serving at the time of interview). No

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<sup>183</sup> Mark's offences up to the point of interview were mostly public order and small-scale acquisitive crimes.

<sup>184</sup> The search was conducted using the search engine Nexis UK, which collects [news](#) and media reports from local, national and international press from 1975 to the present day. The specific references have been omitted as they include personal details of the participant.

doubt Mark relished this public notoriety, so much so, after his picture appeared in the press, he phoned the respective police authority taunting them that they had published an outdated picture and would find it very hard to locate him. This taunt was a classic own-goal by Mark, who was arrested at a central location just a few days later. Naturally, the police were keen to publicise their triumph and the humiliating details about Mark's teasing phone call and his subsequent arrest was reported in two local newspapers. This final anecdote served as a useful metaphor for encapsulating Mark's motivations to offend; his enduring desire to get the better of professionals, his need to taunt and mock, but also his lack of resources and maturity, and not least his attachment to childhood betrayals.

#### **11.4 Two sides of the same coin: Comparing narratives of persistence and desistance.**

At first glance Amos and Mark shared a number of personal characteristics; by virtue of being in the sample they were both young males who had been brought up in Merseyside around the same time. Each had developed a reputation as a childhood persistent offender and had been subject to ISSP, as well as other community-based and custodial disposals. At the time of interview, some seven years after ISSP, there were further similarities; both were in prison on fairly long sentences for burglary and had spent a number of years in prison (intermittently) since their late teens. Moreover, both were new fathers. But there were fundamental differences in their accounts too. They had divergent responses to ISSP; Amos was highly receptive to relationship-based supervision and benefitted

personally, while Mark typified the response of those who lacked trust in adults and were resistant to being 'changed' (see Section 10.2). Viewed linguistically, Amos was keen to present himself as the 'determined desister'. He repeatedly designated people and behaviours as either "good" or "bad", stressing his own commitment to move on from drug dealing ('bad') into legitimate paid work ('good') to provide financial and emotional support for his new son. Amos's narration was composed of stories in the classic sense; there were characters, drama and scenes played out to clearly demarcate the traditional 'goodies' (his mother, his ISSP officer) from the 'baddies' (drug users and dealers, including his own father). Meanwhile Mark's narrative account was a monologue dominated by his negative personal opinions about educated professionals, who, he insisted actually knew "nothing" about him, his history or his environment. Keen to out-wit this indistinguishable population, Mark assigned himself the identity of a lone-outlaw; "different" to everyone else and determined to pursue his own interests (legal and illegal). But from underneath his stories of chaos, vitriolic judgements and self-promotion escaped a number of significant and very intimate stories of family instability, poverty and physical and sexual abuse. In both Mark and Amos's interviews stuttering, repetition and other linguistic comforts, underlined their anxieties about divulging their life-stories.

Undeniably, the approach of the study situated the respondent's personal biographies in the context of their experience of ISSP and the youth justice system. However, this was simply a starting point, and in each case the interviews were both personal and broad ranging. Amos's discursive narrative pivoted on his

journey into and then out of the echelons of a well established drugs network, with its complicated and precarious hierarchy. He described the nocturnal, consuming and intoxicating culture he shared with his friends, spending years “driving around and selling drugs” before the realities of drug-houses, violence and long-term custodial sentences forced him into retreat. His narrative illuminated the various sources of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990a) that was accumulated through his criminal career. Being part of a network of drug dealers associated with a renowned and brutal criminal family provided kudos, excitement and a powerful social circle around Amos. His friends took precedence over his family and they spent their time ingratiating themselves to influential older men who might provide opportunities to make money and earn respect (see Section 10.4). Crucially, while it was a risky strategy, Amos was able to acquire money, connections and reputation *quickly*, particularly in comparison to the conventional but longer term routes for young people such as education, training or employment. As Jamieson et al (1999) suggest offending can emulate the impression of social inclusion in an otherwise exclusionary stage of adolescence.

It is perhaps helpful to think of the social and cultural space that Amos and his friends occupied during their years dealing drugs and fighting over territory as a ‘field’ in and of itself (Bourdieu, 1996). Bourdieu’s concept of a ‘field’ is a site of conflict and competition, where participants struggle to establish control over a specific power and authority, and, in the course of the struggle, modify the structure of the field itself. For Bourdieu, society is constituted by an ensemble of

relatively autonomous fields. This relational theory extends to the interaction between cultural dispositions (*habitus*) (Bourdieu, 1991), which “consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action” (Wacquant 1992:16). As Amos’s narrative indicates, *habitus* allowed for the creation and negotiation of his role within the underground drugs economy (the field). He developed a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1977) which enabled him to (sometimes) make advantageous moves within particular situations. He began to embody an understanding of his immediate locale with the devices and characteristics required to ingratiate himself into its criminal network. Amos’s narration depicts how his involvement in the illegal drugs trade of Liverpool shaped his everyday life from around the age of 16; his movement around particular geographic spaces such as ‘drug-houses’ and delineated gang territories, at particular times of the day. It also impacted his use of language and street vernacular; his relationship to violence such that kidnap, torture and murder became normalised responses to provocation (see Section 10.4). His social network was dominated by drug users and addicts as well as male criminal peers, who had access to, and made use of firearms. Crime, specifically, selling drugs was not only a powerful means for establishing and consolidating multiple sources of capital for Amos, it became his way of life.

Although most youth justice interventions made precious little impact on Amos, Patrice, a local older man and his ISSP officer did. Indeed, both Amos and his mother claimed that Patrice’s support and guidance was perhaps the principal

reason for his completion of the intensive programme and a sustained, although nevertheless finite period of desistance following it (see Section 10.1). Perhaps one of Patrice's strengths was that he understood the wider cultural context that Amos inhabited with its exploitative relationships and dubious moralities. Patrice was fully conversant with the pragmatic logics of street life, he knew how to occupy its territory and was able to communicate honestly with Amos about 'little bits of trouble' he got into. While he exercised sensible discretion in his practice, Patrice was still perceived as 'tough' and unforgiving. He had high expectations of Amos, and wanted him to behave better. In this sense Patrice provided an indispensable bridge between the youth justice system and the 'street'. Undeniably, it was the quality of this trusting and flexible relationship – rather than the content of any structured offence-focused activity - which appeared to be key (Burnett and McNeill, 2005). Patrice's skills show it was not an impossible challenge to support young men in the grips of crime and drug networks.

Eventually, as Amos left his teenage years behind, he began to understand that the stress of his criminal life would increase exponentially. As Wacquant explains, each field "presents itself as a structure of probabilities—of rewards, gains, profits, or sanctions—but always implies a measure of indeterminacy" (Wacquant 1992:18). Indeed, Amos found himself in a precarious position; the field he had embedded himself into was one that depended on regular displays of violence, skilful manipulation and tenacious ambition. Moreover, the local police and judiciary were extremely keen to destabilise and divide the underground drugs economy;

over the years they developed elaborate schemes to break-up the criminal networks that Amos was a part of, particularly at the lower ranks of the hierarchy (see Section 9.6). Ultimately, Amos, a follower rather than a leader, was left isolated and weakened when a number his close and influential friends were “lifer-off” to prison; with a growing band of enemies, as well as new younger men to replace him on the street, the capital accumulation that had taken place in his teens quickly went into reverse.

Since this lifestyle had saturated Amos’s everyday life, disentangling himself from it proved remarkably difficult. His remaining contacts were persuasive and would, he said, provide temptation and opportunities. Likewise, it was doubtful his rivals would allow him to ‘move on’ without punishment, which limited Amos (and his family’s) mobility and safety in parts of the city. Not only did his peers and enemies complicate his movement away from crime, but routes back to a more conventional life were inhospitable. Criminal justice agencies were unwilling to forgive his past actions and securing legitimate work was problematic without a formal education or work experience. In order to desist from offending, Amos had to reconcile a series of sacrifices; relinquishing his pursuit of reputation, his resources, his friends - his way of being. In this sense the challenges that shaped Amos’s removal from the local drugs economy were cultural as well as personal and structural (France, 2007). Finally, on a personal level, the psycho-social pressures from his mother to lead a ‘good and honest life’ and his desire to be an involved and committed father

to his new son, unlike his father had been to him, were also strong forces during this transition (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007).

When we consider the notion of 'pathways' (Wikström, 2005; France and Homel, 2007) into and out of crime therefore, it may be useful to think of these not as structured linear trajectories (c.f Haw, 2006; Pease, 2006) but as complicated and radical processes of capital readjustment. Amos needed the tenacity to straddle both sides of the law; to manage the temptations, habits and risks of his former life whilst also facing the often demoralising challenge of starting a whole new one, with its different rules and customs. The benefit of applying Bourdieu's theoretical framework to this case study is that it emphasises the interaction of multiple cultures, and in so doing highlights the ontological insecurity and tensions (Giddens, 1991) Amos faced when trying to shift from one field of illegal street drug dealing to a radically opposite field of employment and family life.

Mark's life-story by contrast was focused on reaffirming his commitment to persistent offending. His behaviour was seemingly motivated by liberating himself from the perceived constraints of the criminal justice system, out-witting professionals and 'pleasing himself'. However, his proven success in this regard was limited, yet even in the context of frequent police detection and increasingly long prison sentences Mark remained dedicated to pursuing the symbolic capital he believed was realisable through crime. He appeared to get immense satisfaction

simply from defying authority. As Katz has previously indicated, the adrenaline rush of offending can be reward in and of itself, regardless of material gain (Katz, 1988). Mark's narrative illustrated the pleasure and 'seduction' of offending; of gratifying oneself in the moment of desire - a psychic delight he explained he was not willing to give up. His life-story was intimately related to his attachment to crime; it provided him with a means to explain and contextualise his life and relationships. In sum, Mark's willingness to break rules formed the hub around which all of his personal stories orbited and became a defining feature of the personality he was keen to display.

Observing Mark putting on a 'display' or 'performance' was an apt way to reflect on his interviews (Goffman, 1959). Clearly, there was a particular identity he sought to push 'front stage' during our interviews; one which was based on his intelligence, verve and stamina. He relished, if not boasted about his victories, no matter how small they were. He giggled and smiled when recounting upsetting memories, protesting all the while that he had actually been in control, (either emotionally or physically) during these times. I got the impression that this 'persona' was well-rehearsed and had been performed in front of many others - perhaps as well to himself. Analysing Mark's narrative as a 'performance' builds on the work of Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor (1959, 1981) whereby social actors 'stage' performances of desirable selves to protect their reputation in situations of difficulty, such as humiliation or failure. Goffman explains: "often what talkers undertake to do is not to provide information to a recipient but to present dramas

to an audience” (Goffman, 1974:508). This is not to suggest that participants present an inauthentic version of themselves, rather that ‘front stage’ identities are created and performed for a given audience<sup>185</sup>.

However, beyond the realm of the momentary ‘seduction’ of crime and Mark’s ‘front stage performance’, was his very relevant and troubled personal history. The biographical nature of the interview provided a vantage point to explore *why* exactly he relished opportunities to taunt, aggravate and disobey individuals in positions of authority. As Riessman has argued; “Narratives serve non-performative purposes as well – the world is not all a stage.... individuals work over universal human problems in their life stories” (2003:8) Certainly, while Mark ‘performed’ for the interview setting – plainly invested in presenting the veneer of a ‘care-free outlaw’, he brought with him a host of thinly veiled and deeply held resentments. Early memories of being humiliated by teachers, betrayed by his parents, dominated and abused (sexually) by social care staff and beaten by the police had impacted all of his relationships with adults and undermined the legitimacy of the agencies they represented. Mark’s account underscores the significance of both conscious and unconscious action, of what psycho-social criminologists refer to as the conflicted human subject “not necessarily rational in all their choices and by no means stable in their propensity to act in criminal and non-criminal ways” (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007: 28). The psycho-social approach incorporates the complex

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<sup>185</sup> In contrast to the ‘front stage’ region, there is another region in which actors perform. This area is commonly referred to as the ‘back stage’ where actions are not visible to the audience and they are not part of the ‘performance’. Instead, the backstage region is where suppressed thoughts, feelings and behaviours can make an appearance (Goffman, 1959).

nature of human emotion – which often operates in difficult and cross-pressured circumstances (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Mark's biography was replete with contradictions and a desire to assert his autonomy; a psycho-social analysis would suggest that Mark was unconsciously defending himself against anxiety and uncomfortable feelings of personal inadequacy. This interpretation would help explain his conscious need to act superior in situations in which he felt powerless. Mark was seemingly unable to contain any of these awkward emotions, which appeared to have stifled almost all of his personal and professional relationships. He found it difficult to identify with others; no-one made a named appearance in his life-story, not even his siblings, friends or daughter and he only spoke warmly in relation to one person – his grandmother, who was no longer alive. This legacy, which included a tendency to 'split off' (Klein, 1988) bad and unwanted feelings and project them onto others whom could be safely hated and mocked had played out from childhood into adulthood, starting with his vitriolic aversion to social workers as a preteen to his taunting phone calls to the police in his twenties. This dynamic also informed his relationship to me as the researcher or '*Miss*' - a title which did not so much indicate civility but routine derision towards professionals. That said, I believe Mark's response was, in part, a habitual one and he had in fact enjoyed sharing his life-history, which gave him a sense of recognition. Approaching Mark's life-story from this psycho-analytic angle highlights the veracity of the multiple, opaque and contradictory facets of an individual's identity. While this (shifting) complexity

might present challenges for the life-history interviewer – it also produces a unique richness which requires careful and critical analysis. Indeed, a narrative investigation has the potential to move beyond the spoken word, as Riessman stresses “much remains unspoken, inferred, shown and performed in gesture, association and action. What narrators show, without language, constitutes ways of making claims about the self” (Riessman, 2003:6).

Psycho-social criminologists not only seek to unveil the interior of an individual’s psyche, but to also address important exterior influences. Gadd and Jefferson stress that case studies should aim to understand the respondent, individually *and* socially, since to abstract the social from the personal is to “denude the factors of any real meaning” (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007:5)<sup>186</sup>. It is true that Mark and Amos had extensive experience of numerous social institutions and influential cultural networks which shaped their individual biographies. As Bourdieu has argued “narratives about the most ‘personal’ difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions and contradictions, frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and their contradictions” (Bourdieu et al, 1993:511). While Mark and Amos did not explicitly acknowledge their social conditions or collective position, their everyday lives were saturated with politics. Taken for granted inequalities such as erratic and inflexible educational provision, limited

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<sup>186</sup> It should be noted that other theorists have also stressed the need to examine both social and individual influences on offending behaviour. ‘Situational action theory’, developed by Wikström et al (2012), expounds a theory of action which seeks explain how putative personal and environmental characteristics, and particularly their interaction, impact acts of crime.

employment opportunities and social mobility, deprived neighbourhoods and institutionalisation were inscribed in their narratives.

Intersecting with politics, history, gender and culture laced the respondent's stories. For example, the use of violence, firearms and trade of illicit drugs, police aggression and exploitation by older males emerged as endemic, as was manipulation and suspicion amongst male peers throughout much of the respondent's child and early adulthoods (see Section 10.4). Eventually, from these intimate stories, a multi-dimensional illustration of their social and political positions appeared. As mentioned above, the various sources of capital they had accumulated during their teens appeared to be limited to a precise time and space in childhood. It is worth recalling its finite nature, since, in combination with the young men's socio-economic position, we begin to realise just how limited their opportunities for social mobility were once they reached adulthood. Specifically, their knowledge of the 'street'<sup>187</sup> and experience as persistent young offenders imparted few transferable skills into early adulthood, leaving both young men in a complex poverty trap. Their practical assets, earned on the ground, devalued quickly as they grew up. Meanwhile, their lack of an academic or vocational education meant that Amos and Mark had few resources to 'fall back on'. Neither had knowledge of the social customs often acquired through more conventional childhoods or access to advantageous social connections (see Section 10.6). In fact,

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<sup>187</sup> Bourgois defines street culture as: "a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in the opposition to exclusion from mainstream society" (2003:8). As he sees it, street culture is an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity.

the defining culture of the 'legitimate' local environment appeared to represent a remote and mysterious place in their lives; Amos's childhood had been dominated by his friends and drug networks to the exclusion of his family, education and employment, while Mark had waged a decade-long vendetta towards social and welfare institutions and educated professionals. In short, Amos and Mark were at the bottom of both mainstream society and criminal hierarchies at the point of interview; their childhoods, entrenched in crime, had deeply and directly affected their social mobility as adults.

Amos and Mark's personal stories were reminiscent of the "dead ends" and "closed doors" and "limited prospects" Bourdieu spoke about when describing the concept of habitus – those rules and frameworks which are learned through social relations in structured environments, embodied in the lives of individuals and "give an environment its physiognomy" (Bourdieu, 1977: 86)<sup>188</sup>. Building on this relational theory, Bourdieu also spoke about 'symbolic violence'<sup>189</sup> - the capacity to impose economic and political power in ways that are commonly interpreted as disguised or taken for granted forms (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This theory stresses that societies have ways of establishing order and restraint through oblique cultural mechanisms, rather than direct, coercive social control. These systems exercise symbolic power only through complicity or 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 2000b). Specifically, in using the term 'symbolic violence', Bourdieu emphasised how the

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<sup>188</sup> The notion of habitus, though not formally described as such, is consistent with the idea that specific aspects of the environment help children become socialised into culture (Valsiner, 1987).

<sup>189</sup> In discussing a theory of symbolic violence Bourdieu drew heavily on the work of Max Weber, in particular his discussions of authority and legitimate domination (Weber, 1968).

dominated accept as legitimate their conditions; those without influence do not challenge the status quo and may even blame themselves for their position in society's hierarchies and injustices<sup>190</sup>. Indeed, suffering, poverty and criminality has been increasingly interpreted<sup>191</sup> as being caused by immoral or irresponsible individuals rather than by wider political forces such as poor education, structural unemployment (Chiricos, 1987; Wells, 1994; Rosenfold and Fornango, 2007), or discriminatory practices<sup>192</sup> which make it hard for ex-offenders to be genuinely reintegrated<sup>193</sup> into mainstream society and find secure employment<sup>194</sup> (c.f. Gray, 2005; France, 2007; Gray, 2007, 2009).

Bourdieu's theory on symbolic violence is useful for understanding the process by which both young men faced an intricate poverty trap at the beginning of adulthood. Invisible obstacles and taken for granted inequalities which came into

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<sup>190</sup> Similarly, Foucault spoke about the way populations internalise disciplinary power in the name of science and progress (1981).

<sup>191</sup> According to some authors, after the 1970's there was a shift in political debates from the welfare-minded consensus which had characterised the post-war period, towards an agenda which closely favoured neo-conservative policy concerns, stressing the 'responsibilisation' of the individual (Loo, 2009). According to Garland (2001) the rehabilitative ideal of prisons and probation was said to have failed, and there emerged a sense of social malaise related to the idea that common values were deteriorating and that modern life had become unpredictable.

<sup>192</sup> For example, a lesser known effect of imprisonment is that of the difficulties in gaining insurance. Most insurance companies will not insure ex-offenders, or if they do at vastly inflated costs. Ex-offenders may struggle to insure their vehicle; find it hard to insure belongings at their home or if they start a small business. Others will find it hard to obtain Employer's Liability Insurance, and having an ex-offender as a lodger can invalidate some household insurance policies (Communities for Local Government, 2008).

<sup>193</sup> Despite popular sentiments regarding the desirability of giving 'a second chance' to those with a criminal record, research shows that ex-offenders are often unable to overcome the stigma attached to their criminal histories to obtain a productive role in mainstream society (Dale, 1976; Braithwaite and Mugford, 1994; Uggen et al, 2004; Jacobson et al, 2010)

<sup>194</sup> A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005) demonstrated that people with a criminal record formed part of a 'core jobless group' that more than 60% of employers deliberately excluded when recruiting. Similarly, a study by the Barrow Cadbury Trust (2007) found 53% of employers surveyed declared that a prior conviction for theft would automatically bar an applicant from employment.

view in adulthood, contrasted sharply with the exuberance and power associated with the onset of offending in their teenage years. The legacy of a childhood involved in crime eventually left both of them with very limited social mobility. Amos's life-history demonstrated the inexorable and impenetrable nature of his reputation as a persistent young offender; his bold efforts to reinvent himself as a dedicated and working father counted for very little when "old charges came back to haunt [him]" - even after a significant period of desistance. Both Amos and Mark proved that persistent criminal histories were rarely 'spent' or 'forgiven'. Criminal 'justice' involved more than the length and content of their sentences; it attests to the long term and devastating impact youth offending can have on future life chances. This is significant since it may undermine the rehabilitative or reparative thrust of any criminal justice sanctions. Similarly, prior research has indicated that official deviant labelling during adolescence may be a consequential event for the life course, pushing or leading youths on a pathway of blocked structured opportunities and delinquency in young adulthood (Sampson and Laub 1993; Bernburg and Krohn 2003).

Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition (Bourdieu, 2000b) which is the crucial component of symbolic violence whereby oppressive social relations are disguised so that they appear to be the natural order of things, also applies Mark's continuing belief that crime represented an honourable and effective means for resolving problems and achieving goals. It further illuminates Amos's historical attitudes towards violence – as a commonsensical way for resolving problems and for asserting stature and belongingness 'to the team'. In fact, despite Amos's

commitment to desistance, he remained unaware of the shocking nature of some aspects of his life-story. Violence (sometimes fatal) was a normalised and everyday feature of criminal networks.

These life-stories suggest the 'everyday' street violence pervading the young men's lives compounded their misrecognition of the structural violence trapping them into poverty as adults. Both reported personal childhood histories marked by neglect (expulsion, institutionalisation, poverty) but also of dramatic of dramatic physical and/or sexual abuse. Violence was not only 'symbolic' feature of their lives; Mark reported both physical and sexual abuse by adults who were in positions of authority, some of whom were responsible for his state-sponsored upbringing. Meanwhile Amos's personal history was peppered with stories of graphic violence, intimidation and firearms, all of which posed a very real threat to his safety. The social spaces both young men occupied as children growing up were sites of struggles for legitimate power and battles took on physical forms. Violence was a real organiser of street culture and an ordinary way for resolving conflicts. In sum, both individuals had learnt to tolerate exploitation, rivalry and dispossession as a common feature of their lives, which appeared to further impact the process of 'misrecognition'. Neither Amos nor Mark had high expectations of their futures; they also had very low expectations of their communities. Mark admitted he would 'definitely' return to crime, despite tired protestations to his parents that each prison sentence would be his last. Amos meanwhile believed his future prosperity

relied on getting a job to provide financial security for his son. While he appeared to be determined in this regard, he recognised that his options were limited.

The insights drawn from these case studies emphasise the advantages of the case-study method; careful examination of the smallest details revealed the contrasting meanings and interpretive complexity of the two young men's experience of crime and justice. It is worth bearing in mind that each case study comprised more than the recounted stories, but also the performative aspects of engaging in longitudinal biographical research. Mark and Amos's displays of self and identity were enacted and embodied. The data were interrogated not only for the stories within their accounts, but also for what was *not* said, where pauses and omissions occurred. The participant's physical mannerisms were observed (such as posture and eye contact) in addition to their linguistic attributes. For example, how their stories emerged, perhaps as a rehearsed formal tale, or through a slow process of disclosure; how they related to the people in their stories and where they positioned themselves. Such demonstrations of identity go beyond the spoken word and tell us much more about what the individuals and their narratives are 'about'.

Situating the cases in a political context illustrated the reproduction of social inequality through crime; how social structures found their way into personal experience and how those habits and behaviours were reinvented in the process.

Bourdieu's analysis of how oppressive structures of inequality are systematically misrecognised proved a useful tool for extracting the social and political aspects from the participant's biographies. It applied equally to stories of persistence and desistance; to Mark's habit of relying on crime as a means for resolving problems and acquiring goods. It also helped illuminate the process by which Amos normalised the levels of exploitation and physical violence in the underground drugs economy, as well as his overlooking the layers of disadvantage (particularly educational) he experienced during his life. A focus on the social and political aspects of Mark and Amos was especially important because narrative analysis can become embroiled in fine-grained observations of individuals that miss the invisible structures of power and historical context that are taken for granted by people when they are trapped in them (Wolf 1982).

The case studies also displayed shifting and locally articulated identities. Two of the advantages of this study were the period of time it covered in the young men's lives, including the formative years of their adolescence and journey into adulthood. The second asset was the specificity of Liverpool, with its inimitable history and culture. The result is a set of discursive, but authentic local narratives, consistent with classic sociological thought<sup>195</sup>. Indeed, Berger (1963) stressing the intimate link between the personal and the structural commented that "self and

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<sup>195</sup> Berger and Luckmann (1966) introduced the seminal concept of 'social construction' into the social sciences. The central tenant of their theory is that persons and groups interacting in a social system form, over time, concepts or symbolic representations of each other's actions. These concepts eventually become habituated into reciprocal roles played by the actors in relation to one another.

society are two sides of the same coin” (1963:99). He went on “Society is not only something ‘out there’” but is also “in here’ as part of our innermost being. The structures of society become the structures of our own consciousness” (1963: 121).

## **Part Four: What happens to persistent young offenders when they grow up? Youth, crime and society through a cross-methodological lens**

### **Chapter 12: Conclusions**

#### **12.1 Introduction**

The aim of this thesis has been to illustrate and illuminate the multifarious dynamics young people experience as they grow up after a childhood of persistent offending. Drawing on a longitudinal national reconviction study, as well as in-depth stories and insights from a group of young men in Liverpool as they grew up, I have tried to make sense of young people's interdependent relationships with crime, culture and history. In so doing, I have aimed to add weight to the voice of the young people concerned. The reason for this is two-fold; as Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) commented, a researcher who is "forced to use mass phenomena as material, or any kind of happenings taken without regard to the life-histories of the individuals who participate in them, it is a defect, not an advantage, of our present sociological method" (1927:1932-33). In order to capture a more nuanced impression of the lived experience of persistent young offenders and the impact of criminal justice policy on their lives, it was essential to actively engage with the young people themselves. The intention here was not limited to examining 'what works' with this population. This study also sought to critically evaluate the data and explore the inherent meanings underpinning the empirical data. At this intersection of history and place, how do we relate to persistent and serious young

offenders? What do our penal discourses illustrate about society and our relationship with crime and punishment? How does research shape our understanding of the youth justice system? Emphasising the metaphysical properties of scientific facts and human nature, Voeglin (1987) has argued that researchers should not steer away from subjectivity, but engage with it to illuminate the furtive underbelly of the subject at hand.

The approach adopted in this thesis emerged from previous experience of conducting public policy research and recognises the limits of contemporary evaluative agendas – which can have a potentially strong impact on policy conceptions of youth and crime. As argued in each of the chapters, evaluative research frameworks often fail to capture the complexity of young people’s lives or recognise the arduous process of desistance. Moreover, it often starts from a position in which the young people are defined by their personal problems without reference to the broader context of their social and economic situation. But, as France et al (2012) have stressed crime is an everyday feature in some young people’s lives, it “enters their play and cultural pursuits as they grow up and therefore has to be managed in everyday life” (2012:169-170). Trying to understand ‘what works’ therefore requires more than a sideways glance at the young people themselves. This study has benefited from a longitudinal and wide lens; it has drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1994) to incorporate an understanding of the social world as being shaped by a range of political, cultural and symbolic factors. This chapter begins with a summary of the

empirical findings before reflecting on the broader theoretical, methodological and epistemological contributions from this thesis, as well as identifying the important issues that remain in the shadows.

## 12.2 Summary

From the quantitative analysis we discovered that, despite being well matched on characteristics one year prior to the programme, the ISSP group differed significantly from the control group on the basis of their longer criminal histories which started at a significantly earlier age. This is important because it is likely that magistrates and police may have considered them 'recidivist' offenders even before they started ISSP, potentially subjecting them to more on-street surveillance, fewer diversionary measures and more convictions and sentencing occasions. Secondly, this finding highlights the very real difficulty of securing a well matched comparison group for statistical analysis. Finally, it also means that we have to be cautious about making definitive conclusions regarding whether ISSP provides an advantage or disadvantage for young people, because this sort of analysis is dependent on a closely matched control group.

The data demonstrated a sharp downward slope in frequency and seriousness of offending within the ISSP and comparison groups post-intervention – a standard result from these types of evaluations that reflects a statistical artefact known as 'regression to the mean' (Cook and Campbell, 1979). There was a general pattern of

'no difference' between the long-term offending trajectories of the ISSP and comparison cases. Comparison cases had significantly lower (albeit modest) estimates of offending seriousness in the first year post-intervention, however, this pattern was not sustained in the longer term. This finding suggests that non-intensive community disposals may be just as effective as intensive ones in reducing offending.

Despite the benefit of longitudinal criminal history data on a large national sample, critical gaps in the data remained, namely, in relation to social and economic data. Unfortunately the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was not available on participants from Wales, or those from the comparison sample, so we cannot say with any certainty what the influence such a variable might have on the data if better coverage was achieved. However, the results from the qualitative data suggests that local economic, political and youth cultures exerted a powerful influence on both the maintenance of persistent offending, as well as the gruelling process of desistance from crime. Since IMD can be swiftly derived from a postcode, future research should consider including it for both comparison *and* treatment samples so social level data can be effectively captured in a quantitative framework.

The latent growth curve modelling (LGC) results found the strongest and most reliable predictors of offending frequency and seriousness related to aspects of

*persistent* offending. Expressly, offenders who qualified for ISSP on account of persistence, or those with the highest volume of offences prior to ISSP were significantly less likely to reduce the frequency of their offending over the four-year study period. Notably, a history of persistent offending ('persistent offender category' and 'frequency of offending before the intervention') also predicted the seriousness of future criminal convictions up to four years after the intervention. However, the same pattern did not hold true for offenders who committed the highest gravity offences. Instead these offenders, on average, reduced the rate of their offending more dramatically than other members of the sample. Moreover, the gravity of offending prior to ISSP did not have a predictive effect on the gravity of future offending. Meaning, desistance from crime was a more complex and prolonged process for persistent offenders than it was for those who displayed less frequent, high-gravity offending behaviour. The 'drawn-out' nature of desistance from (observed) persistent criminal behaviour - as highlighted by the quantitative data (PNC data) - was replicated in the qualitative data, which illuminated the painful and fundamental processes some young people experience trying to move away from a childhood embedded in criminal networks and everyday offending. Finally, the significance of the results above indicates that a reciprocal relationship between offence frequency and seriousness emerges at certain points in young people's offending careers.

Various socio-demographic variables were tested and proved to have an influence on the initial period following the intervention. Young men were more likely to

exhibit high-frequency and high-gravity offending behaviour at this stage, however, the pattern failed to remain significant over time. White rather than minority ethnic participants also had a greater likelihood of continuing to commit more serious offences in the first year after ISSP commenced, as well and up to four years later. Meanwhile, offenders with the highest total Asset scores – i.e. those who were assessed as having the most complex ‘underlying needs’ – were at increased risk of committing more frequent and higher gravity offences in the immediate aftermath of their sentence and four years beyond.

Confirming a finding from the previous 24-month reconviction study (Gray et al, 2005), restorative justice was positively associated with a reduction in the frequency of offending in the first year after commencing ISSP. Finally, the analysis suggested that increased exposure (active days on the programme) may be associated with better outcomes in relation to the frequency of offending behaviour. This result does not mean that an individual ISSP programme should be longer per se, but that repeating an ISSP sentence is not necessarily counter-productive.

An exploratory exercise into the marked variance within the sample was conducted using finite mixture modelling. This task identified four distinct groups of offenders within the ISSP sample; it found the previously identified reduction in crime was maintained by approximately half of the sample whose offending behaviour

reduced, on average, to a small number of low-gravity crimes one and two years after the intervention. One group posed a constant challenge to the criminal justice system; the frequency of their offending remained at a high level from childhood into early adulthood, while the gravity also remained resistant to change. In sum, there was concurrent evidence of long-term persistence as well as relatively swift desistance (after the intervention) amongst the ISSP cases. Notably, this exercise corroborated the findings from the LGC models and indicated that participants who were defined as 'persistent' rather than 'serious' offenders when they commenced ISSP were more likely to sustain their offending behaviour from childhood into early adulthood. While this task was an exploratory one, it provided a useful means for analysing a large sample of diverse offenders. Future evaluative research might benefit from further investigation and exploitation of these methods

All told, these results revealed deviating rates of change throughout the sample. There was obvious evidence of a 'regression' downwards to the 'mean' over time. However it also appeared that some young people regressed at sharper rates than others. Statistically, these models imply that 'regression to the mean' is not necessarily the same process for the frequency of offending as it is for the seriousness of offending. It is possible that the differences in the long-term trajectories of persistent and serious offenders is the outcome of their particular statistical 'average' – i.e. serious and persistent offenders are two distinct groups who regress differently. On the other hand, it could be that real differences in behaviour post-intervention were due to the differing responses serious offenders

had to interventions, or persistent offenders had to repeat-processing by the criminal justice system. Naturally at this stage, we can only speculate, but the need to further examine differences in how young offenders 'regress' over time has been highlighted in this research.

The qualitative data began with salient memories of ISSP. The generous amount of time afforded by the programme facilitated quality bonds between some young people and their ISSP officers, highlighting the value of relationship-based supervision (Burnett and McNeil, 2005). However, historical trust and identity issues proved insurmountable to some participants who could not relate to the staff or the aims and structure of the programme. Reflecting on their experiences, it is clear that some participants felt very distrustful of adults in authority by the point at which they started ISSP; experiences of police brutality and poor relationships with education and social work staff, as well as parents were common, even among the small sample. Uniformly, surveillance measures were resented, although these were often perceived as separate from the supervision provided by the ISSP teams.

From childhood and early youth, offending and the influence of friends, acquaintances and local criminal networks became crucial sources of capital for these young people - during a time when they lacked the traditional supply of childhood attention such as that from family, teachers or the wider community. Youth custody was rarely experienced as a deterrent or punishment, in fact, it afforded the young people in this sample considerable personal status, and, in

comparison to community-based interventions (ISSP in particular) that were premised on the concept of 'change' and 'rehabilitation', prison was often perceived as the cognitively easier option. In early adulthood, what capital the young people had generated from offending tended to dissipate. Moreover, youth offending and its associated issues (i.e. addiction, gang conflict, and imprisonment) had long-term negative effects on relationships, health, employment and housing prospects. While criminal relationships supplied important material and non-material resources in the short term, these relationships were often reflected upon as adults as both unfaithful and exploitative. Ultimately, routes out of persistent offending were extremely complicated and the process of desistance was shown to be an emotionally, financially and practically demanding one that was rarely achieved without considerable assistance from external agencies. The data suggests that there were no obvious points in time when a young person decided to desist from offending; it was sometimes borne out of a personal crisis, while circumstances forced temporary gaps in the criminal trajectories of others. If desistance was a temporary interlude for some, others outgrew certain offending patterns over the life-course, sometimes in aspiration of a crime-free lifestyle, sometimes towards a more entrenched criminal career.

### **12.3 Remaining shadows**

Before considering the wider conclusions of this study, it is perhaps worth acknowledging areas of the study that I was not at liberty to expand upon. Indeed, despite the space and time afforded during a doctoral study, it has been impossible

to adequately attend to all of the substantive, statistical and theoretical avenues this study has presented me with. First while I have drawn upon feminist literature throughout, I regret that it has not been possible, within the confines of this particular study, to delve more deeply into various but associated matters of gender, masculine identities and hegemony. The nature of persistent offending, so defined by the ISSP pilot, meant that the national sample was predominantly male, which complicated the recruitment of young women for the life-history interviews. Unfortunately no young women agreed to be interviewed and this is a drawback of the qualitative sampling strategy. Future work would benefit from taking a more dedicated approach to female persistent and serious young offenders, particularly since the statistical data suggests their short and long-term trajectories differ, on average, to young men.

Space did not allow for a more detailed exploration of masculine identities and persistent offending, but, naturally the quantitative data was drawn from a predominantly male population and the life-history interviews were heavily populated by male protagonists – with women very much on the periphery. Notably the role of influential ‘older men’ in criminal networks and their relationships with younger males struck me as important. Not only because the tactics of the ‘older men’ were reminiscent of a topical social ill – that of ‘grooming’, but because the notion of an ‘exploited’ and ‘manipulated’ ‘persistent’ young male offender was conceptually intriguing.

Second, the findings point towards the need for economic and civic reintegration of offenders into local communities. The young men who were interviewed carried their childhood reputations heavily into adulthood. Moreover, these reputations were kept alive by commercial and statutory agencies as well as communities and enemies, thus penetrating various domains of their lives. Saliiently, the quantitative data reiterated that 'persistent' offenders were much more likely to remain in the criminal justice system, compared to serious or low-frequency offenders. It is possible that aspects of the criminal justice system may exert unintended negative consequences that actually increased likelihood of subsequent offending (Sampson and Laub 1993; Bernburg and Krohn 2003; McAra and McVie, 2005; Bernburg et al, 2006). The focus of this study did not allow for a more detailed analysis of these issues, but further work examining the long-term impact of labelling and means of overcoming associated obstacles might have valuable policy and practice relevance.

Third, the considerable weight and significance of the qualitative material alongside a complex reconviction study meant sacrifices had to be made. For example I collected a series of contemporary and historical photographs of Liverpool that I had hoped to include. However, there was not a suitable opening to present a coherent visual ethnography of Merseyside. Likewise, historical interviews with some of the participant's parents had to take a marginal role, despite the significance of their involvement in the management of curfew orders and family-based work essential to ISSP.

Finally, there remains untapped value in the quantitative data. The thrust of this study had to remain, for brevity's sake, on measuring the rate of change over time between the ISSP and comparison group. However, intriguing lines of analysis emerged through the mixture modelling exercise which explored the heterogeneity within the sample and highlighted a curious relationship between frequency and seriousness of offending in youth offender populations. Committing time to examining these topics further will be a priority for post-doctoral study.

#### **12.4 No difference - where now?**

Some of the immediate policy concerns emanating from this thesis are not uncommon. First, the finding of 'no difference' between the ISSP and control samples in the reconviction study analysis is a typical one (Folkard, Smith and Smith 1976; Pearson 1988; Barton and Butts 1990; Bottoms 1995; Wiebush et al, 2005). Conferring the inevitability of this finding, Gendreau, Goggin and Fulton (2000) remarked that "when it comes to the matter of reducing offender recidivism, the conclusion is inescapable, ISPs (intensive supervision programmes) have had little effect on offenders future criminal activity" (2000:198). While statistically speaking, ISSP was no better (and no worse) than alternative disposals, policy makers and practitioners are left with imprecise evidence on which to base service delivery. This is problematic precisely *if* policy developments are directed towards demonstrating measurable reductions in reoffending at the expense of other priorities (Smith, D.J. 2005). The result of 'no difference' indicates that we do not confidently know how to moderate persistent offending behaviour beyond its own

natural fluctuations. Historically, this position has left us with more questions than answers (MacKenzie, 2000).

Complex research questions such as these, *do* present us with tough challenges – politically, substantively and statistically. Indeed, it is important to exercise some caution with the results from the quantitative results, which are based on samples with observable long-term differences. One of the striking results of this study is that, in order to select a suitable control group of persistent and serious young offenders you must base your selection on a range of independent variables taken over the life-course, and not limit the indicators to one-year.

One might begin to question the rationale for other types of interventions. Although this study was not geared towards appraising the use of youth custody *per se*, the majority of the qualitative sample had extensive experience of the secure estate. Uniformly, they reported that detention was something they found easy to adapt to, and the cultural and personal benefits of imprisonment often outweighed the practical drawbacks. Interviewees reported that custodial penalties represented an ‘easy’ option compared to intensive community-based programmes. Prison represented an unusual space for the participants in this study – it was typically not a site of correction or punishment, in fact they did not find it dissimilar to their everyday lives ‘outside’. As Wacquant (2001) has argued, a “deadly symbiosis” can occur which blurs the boundaries between the prison and the street, such that one becomes indistinctive from the other. But as the participants adapted easily to the custodial environment, finding it easy to ‘fit in’

and feel 'at home', there was no escaping the longer-term disadvantages of a childhood that was punctuated by spells in prison. Fractured education and home-lives; increased opportunities to network and develop skills from more experienced offenders and the development of a 'recidivist' reputation put them at risk of future prison sentences. As previous studies have consistently noted, imprisonment affects prisoners employability and subsequent earnings upon release (Freeman, 1992), and the vocational setbacks tend to compound over time (Fagan, 1989).

The question of what works for young people does not involve an easy or universal solution. Nevertheless, ISSP afforded some young people in the qualitative sample a rare opportunity to create a high-quality bond with a responsible adult (Gray et al, 2005) that appeared to be an important mediator of change (Burnett and McNeil, 2005; Ruch, 2005; Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011). The concept of a therapeutic alliance has been defined as 'the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between client and therapist' (Horvarth and Bedi, 2002: 41). The informal, participative style of supervision that ISSP staff developed with the young people in this study was crucial to establishing trust. ISSP officers offered support to build self-esteem and a greater sense of personal direction. Young people were afforded individualised attention and the opportunity to talk about their worries, to feel listened to and to feel supported. Both 'empathy' and 'feeling understood' have been found to be key variables in alliance formation (Lafferty *et al.*, 1989). A similar result, highlighting the quality of relationship between a key

worker and a persistent young offender in maintaining commitment to an intervention was identified by Arnull et al, (2005).

Developing a committed bond with a dedicated ISSP officer had a transformative effect on some young people. In other cases, however, trust issues remained insurmountable. Scholars have suggested that the ability to form a connection with a professional may be related to a more general ability to maintain interpersonal relations (Dore and Alexander, 1996). The authors go on to suggest this social competence, rather than the therapeutic alliance *per se*, may be the factor that drives positive outcomes. However, this social competence may itself be influenced by the nature and quality of relationships that young people have experienced in their families and elsewhere. Dore and Alexander (1996) argue that for clients who summarily distrust professionals, relationship-based supervision may still have value – in fact it may be a necessary first step before embarking on broader cognitive or behavioural strategies.

### **12.5 Persistent young offenders: Someone else's problem**

The issue of fostering trusting relationships encounters an inevitable dilemma for social workers, who must provide both care and control (Day, 1979) in the everyday administration of ISSP. As some young people yielded to the supervisory element of the programme with relative ease, all of the participants interviewed resisted and resented the presence of the 'tag'. Demonstrating they were not passive subjects (Foucault, 1977), the interviewees exercised their agency to circumvent

aspects of electronic monitoring on a regular basis. Consequently, youth justice workers faced daily challenges surveying the young people's movements whilst simultaneously seeking to develop trusting bonds. This predicament has been widely commented upon in the literature, as social work has been criticised for becoming more demanding, controlling and coercive (Pratt, 1985; Jordan, 2004). Others have also noted how its emancipator capacity has been steadily eroded (Jordan, 2001; Stepney, 2006). Whilst balancing 'care' and 'control' has long been the bedrock of social work practice (Burford and Adams, 2004), Parton (2000) contends that more recently, control has become the dominant rationale. Writers on this topic have linked this shift to the influx of neo-conservative ideas which emphasise autonomy, responsibility and community (Jordan, 2001; Lorenz, 2005). More critically, Lorenz (2005) has argued that social work should have done more to defend its professional purpose, but instead has remained silent on new punitive directions – particularly in relation to youth justice. Speaking on this topic Sharland (2005) has stated that youth delinquency has become 'someone else's problem' (2005: 2).

The role of social work in youth justice is of significant policy relevance when one considers that the future direction of ISS<sup>196</sup> – the successor of ISSP - is likely to be dealing with more young people as it casts its net wider. Changes made after the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 restructured the aims of intensive youth justice practice away from targeting a precise group of high-level persistent and/or

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<sup>196</sup> Intensive Supervision and Surveillance is a statutory disposal that can be attached to the new Youth Rehabilitation Order.

serious offenders, to exhausting ISS as an alternative to custody. The purpose was to steer those young people, who did not meet the original criteria for ISSP - yet increasingly received a custodial sentence – back towards intensive disposals. The result was an expansion of the eligibility criteria and opportunities to apply more flexible local priorities - by virtue of new subjective guidelines (Sentencing and Guidelines Council, 2009). By 2009, ISS sought to draw more young people into the intensive web. However, given the previous evidence that the introduction of ISSP failed to have an observable impact on custodial sentencing (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005)<sup>197</sup> I must conclude that the recent alterations to the offending criteria should be monitored very carefully. This is essential since a well-recognised corollary of intensive community programmes, is the risk of ‘up-tarrifing’ offenders from a generic programme to an intensive one, which involves a consequent risk of “catapulting the offender into custody when the enormous demands of the programme prove too much” (Cavadino and Dignan 2002:304). Evidence of ‘net-widening’, ‘mesh-thinning’ and increased ‘penetration’ (Cohen, 1979) has led a number of scholars to consider whether ‘more’ is necessarily ‘better’ or whether the general intensification of community penalties is in danger of causing more harm than good (Blomberg and Lucken 1994; Merrington, 2006). For example, Cavadino and Dignan (2002) state: “Even if some of this ‘tough early intervention’ takes positive forms such as reparation or programmes to confront offending behaviour, the tougher you get and the earlier you get tough, the greater the likelihood that young offenders will suffer the adverse effects of stigmatising

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<sup>197</sup> The evaluation assessed the impact by comparing the proportionate use of custody in ISSP and non-ISSP areas. Over a three-year period there was a 1.5 per cent reduction in the ISSP areas, but the same period saw a 1.9 per cent reduction in the rest of the country (Moore et al., 2004).

'labelling' and accelerate 'up the tariff' into overcrowded and damaging custodial institutions before they have a chance to grow out of crime" (Cavadino and Dignan, 2002:304).

On a related point, the decision to expand the eligibility criteria to reduce reoffending (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006 provide a detailed account of the various justifications of intensive programmes) is also not supported by this study. The quantitative data consistently suggested that young people who qualified for ISSP via the persistence route were the most likely to commit further and more serious offences in both the immediate aftermath of the programme and up to four years later, compared to serious-only offenders. In sum, the most persistent offenders presented the greatest challenge for the young – and adult – criminal justice system. Empirically, the average number of offences committed one year before starting ISSP was 7.7. Similarly the mixture modelling exercise found that around half of the young people on ISSP presented the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system in terms of future offending (Groups 3 and 4). These young people had, on average committed at least eight offences in the year prior to starting ISSP. As such, the new working guidelines at "around three" (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11) offending episodes in the prior 12 months may be pitched too low and risk expanding an intensive programme to those whose behaviour, although problematic, might not warrant (or benefit from) a high-tariff sentence (c.f. Merrington, 2006) and might not benefit from the intervention. However, if policy makers and magistrates do limit the use of intensive programmes

to those most at risk of further and long term offending (the most persistent offenders), they might also have to accept that reconviction rates, measures of offence frequency and gravity and non-completion rates might remain high (in contrast to the comparable outcomes for serious offenders who are more likely to desist and complete the programme).

Nevertheless there appears to be a political and practice attraction to pursuing intensive interventions for an expanding group of young offenders. While ISSP (and now ISS) provided much-needed support to young people in terms of contact hours with social workers and the availability of family and education support, it remains questionable whether the youth justice system is the most appropriate vehicle for providing these statutory services. Flanking the disengagement of social work from youth justice - mentioned above - other providers of mainstream services have also been criticised for failing to gear services towards young offenders (Gray, 2005). The most recent report from the House of Commons Justice Committee (2013) noted that the Youth Justice System has been undermined by mainstream agencies who circumvent the more disruptive and vulnerable children by formally or informally excluding them. Giving evidence to the committee Tim Bateman noted “that there has been little or no attempt to redirect the capacity to work with children in trouble towards mainstream services” (2013:17) while Alexandra Crossley, from the Centre for Social Justice, suggested “that the creation of YOTs encouraged other agencies to relinquish responsibility to them” (2013:15). Similarly, France et al (2012) have argued that contemporary social policy regarding

'troubled' children more broadly has not paid sufficient attention to matters of social justice; disruptive behaviour and low commitment in schools; self-regulation and self-management in the care system and responsabilisation in youth justice policy all emphasise the role of the individual young person in managing their own risks without reference to the exclusionary practices which take place within these agencies. If mainstream services are not encouraged to find avenues for meeting the needs of disaffected young people, there is a risk that they will enter a 'no man's land', where there is no help available unless they come into contact with the youth justice system. Along these lines France et al (2012) have called for critical and interpretive research on marginalised youths experiences, to understand how the educational and welfare system may be implicated in reproducing their academic failure and delinquency.

### **12.6 Symbolic violence: the hidden high costs of making good**

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 2000b, 2002) I suggest that both professionals and young offenders may often be missing the magnitude and mechanisms of socially structured suffering, because it is routinely 'misrecognised' (Bourdieu, 2000b). Symbolic violence is "violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:167)—that is, individuals frequently accept the dominant values and the behavioural schema of their environment. This legitimacy obscures the existing power relations, often making them unrecognisable to, and misrecognised by agents (Bourdieu, 1990b). Of particular

importance here is the contextual discourse used, and the manner in which it is typically accepted as the 'right way' at the expense of alternative view points (Schubert, 2002). The concept of symbolic violence is thus useful to understand how contemporary discourses in youth justice and evaluative research help create and recreate aspects of our knowledge giving current practice an entrenched legitimacy.

Via quantitative and qualitative research, academics have made considerable and insightful inroads into the process of desistance (Rex, 1999; Maruna, 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2003; Bottoms et al, 2004; Farrall and Calverley, 2006; Bottoms et al, 2008), as well providing critical responses to contemporary youth justice (Goldson, 1997; Pitts, 2003; Gray, 2005; 2007, 2009; Muncie and Goldson, 2006; Muncie, 2006; 2009) and social policy (Pitts and Hope, 1997; Hope, 2001). However, these bodies of work have rarely translated into policy development (Hope, 2004; Worrall, 2004; Naughton, 2005). Despite the obvious common sense of 'evidence based practice', recent incarnations have been met with sustained critical attention for being too limited in scope and lacking theoretical sophistication (Klein, 2000; Gabbay et al., 2003; Naughton, 2005). By focusing on 'what works' evaluative research has been criticised for failing to understand the lived reality of the policy process. Humes and Bryce, (2001) have argued that policy development is chaotic and involves both compromise and diplomacy. In addition, Sanderson (2002) raised the vital issue of the need to use evidence in the process of *defining* social problems and forming policy objectives. As he stressed, 'evidence' usually tells us if a programme has fulfilled a particular function or not. But rather less attention is

given to developing a better understanding of the specific nature and incidence of social problems. Consideration of alternative objectives as a measure of success is also lacking (Sanderson, 2002). For example, the recent political prioritisation of 'reducing reoffending'<sup>198</sup> amongst youth offenders has effectively been pursued without a conscientious reference to the broader impact of youth justice policies on young people, their families or communities (Gray, 2005, 2007, 2009). The discourses that run through many evaluative frameworks simply provide too small a space for assessing wider concerns or unintended consequences of how policies play out 'on the ground'. Inevitably, research can recreate a state of 'misrecognition' (Bourdieu, 1990b) within the practice and policy fields.

The quantitative and qualitative strands of this study have illuminated the arduous process of desistance. Meanwhile, the criminal justice system (and others) consider desistance from crime a triumph. It is self-evident that desistance *is* a constructive objective; however, the participant's narratives often depicted the initial steps of desistance as a path of demoralising hardship and comprehensive readjustment. Both the qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated that moving away from crime was a chaotic and complex journey. Offenders defined as 'persistent' were statistically more likely to remain in the criminal justice system four years after the intervention. Indeed, complete desistance from (recorded) crime was, on average a rare event. Participants described how an overhaul of their lives was necessary to

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<sup>198</sup> The 'strategic' objectives of the Youth Justice Board 2012-2015 are to prevent offending; reduce reoffending protect the public and support victims; promote the safety and welfare of children and young people in the justice system (Youth Justice Board, 2012).

move on from offending; they would need to change their social, psychological and economic conditions dramatically. This was all the more challenging for participants who had stepped into a new social space or 'field' as adults (Bourdieu, 1977) where they had no particular status or symbolic capital. As such, to better support young offenders to desist from crime, to better understand 'what works' we must be committed to appreciating and accepting offenders in the authentic context in which they operate. From this position, those vulnerable and tentative first stages an offender makes towards desistance could be made stronger (Bernberg et al, 2006).

Nevertheless, public policy research continues to focus on crude, momentary measures of reconviction (yes/no) as indicators of programme success<sup>199</sup>. The shortcomings of this statistic have been widely critiqued in the literature (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Harper and Chitty, 2004; Moore et al, 2006). In addition to the many drawbacks of static measures already cited (see Section 6.3), the qualitative data found that persistence and desistance were not irreconcilable bedfellows. Instead of being at opposite ends of a behavioural spectrum, repeat offending and desistance often converged in real life. For example, most of the men interviewed continued to offend to some degree, even after they had begun to take clear steps away from illegal activity. Such subtle but relevant findings are missed when markers of success are limited to constrained objectives. Moreover, this pattern effectively confines our research knowledge to reified statistics and

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<sup>199</sup> For example, the Ministry of Justice typically include reconviction (yes/no) in their yearly output which appraises the relative merit of different youth and adult sanctions (see, Ministry of Justice, 2012b).

decontextualised anecdotes. These subtle findings also underscore the importance of collecting sensitive statistical measures of offending behaviour, such as changes in *frequency* and *seriousness* of offending – as conducted in this study. One could also look more closely at shifts in sentencing outcomes or compliance with community-based orders.

### **12.7 Symbolic violence: the demoralising process of growing up**

Drawing on the narratives of formerly persistent young offenders, this study also identified features of symbolic violence in their life-histories. Participants were often excluded from areas of mainstream society in subtle and unspoken ways. This misrecognition was not restricted to how they were marginalised by official social structures, but also extended to local criminal networks and offending relationships. For example, at least initially, crime was a seductive source of capital during the on-set of persistent offending. It afforded the participants both practical and symbolic resources in an otherwise disadvantaged environment. The street seduced them with its ‘emotional logic’ and ‘transcendent fascinations’ (Katz, 1988: 148). Crime and the culture surrounding it could be at once morally, aesthetically and practically exciting and extraordinarily shocking.

But the logic of the street was not simply down to the seductive material benefits or the accumulation of symbolic capital. All of the participants had been informally or formally excluded from education before completing any qualifications; many

had experienced a history of disappointing encounters with education and social work staff, as well as their own families, and, at the time of interview not one participant was in full-time employment. In addition, over half of the sample voluntarily reported that they had suffered police brutality throughout their adolescence and into adulthood. This chronic 'alienation' from the traditional structures of public and economic life served to legitimate - for the participants - a commitment to crime and criminal culture. Interviewee's narratives described a sense of being outside and unfamiliar with 'civvy street'. Certainly, that the police continued to arbitrarily stop and search members of the sample as adults in humiliating and public displays of aggression served to sustain the participant's perceptions that the police were intrinsically unfair and not to be trusted (Tyler, 1999; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003). These examples, corroborated by the quantitative data, demonstrate how difficult it was to 'shed the skin' of childhood persistent offending; criminal reputations were heavy and difficult to shift - in spite of concerted efforts to change, while civil life was often unfamiliar and intimidating.

The sparkle of their most reliable source of capital - criminal networks - began to wear off as the participants grew-up. The interviewees typically experienced 'gangs' and offending relationships as a double-edged sword. While initially these alliances were viewed as an attractive response to, if not a remedy for the problems of poverty, exclusion and their own underdeveloped skills. As adults, participants expressed scorn and regret as they reflected on the betrayal of their childhood

friendships, and the violence and exploitation that were endemic in criminal networks. More broadly, being embedded in crime carried additional long-term costs, including increased probability of arrest, violent victimisation, spoiled family relationships and obstacles gaining employment or obtaining car insurance. In sum, a childhood of persistent offending was often experienced as wild flight of hedonism and capital advantage. However, frequently and swiftly, it translated into a complex and demoralising poverty trap in early adulthood. In this respect, crime and criminal networks can be both a response to various forms of poverty, as well as reproducing marginalisation and economic deprivation in the longer-term (c.f. Hughes, 1971; Padilla, 1992).

## **12.8 Evaluation and learning from policy implementation: Cross-methodological research**

There have been significant epistemological disputes about the basis on which ‘reliable’ knowledge of the social world is derived (Searle, 1995; Trigg, 2001; Naughton, 2005). More recently, the 1997 Labour government’s formal commitment to evidence based practice was met with considerable criticism<sup>200</sup>. However, we cannot conclude that public policy research is unnecessary or irrelevant. There is much to learn from theoretically informed and robust empirical policy research. This study – as many before it – has highlighted large knowledge gaps in evaluative research, but there *is* potential to engage with the complexity of

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<sup>200</sup> It should be noted the role of social science in informing policy development has a long history, pre-dating the accession of the ‘New Labour’ government see Bulmer, 1987; Newby, 1993; Weiss, 1995.

modern life (Giddens, 1990) and fulfil a broader purpose. Thus, Smart (1999) argues that:

*“Questions concerning political responsibility and ethical decision making, the difficulties of adjudicating between the expression and pursuit of self-interest and the promotion and adequate provision of the public domain, as well as the problems encountered in everyday social life of making a choice or taking a stand, have, if anything become analytically more significant” (Smart, 1999:63)*

For example, there is a need for research evidence of *how* policies work, for *whom* and *under what circumstances* (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The provision of longitudinal studies for longer term outcomes (Rock, 2005; Gray et al, 2012) is essential, as is the examination of unintended consequences of policies (Learmonth, 2009) and the identification of social problems (Sanderson, 2002). More broadly, there is an urgent need for clarity about the role of youth justice research and about the ethics of handling data linked to young people and their offending behaviour. Sanderson (2002) argues that more emphasis should be placed on developing a sound evidence base for policy through long-term impact evaluations that are grounded in theory and focused on explaining how policies translate on the ground through the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Unmistakably, the utility of detailed qualitative data cannot be over-estimated. The nine interviewees provided an abundance of data that lit up my understanding of their lives and the disparate influences that impacted their propensity to persist or desist in offending. Life-history data has indispensable value beyond the provision of anecdotes (Bryman, 1988) and public policy research should engage with in-depth qualitative methods – growing in academic popularity – more fully (c.f. Spencer et al, (2003).

One of the critical challenges for collecting qualitative data on marginalised populations is the inherent dilemmas of representation. Frank accounts of persistent offenders are likely to include (amongst other topics) violence, cruelty, amorality, deprivation and neglect. Bourgois (2003) argues that too often researchers veer away from unpleasant themes for fear of stereotyping an already vulnerable population. However, disregarding these narratives is effectively a process of sanitisation and biases the results. It also seriously limits the ability of policy makers, practitioners and academics to debate issues of poverty, social justice and child protection. In short, suppressing distasteful but complex data inhibits our understanding and ability to address the social problems at hand.

Despite the wide epistemological, theoretical and logistical gaps between quantitative and qualitative methods, this study has sought to demonstrate that public policy research and the interventions they inform can benefit from - and be enhanced by - the adoption of a mixed-methods framework. During the data

collection process of this study – the quantitative and qualitative data felt quite distinct from one another, however, over time many neat overlaps emerged, most obviously, the difficulties in leaving behind a childhood of *persistent* offending and the complexity and variance within criminal careers. More subtly, both strands of the analysis pointed towards the potential risks of increasing the exposure of the criminal justice system to a sub-group of young offenders. Indeed, the quantitative and qualitative results were often able to describe two sides of the same coin and in so doing, enriched the value and validity of the data.

Theoretical and cross-methodological strategies have the potential to illuminate the lived experience of desistance and persistence. To create pragmatic interventions youth justice has to rise to the logistical challenges of cross-methodological dialogue and engage with the structural categories that are typically erased by national reconviction studies.

It has become clear during the course of this study that policy evaluations could be strengthened by the adoption of more sophisticated statistical models and longer term evaluations. The quantitative techniques used herein can provide robust and valid tests of the effectiveness of a programme - more cheaply than can be done in randomised controlled trials (Duncan et al, 2006). The adoption of more sensitive statistical models is especially pertinent to research on persistent young offenders. This study suggests that locating a well-matched comparison group requires comprehensive offending data in excess of two years prior to the intervention, as well as a range of personal, social and offending characteristics. Moreover, we have

learned much about the etiology of criminal behaviour from life-history interviews; the use of narrative data reminds us of the bearing subjective experience has on offending.

This is not to say that these methods are a panacea or that alternative research methodologies do not offer value. Indeed, a diversity of methods is likely needed. Particular research tools will be suitable for some situations, not others. It is useful to draw upon a wide reserve of social science methods that can bring critical insights to the fore.

Occasionally, marrying various data sources together does involve reconciling contradictions, and philosophical and technical obstacles. However, we must move beyond an appraisal of interventions based on subsequent offending behaviour alone. What is clear is that offender-oriented interventions alone are far from enough of what is needed to achieve large reductions in offending by young people. The cultural and social spaces that are inhabited by crime and justice require research methods that can adequately reflect their inherent complexities. Otherwise, we restrict our knowledge to minimal monitoring statistics, and in so doing inadvertently hide the reality – the pleasure and brutality of everyday life as a persistent young offender.

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## **Appendix A: Extraction of reconviction data from the Police National Computer**

The Police National Computer (PNC) is increasingly being used as a source of data, because greater detail is available – offence dates, for example – and records are more up-to-date than the alternative offender index. At the time of data collection, the updated Ministry of Justice extraction and counting procedure (Ministry of Justice, 2011) had not yet been established for researchers. This appendix describes how data on frequency and seriousness of offending was extracted from the PNC for a highly persistent group of young offenders.

### **Timescale**

The first ISSP orders were made in July 2001. Cases had the total frequency and gravity of their most serious offence calculated at one year intervals for three years before the start of their order and up to five years after. Each year interval was determined from the start of ISSP, which meant the bail date (Bail ISSP), order date (Supervision Order or Community Rehabilitation Order ISSP) or release date (Detention and Training Order ISSP). As persistent and serious offenders, many of the sample spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended individually to compensate for this – further details are provided below. The equivalent dates and principles also applied to the comparison group. At the time of the fieldwork, the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate advised leaving a

three-month period for data on convictions to be entered on the PNC. Data was extracted in mid-July 2008, which allowed a maximum follow-up period up to and including mid-April 2008.

### **Submission of data to the Police National Computer**

The Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate requires details of offender names, dates of birth and PNC numbers in order to extract criminal history data from the PNC. A total of 2,881 ISSP cases and 906 individual comparison cases were submitted with full details.

### **Matching Police National Computer output against our data**

The Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate was able to provide criminal histories on 94% of the submitted ISSP cases and 97% of the comparison cases. The next stage was to compare this output with the historical ISSP data in order to determine whether there was an acceptable match. The main way of judging this was by checking whether the PNC data contained a court disposal that corresponded to the ISSP (or comparison) case in respect of date and disposal type. The following guidelines were used.

- In Supervision Order and Community Rehabilitation Order ISSP cases, the disposal was frequently entered into the PNC as a Curfew Order. Sometimes it

showed as a Detention and Training Order. If the date was correct, it was accepted as a match. Or, if the disposal was correct, and the date matched to within two weeks, it was accepted.

- In Detention and Training Order ISSP cases, the disposal date was sometimes not known. If this could be estimated from the ISSP start date and matched against a PNC disposal date and sentence length, the match was accepted.

Using these criteria, a further 3% of submitted ISSP cases and 2% of submitted comparison cases were discarded.

### **Allowing interval periods 'at liberty'**

As mentioned above, as highly persistent and serious offenders, many of the sample spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended individually to compensate for this. Since the PNC does not contain release dates, these were estimated. We assumed that half the sentence period was spent in custody on Detention and Training Orders and adult prison sentences. On the advice of the Parole Board, adult sentences in excess of four years were calculated at 60% of the total, and minimum recommendations for life sentences for individuals were sourced through media outlets where life sentences were applied.

## Appendix B: Ethical applications

### B.1 Application for ethical clearance of quantitative data – Keele Ethics Committee

#### Ethics Checklist for POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

APPROVAL MUST BE OBTAINED before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University Code of Practice on Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants. The principal investigator or, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

#### SECTION A

Project Title:	What happens to persistent and serious young offenders as they grow up? A follow-up study of the first recipients of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance
Proposed date of commencement:	October, 2007

Name of Researcher (applicant):	Emily Gray
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<p>If this project has already been subjected to an ethical review, please attach the letter of approval and move to Section E of the form.</p> <p>Letter of approval attached?</p> <p>*A preliminary appraisal of this study took place prior to submission to the ESRC (Feb 07) - details of this are attached. This form is completed in respect of a fuller ethical review of the quantitative aspects of the research.</p>	YES*
<p>If this project has not been subjected to an ethical review, please continue with this form.</p>	

## SECTION B (PARTICIPANT CONSENT)

<p>Will the researchers inform participants of all aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate and in particular, any negative consequences that might occur?</p> <p>The quantitative aspect of this project represents an extension of a previous government funded reconviction study. The data was initially collected seven years ago on behalf of the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and formed the official evaluation of the YJB's, Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) for persistent and serious young offenders.</p> <p>The YJB stipulated that as a condition of the grant to run the pilot ISSP schemes, all participating Youth Offending Teams (Yots) and young people made subject to those orders are subject to the evaluation. This involved collecting procedural information and criminal history searches for ISSP and comparison cases (See Moore et al, 2004 and Gray et al, 2005). In short, the Youth Justice Board did not seek written consent from the participants at that stage, as it was assumed that by taking part in the pilot consent was automatically given.</p> <p>In support of this action, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998 allows the Youth Justice Board and youth offending teams to disclose the personal details of the young people to local/national evaluators for the purposes of statutory research and monitoring.</p> <p>This subsequent follow-up study aims to extend the previous evaluative work and we believe will help to inform policy and practice surrounding the management of persistent and serious young offenders. As such we believe it will contribute to 'the prevention or detection of crime' (Sec 5.29.1a) under the special exemptions from the Data Protection Act 1998.</p> <p>Finally, this study represents a large-scale quantitative project (n&gt;=5,000). All results will be analysed and reported at an aggregate level. As such it will not be necessary to reveal information about individuals.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>(delete as appropriate)</p>
<p>Might the study involve participants who are vulnerable?</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Might the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent?</p> <p>If YES, what procedures will be in place to ensure that fully informed consent is obtained from those who have the duty of care for the participant?</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Does the investigation involve observing participants unawares?</p> <p>As explained above, the young people on ISSP were not required to give their consent to be part of the original study. As such they will not be aware of this subsequent follow-up study. However, because of the large-scale nature of the</p>	<p>YES</p>

quantitative study, it will not be necessary to discuss or present sensitive individual-level data in the results. All data will be analysed and reported upon at an aggregate level.	
Will the confidentiality of participants be maintained?  If confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, how will participants best interests be protected?	YES
Might participants require any support to take part in the research (e.g. disability support, interpreters)?  If YES what sort of support?	NO

### **SECTION C (PROCEDURES)**

Does the research involve people being investigated for a problem which has received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or similar attention?  If YES, please give details:	NO
Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to participants or will the study involves invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?  If YES, please give rationale.	NO
Will blood be obtained from participants?  If YES, please give rationale.	NO

### **SECTION D (RESEARCH PROCESS)**

Will participants incur any expenses?  If YES, how will they be compensated?	NO
Does the actual or potential research involve the analysis of data participants did not realise would be used by you for research purposes (e.g. confidential criminal, medical or financial records)?  As stated above, the proposed study is a long-term (approximately seven year) follow-up of the Youth Justice Board's original evaluation of ISSP (See Moore et al, 2004 and Gray et al, 2005). Because of the experimental nature of the programme, written was not sought for the first evaluation. Consequently those individuals will not be aware of this subsequent research.	YES

<p>Specifically, for the purposes of this follow-up we will seek up-dated criminal histories from the Ministry of Justice on each case. However, this aspect of the study does not require active participation on the part of the original cohort. All data will be handled confidentially, in strict accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Moreover, all data will be analysed and reported on at an aggregate level, precluding the possible exposure of any individuals.</p> <p>As previously mentioned, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998 allow the processing of personal details of relevant young people for the purposes of research and monitoring. Because this study aims to inform policy and practice surrounding the management of persistent and serious young offenders, we believe it will contribute to ‘the prevention or detection of crime’ (Sec 5.29.1a) under the special exemptions from the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	
<p>Does the research involve the possible disclosure of confidential information to other participants?</p> <p>If YES, please give rationale.</p>	NO
<p>Will the researchers de-brief participants to ensure that they understand the nature of the research and monitor possible misconceptions or negative effects?</p> <p>This project involves analysis of a secondary data set with some updated information. It will not be possible to re-contact participants to inform and de-brief them as to the nature of this follow-up study. However, the large-scale quantitative nature of the project means participants will remain completely anonymised and will not be actively involved in any aspect of the research. No participants will be exposed by the collection, analysis or reporting of this work.</p>	NO
<p>Are there any other ethical issues that you think might be raised by the research?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p>	NO
<p>Are there any other data protection implications?</p> <p>If YES, please give details.</p> <p>In order to keep the data secure, the I.T. department will have to facilitate a password protected folder on the server to ensure information cannot be accessed by unauthorised individuals. After completion of the study Ms. Gray’s computer must not be given away or sold unless Keele University have ensured that all information stored on it has been completely removed or deleted.</p>	YES

## B.2 Application for ethical clearance of qualitative data – Keele Ethics Committee

### Ethics Checklist for POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

APPROVAL MUST BE OBTAINED before potential participants are approached to take part in any research.

Before completing this form, please refer to the University Code of Practice on Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants. The principal investigator or, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

#### SECTION A

Project Title:	What happens to persistent and serious young offenders as they grow up? A follow-up study of the first recipients of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance
Proposed date of commencement:	October, 2007
Name of Researcher (applicant):	Emily Gray

#### SECTION B

Has your project already been approved by an ethics committee? (for example, an NHS research ethics committee) (Full details see Section F.3 )  If YES the following documentation should be sent directly to the Chair of the Ethics Committee (Dr Roger Beech):  *The quantitative aspects of this research have already received ethical approval from the Committee on 15th May 2008. This second submission seeks approval of the qualitative part section of the study.		YES*  (delete as appropriate)
A completed and signed ethics checklist (available from the H&SS Faculty Office or your Research Institute), 2 signatures needed, is received by the Chair and accompanied by an electronic copy;	Signed hard copy:	n/a
	Electronic copy:	n/a
Evidence of prior ethics approval from the hosting institution.	Copy of appropriate document:	n/a

## SECTION C

If your project has not been subjected to an ethical review, please complete this section.		
If your project is still to be approved by the H&SS Faculty Ethics Committee, the following documentation should be sent directly to the Chair of the Ethics Committee (Dr Roger Beech) including hard copies and electronic copies via email: Please indicate that you have completed the required documents:		
A completed and signed ethics checklist (available from the H&SS Faculty Office or your Research Institute). A proposal cannot be considered until a signed copy (2 signatures needed) is received by the Chair and accompanied by an electronic copy;	Signed copy attached:	YES
A summarised project proposal attached to this form, NO MORE THAN two sides of A4 paper;		YES

And, if they are applicable given the study's design and approaches;	
A letter of invitation for participants;	YES
<p>An information sheet which should include following sections:</p> <p>Why the participant has been chosen;</p> <p>What will happen to participants if they take part</p> <p>A discussion of the possible disadvantages, risks and benefits of taking part</p> <p>The procedures for ensuring confidentiality and anonymity</p> <p>The proposed use of the research findings</p> <p>Contact details of the principal investigator plus details of additional support agencies** (if necessary)</p> <p>**Details of support agencies will be provided (on the information sheet) to each and every participant in advance of the interview, but they will be tailored to the individual needs and location of the participant (some of whom may be in custody, and others who are spread over the North West area). As such, they are not included in this version, but I would expect them to include contact details for the local Social Work emergency helpline, The Local Probation Team; Drugs counselling teams; Saneline; The Samaritans, The listening service (in Prison).</p>	YES

A copy of the participant consent form/s	YES
<p>Copies of any questionnaire, interview schedules or topic guides.</p> <p>Interviews in this study will follow a ‘biographical’ style. This approach has very few structured questions, but instead asks to the respondent to recount their (subjective) experiences – in their own words, and attempts to develop a detailed biography with the interviewee. The emphasis here is on acquiring deep knowledge and authenticity of people's life experiences (<a href="#">Gubrium and Holstein, 2001</a>). Schedules for follow up interviews are particular to each participant and based on the information and analysis of the first interview.</p>	YES

(PARTICIPANT CONSENT)

<p>Will the researchers inform participants of all aspects of the research that might reasonably be expected to influence willingness to participate and in particular, any negative consequences that might occur?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p> <p>An information sheet will be given to participants prior to any interview and this describes the interview process, the topic of discussion, how the data will be used, and what consent means (and that they can withdraw it). It is also expected that a number of discussions will take place with the participant before the interview is finally agreed on and organised. This will give the researcher a number of opportunities to explain the study and interview process, and the participant opportunities (and time) to ask any questions. Throughout all interviews participants will be free to stop the interview if they do not want to continue, and will be actively asked if they do give their consent at the end of each meeting.</p>	YES
<p>Might the study involve participants who are vulnerable?</p> <p>If YES, what procedures will be in place to ensure that fully informed consent is obtained from those who have the duty of care for the participant?</p> <p>It is likely that as a population, (previously) persistent young offenders will have higher than average rates of mental illness as well as social and other health problems (Moore et al, 2004).</p> <p>For this reason it will be important to ensure the interview process proceeds sensitively into any issues which may be difficult for the participant to discuss. While some gentle guidance may be offered by the interviewer, in the biographical interview participants have the freedom to tell their life stories in their own way and are not under any pressure to answer structured questions or reveal details they wish to keep private. Nevertheless, all participants will be actively reminded that they do not have to discuss anything they feel</p>	YES

<p>uncomfortable about and even if they do, they can withdraw consent to continue or have particular quotes removed from the interview transcript.</p> <p>Details of relevant support agencies will be given to all participants at the time of interview.</p>	
<p>Might the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent?</p> <p>If YES, what procedures will be in place to ensure that fully informed consent is obtained from those who have the duty of care for the participant?</p>	NO
<p>Does the investigation involve observing participants unawares?</p> <p>If YES, what efforts will be made to respect their privacy, cultural values and psychological well-being?</p>	NO
<p>Will the confidentiality of participants be maintained?</p> <p>Participants will be assured that all data will be handled confidentially, in strict accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, including the following:</p> <p>All data will be kept in password and user-name protected files, on a secure server at Keele University. Once data is collected it will not be transferred onto to any portable devices, and will not leave the secure facilities/ premises of Keele University.</p> <p>All data will be kept on secure electronic facilities. Any necessary printing of the data onto paper (already anonymised) will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed (shredded<sup>201</sup>) when it no longer required.</p> <p>Ms. Gray's computer is not a shared machine and is password and finger-print protected.</p> <p>Ms. Gray's office is locked at all times when unoccupied.</p> <p>Keele University Research Services have a Research Governance Officer to ensure all data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant requirements or updates Keele's computer amenities are subject to regular security checks and anti-virus up-dates. All servers are kept in locked facilities.</p> <p>Participants will be asked if they agree to the interview being digitally recorded. If they agree they will be advised that under the guidelines of the British Society of Criminology and the Economic and Social Research Council, the researcher must abide by 'duty of confidentiality' and if any undisclosed offences either committed by the participant or other persons are revealed to the researcher, the information will be passed to the police (see 4iii and 4iv of the Code of Ethics, British Society of Criminology). Participants will be reminded they should not</p>	YES

<sup>201</sup> Shredded files are then placed in a confidential waste sack and destroyed of securely.

mention their or any other person's personal details during the recording.	
Might participants require any support to take part in the research (e.g. disability support, interpreter)?  If YES, what sort of support?	NO

**(PROCEDURES)**

Does the research involve people being investigated for a problem which has received medical, psychiatric, clinical psychological or similar attention?  If YES, please give details:	NO
Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?  If YES, please give rationale.	NO
Will blood be obtained from participants?  If YES, please give rationale.	NO
Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?  If YES, please give rationale.	NO

**(RESEARCH PROCESS)**

Will participants incur any expenses?  If YES, how will they be compensated?  It is possible that some individuals will have to travel to the interview. Any such costs will be compensated, financially from the Study's funds.	YES
Does the actual or potential research involve the analysis of data participants did not realise would be used by you for research purposes (e.g. confidential criminal, medical or financial records)?  If YES, please give rationale.  Confidential criminal records have been sourced on all participants. This matter was the subject of the first phase of the ethics procedure and has already been agreed by the ethics board. See attached.	YES

<p>Does the research involve the possible disclosure of confidential information to other participants?</p> <p>If YES, please give rationale.</p>	NO
<p>Will the researchers de-brief participants to ensure that they understand the nature of the research and monitor possible misconceptions or negative effects?</p> <p>If NO, please give rationale.</p>	YES
<p>Are there any other ethical issues that you think might be raised by the research?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p> <p>In selecting participants to interview we will have to re-contact people, by mail, who were subject to ISSP over six years ago. It is possible that individuals or their families might have moved since this time and their mail could be received by others. It is also possible that potential participants do not wish to be contacted. As such we have exercised considerable sensitivity in the wording of the letter. (See attached). It makes no reference to the criminal justice system and will require interested individuals to actively respond to the request. If no response is forthcoming, the researcher will not pursue the individual any further. All efforts will be taken to ensure the letters are sent to the correct addresses and where possible current addresses will be cross-checked with information from current electoral registers and national directory's (as held by 192.com). Where individuals do respond to the letter, they will be asked to confirm personal details known to the study and not included in the letter (such as D.O.B, middle name, mother's name) to ensure they are the intended recipients.</p>	YES
<p>Are there any other data protection implications?</p> <p>If YES, please give details:</p> <p>There are data protection issues associated with the holding of quantitative data – which has been covered by the first ethics submission. The possession of audio material and transcripts raises additional 'data protection' responsibilities. Since audio files can identify people, even if pseudonyms are used, the study will need to reassure interviewee's that all data are completely secure. All participants will be asked not to disclose their or any other person's personal details during the recording. After the interview the files will be kept in a digital format and encrypted on a secure server in line with the Data Protection Act. After completion of the study all audio files will be destroyed. Anonymised transcripts will be my primary material, and permission will be sought for their archiving. They will also be kept securely; password protected on a secure server. For auditing purposes some real names may be kept, for example on receipts for expenses and consent forms, and these will be lodged securely at another site. Decryption keys for audio files should be kept separately too.</p>	YES

### B.3 Request to Home Office for PNC data

#### DATA REQUEST FORM FOR PNC INFORMATION (EXTERNAL)

##### Contact Details

Name	Emily Gray
Organisation	Keele University
Organisation address	Centre for Criminological Research, Institute for Law Politics and Justice, University of Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG.
E-mail address	e.gray@crim.keele.ac.uk
Data Protection Registration number	Z5571818.
Expiry date for Data Protection Registration	20/08/08

Does your Registration allow for offence details of individuals to be stored within your organisation for research purposes?

YES  NO

##### Research / Study Details

What is the main aim of this work or research questions being analysed?	<p>The proposed study is a long term reconviction study (approximately seven years) of the Youth Justice Board's 'Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme' (ISSP). ISSP was piloted in 2001 following New Labour's overhaul of the Youth Justice System. This study will provide a genuinely unique opportunity to explore the offending trajectories of those offenders subject to intensive supervision and surveillance as they enter the adult system. The research builds on a previous evaluation of ISSP (See Moore et al, 2004 and Gray et al, 2005).</p> <p>It is financially supported by the Youth Justice Board and aims to shed new light on the longer-term impacts of intensive criminal justice interventions.</p> <p>Specifically, we aim to study the impact of ISSP on frequency and seriousness of further offending compared to a well matched control group. The research aims to produce an integrated model of evaluating subsequent offending behaviour, so that a statistical picture of which young people persisted with or desisted from crime can be deduced, together with measures of the nature of their subsequent offending and exposure to criminal sanctions.</p>
Number of offenders in study (if known)	4,000

Number of offenders with PNC ID (if known)	4,000
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Has written consent been given to access criminal history and offence information, from the offenders in this research?

YES  NO  X202

#### Data supply and requirements

When will you be able to supply the offender list to us? (if applicable)	Immediately
When will you require the PNC data from us?	As soon as possible.
Describe the PNC data that you require.	Criminal History searches, including all convictions and sentencing decisions.

#### Security arrangements

Who will have access to the PNC data provided to you?	The researcher, Emily Gray.
Will you need to release offender level PNC data to others?	No.

<sup>202</sup> The Youth Justice Board stipulated as a condition of the grant to run Pilot ISSP schemes that all participating Youth Offending Teams (Yots) and young people made subject to 'ISSP' orders should become part of the evaluation. This involved criminal history searches for ISSP and comparison cases as part of the first reconviction study (See Moore et al, 2004 and Gray et al, 2005). As such, written consent was not sought from each individual young person. The attached letter from the Youth Justice Board (Appendix 1) explains how the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Data Protection Act 1998 allows Yots to disclose the personal details of the young people to local/national evaluators for the purposes of research and monitoring. This subsequent follow-up study aims to extend the previous evaluative work and we believe will help to inform policy and practice surrounding the management of persistent and serious young offenders. As such it will contribute to 'the prevention or detection of crime' (Sec 5.29.1a) under the special exemptions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

<p>How will you ensure the physical security of the data during the study?</p>	<p>Once the data is received it will be immediately anonymised and each case will be given a unique code number. Information which is not required for the study will be deleted. Some identifiers will be kept, such as age, sex and ethnicity, but will be kept in a separate file, so they could not be reconstructed to reveal the identity of the participant.</p> <p>When using the data Ms Gray will ensure that data is not displayed on computers screens visible to passers-by.</p> <p>All data will be kept in password and user-name protected files, on a secure server at Keele University. Data will not be transferred onto to any portable devices, and will not leave the secure facilities/ premises of Keele University.</p> <p>All data will be kept on secure electronic facilities. Any necessary printing of the data onto paper (already anonymised) will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed (shredded<sup>203</sup>) when it no longer required.</p> <p>Ms. Gray's computer is not a shared machine and is password and finger-print protected.</p> <p>Ms. Gray's office is locked at all times when unoccupied.</p> <p>Keele University Research Services have a Research Governance Officer to ensure all data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant requirements or updates.</p>
<p>What IT arrangements have been made to restrict access to this data to those working on this research project ?</p>	<p>The following security measures will be in place to protect against unauthorised access:</p> <p>Keele University provides space for keeping confidential files in a folder (on a secure server) which can be limited to Ms. Gray's use and can only be accessed through a specified username and password.</p> <p>Keele's computer amenities are subject to regular security checks and anti-virus up-dates. All servers are kept in locked facilities.</p> <p>Ms. Gray's computer is not a shared machine and is password and finger-print protected.</p> <p>Data will not be transferred onto to any portable devices, and will not leave the secure facilities/ premises of Keele University.</p> <p>Keele University Research Services have a Research Governance Officer to ensure all data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant requirements or updates.</p>

<sup>203</sup> Shredded files are then placed in a confidential waste sack and destroyed of securely.

<p>How will you ensure the physical security of the data after the completion of the study?</p>	<p>Data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for purposes of this research project alone. Upon completion of the study, the Information Technology Services and Research Governance Officer at Keele University will ensure the electronic data is securely removed and disposed of. Any remaining paper-based material will be destroyed (shredded).</p> <p>After completion of the study Ms. Gray's computer will not be given away or sold unless Keele University have ensured that all information stored on it has been completely removed or deleted.</p>
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#### Dissemination and publication

<p>Describe very briefly the analyses you plan to do using the PNC data.</p>	<p>We aim to produce a model of evaluating subsequent offending behaviour, which demonstrates which young people persisted or desisted from crime. This will involve an exploration of the frequency, pattern and seriousness of successive offending, alongside any continuing exposure to criminal sanctions. This analysis will cover the sample's transition into the adult system.</p> <p>The data will be explored using advanced techniques including, longitudinal analysis; structural equation modelling and semi-parametric statistics.</p>
<p>How will you ensure that any findings do not reveal information about single individuals.</p>	<p>This study represents an extension to previous large-scale project (n=4,000). All results will be analysed and reported at an aggregate level. As such it will not be necessary to reveal information about individuals.</p>
<p>When will your research findings be published?  (if applicable)</p>	<p>The Youth Justice Board has agreed to publish the report, which is expected to be completed in 2010.</p>

#### Any Other Relevant Information

<p>This study is a joint-funded three-year CASE Studentship between the Youth Justice Board and the ESRC. Ms. Mary Wyman (Head of Service Development, Youth Justice Board) is a named supervisor and Ms. Nisha Patel (Research Manager, Youth Justice Board) is advising on the completion of this work.</p>
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## Appendix C: Offence categories and offences by seriousness scores

The Youth Justice Board developed a seriousness score to a) help practitioners assess the severity of an offence and b) define eligibility for the ‘serious crime short-cut’ route onto ISSP. It is a 1-8 scale (8 is the most serious offence) based on sentencing practice (Moore et al, 2004). It allows relevant staff to quantify ‘seriousness’ and plan interventions. The 2001 version of the scale was utilised in this research, which was current when the original study began. Although it has since been superseded (see Youth Justice Board, 2010c). The table includes an individual ‘code’ for each offence (mostly used for administrative purposes), followed by a description and then a score (1-8). The final column denotes whether the offence would qualify for the ‘serious crime short cut’ onto ISSP.

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	‘Serious offence’ (ISSP)
<b>01</b>	<b>VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON</b>		
<b>0101</b>	<b>Abandoning a child under the age of two years</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0102</b>	<b>Abduction/ Kidnapping</b>	<b>7</b>	
	Abduction of female		
	Child abduction		
	False imprisonment		
	Kidnapping		
	<b>Assisting offender in a case of murder</b>	<b>5</b>	
	By impeding his apprehension or prosecution		
<b>0103</b>	<b>Attempt murder</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>0104</b>	<b>Common assault</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>0105</b>	<b>Cruelty to or neglect of children</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0106</b>	<b>Harassment</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Conduct amounting to harassment		
	Harassment		
	Harassment – causing continual disruption		

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
	Harassment stalking without		
<b>0107</b>	<b>Interfering with a witness</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0108</b>	<b>Making threats to kill</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0109</b>	<b>Malicious communication</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0110</b>	<b>Manslaughter</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Child destruction		
	Infanticide		
	Manslaughter		
	Manslaughter due to diminished responsibility		
<b>0111</b>	<b>Murder</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Of persons aged 1 year or over		
	Of infants under 1 year of age		
<b>0112</b>	<b>Other violence</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Having an article with a blade or point in a public place		
	Intimidating a witness		
	Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control		
	Possessing firearm or imitation firearm at time of committing or being arrested for an offence specified in Schedule 1 of the Firearms Act 1968		
	Possessing firearm or imitation firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence, or resist arrest		<b>Serious</b>
	Possession of a firearm or imitation firearm with intent to cause violence		
	Possession of offensive weapon without lawful authority or reasonable excuse		
	Putting people in fear of violence		
<b>0113</b>	<b>Other wounding</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Administering poison with intent to injure or annoy		
	Assault occasioning actual bodily harm		
	Assault with intent to resist apprehension or assaulting a person assisting a constable		
	Wounding or inflicting grievous bodily harm (inflicting bodily injury with or without weapon)		

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
0114	Possession of an offensive weapon	4	
0115	Threatening behaviour	3	
0116	Threat or conspiracy to murder	8	Serious
	Conspiring or soliciting to commit murder		
0117	Wounding or other act endangering life	7	
	Attempting to choke, suffocate with intent to commit an indictable offence (garrotting)		Serious
	Burning, maiming by explosion		
	Causing danger by causing anything to be on road, interfering with a vehicle or traffic equipment		
	Causing explosions or casting corrosive fluids with intent to do grievous bodily harm		Serious
	Endangering life or causing harm by administering poison		
	Endangering railway passengers (by placing anything on railway, taking up rails, changing points and signals and by throwing anything at railway carriages)		Serious
	Causing danger to road users (throwing stones etc)		
	Malicious wounding/ malicious grievous bodily harm		
	Possession of explosives with intent to endanger life		Serious
	Possession of firearms with intent to endanger life or injure property		Serious
	Unlawful wounding		
	Using chloroform to commit or assist in committing an indictable offence		Serious
	Using firearms or imitation firearms with intent to resist arrest		Serious
	Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm, or to resist arrest		Serious
0118	OTHER	1	
02	SEXUAL OFFENCES		
0201	Buggery with an animal <i>or person under 16</i>	7	Serious
0202	Failure to notify police of change of address (Sex Offenders Act 1997)	5	
0203	Gross indecency with a child	7	
0204	Incest	7	
	Incest with a female under 13		Serious
	Inciting a girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse		
	Other incest		

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
<b>0205</b>	<b>Indecent Assault</b>	<b>6</b>	
	Indecent assault on female aged 16 or over		
	Indecent assault on female aged under 16		
	Indecent assault on male aged 16 or over		
	Indecent assault on male aged under 16		
<b>0206</b>	<b>Indecent behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>	
	Indecent exposure		
<b>0207</b>	<b>Indecent, obscene or menacing phonecall (section 43 telecommunications act)</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0208</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Assault with intent to commit buggery		
	Assault with intent to rape		
	Attempt rape		
	Conspiracy to rape		
	Female rape		
	Male rape		
<b>0209</b>	<b>Soliciting</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>0210</b>	<b>Unlawful sexual intercourse with female under 13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>0211</b>	<b>Unlawful sexual intercourse with female under 16</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>0212</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>03</b>	<b>DEATH OR INJURY BY DANGEROUS DRIVING</b>		
<b>0301</b>	<b>Death by dangerous driving</b>	<b>7</b>	
	Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking		
	Causing death by dangerous driving		
	Causing death by dangerous driving when under the influence of drink or drugs		
<b>0302</b>	<b>Injury by dangerous driving</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Causing injury by aggravated vehicle taking		
	Causing injury by dangerous driving		
	Causing injury by dangerous driving when under the influence of drink or drugs		
<b>0303</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>04</b>	<b>MOTORING OFFENCES</b>		
<b>0401</b>	<b>Aiding and abetting dangerous driving</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0402</b>	<b>Dangerous driving</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0403</b>	<b>Driving defective vehicle (not roadworthy)</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>0404</b>	<b>Driving motor cycle on common land</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>0405</b>	<b>Driving on a footpath</b>	<b>3</b>	

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
<b>0406</b>	<b>Driving under the influence</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Driving with excess alcohol		
	Driving under influence of drugs		
<b>0407</b>	<b>Driving whilst disqualified</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0408</b>	<b>Driving without due care and attention</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>0409</b>	<b>Interfering with a motor vehicle</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>0410</b>	<b>Pedal cycle offences</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>0411</b>	<b>Reckless driving</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>0412</b>	<b>Refusing to give breath test</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>0413</b>	<b>Road traffic/ Additional Offences</b>	<b>2</b>	
	Careless driving		
	Exceeding speed limit		
	Failure to comply with a road traffic sign		
	Failure to give particulars after an accident		
	Failure to produce documents		
	Failure to report an accident		
	Failure to stop		
	Failure to stop after an accident		
	Failure to stop when requested by a constable		
	No insurance		
	No L plates		
	No licence		
	No MOT		
	Failure to wear a seatbelt		
	Not wearing protective headgear		
	Not well maintained indicators/ stop/ hazard and light reflectors		
	Reckless driving of a pedal cycle		
<b>0414</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>05</b>	<b>ROBBERY</b>		
<b>0501</b>	<b>Robbery</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Assault with intent to rob		
	Conspiracy to rob		

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
	Robbery		
<b>0502</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>06</b>	<b>DOMESTIC BURGLARY</b>		
<b>0601</b>	<b>Aggravated burglary in a dwelling</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Burglary with violence or threat of violence		
<b>0602</b>	<b>Burglary in a dwelling</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Burglary with intent		
	Other burglary in a dwelling		
<b>0603</b>	<b>Conspiracy to commit burglary of a dwelling</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>0604</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>07</b>	<b>NON DOMESTIC BURGLARY</b>		
<b>0701</b>	<b>Aggravated burglary in a non dwelling</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Burglary with violence or threat of violence		
<b>0702</b>	<b>Burglary in a non dwelling</b>	<b>4</b>	
	Burglary with intent		
	Other burglary in a non dwelling		
<b>0703</b>	<b>Conspiracy to commit burglary of a dwelling</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0704</b>	<b>Found in enclosed premises</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0705</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>08</b>	<b>VEHICLE THEFT AN UNAUTHORISED TAKING</b>		
<b>0801</b>	<b>Aggravated vehicle taking</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Injury to person, damage to property or car		
<b>0802</b>	<b>Other vehicle taking</b>	<b>3</b>	
	Allowing self to be carried in a stolen vehicle (aggravated)		
	Allowing self to be carried in a stolen vehicle (non aggravated)		
	Driving motor vehicle knowing to be stolen		
<b>0803</b>	<b>Vehicle taking</b>	<b>4</b>	
	Theft of a motor vehicle		
	Theft of motor		
	Unauthorised vehicle taking (TWOC)		
<b>0804</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>09</b>	<b>THEFT AND HANDLING STOLEN GOODS</b>		
<b>0901</b>	<b>Handling stolen goods</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Receiving stolen goods		
	Undertaking or assisting in the retention, removal, disposal or realisation of stolen goods, or arranging to do so		
<b>0902</b>	<b>Making off without payment</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>0903</b>	<b>Theft</b>	<b>3</b>	
	Abstracting electricity		
	Going equipped for stealing		
	Intent to steal		
	Theft by an employee		
	Theft by finding		
	Theft from a motor vehicle		

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
	Theft from a public place		
	Theft from a shop		
	Theft from an automatic machine or meter		
	Theft from other vehicle		
	Theft from the person		
	Theft in a dwelling		
	Theft of a pedal cycle		
	Theft or unauthorised taking of mail		
<b>0904</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>10</b>	<b>FRAUD AND FORGERY</b>		
<b>1001</b>	<b>Forgery</b>	<b>4</b>	
	Forgery, or use, of false prescription		
<b>1002</b>	<b>Fraud</b>	<b>4</b>	
	Acting as peddler without certificate		
	Conspiracy to defraud		
	Obtaining pecuniary advantage by deception		
	Obtaining property by deception		
<b>1003</b>	<b>Additional</b>	<b>3</b>	
	Counterfeiting		
	<b>Fraudulent use of documents</b>		
	Railway fare evasion		
	Railway fraud		
<b>1004</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>ARSON</b>		
<b>1101</b>	<b>Arson endangering life</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Arson endangering life		
	Arson reckless as to whether life is in danger		
<b>1102</b>	<b>Other Arson</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Arson not endangering life		
<b>1103</b>	<b>Threat to commit arson</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>1104</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>12</b>	<b>CRIMINAL DAMAGE (excluding Arson – see above category)</b>		
<b>1201</b>	<b>Criminal damage endangering life</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1202</b>	<b>Other Criminal Damage Over £2000</b>	<b>3</b>	
	Criminal damage		
	Possession with intent to commit criminal damage		
	Threat to commit criminal damage		
<b>1203</b>	<b>Other Criminal Damage Under £2000</b>	<b>2</b>	
	Criminal damage		
	Possession with intent to commit criminal damage		
	Threat to commit criminal damage		
<b>1204</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>DRUGS</b>		
<b>1301</b>	<b>Cultivation of cannabis</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1302</b>	<b>Permitting use of premises for use of Class A drug</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1303</b>	<b>Permitting use of premises for use of Class B or C drug</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1304</b>	<b>Possession – Class A</b>	<b>5</b>	

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
	Possession of Class A drug		
<b>1305</b>	<b>Possession - Other</b>	<b>2</b>	
	Possession of Class B drug		
	Possession of Class C drug		
<b>1306</b>	<b>Supply – Class A</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Having possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply		
	Supplying or offering to supply a controlled drug		
	Unlawful importation or exportation of a drug controlled		
<b>1307</b>	<b>Supply – Other</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Class B serious Class C not</b>
	Having possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply		
	Supplying or offering to supply a controlled drug		
<b>1308</b>	<b>Unlawful importation or exportation of a drug controlled</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1309</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>14</b>	<b>PUBLIC ORDER</b>		
1401	Affray	<b>4</b>	
1402	Breach of the Peace	<b>3</b>	
	Breach of the peace		
	Behaviour likely to cause breach of the peace		
1403	Drunk and Disorderly	<b>2</b>	
	Drunk and disorderly		
	Drunkenness		
1404	Other offences against the State or Public Order	<b>5</b>	
	Communicating false information alleging the presence of bombs		
	Placing of dispatching articles to cause bomb hoax		
<b>1405</b>	<b>Other Public Order Act</b>	<b>4</b>	
	Section 4 Public Order Act 1986 (fear or provocation of violence)		
	Section 4a Public Order Act 1986 (intentional harassment, alarm or distress)		
	Section 5 Public Order Act 1986 (harassment, alarm or distress)		
<b>1406</b>	<b>Rioting</b>	<b>6</b>	
<b>1407</b>	<b>Violent disorder</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>1408</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>15</b>	<b>OTHER</b>		
<b>1501</b>	Absconding from lawful custody	<b>5</b>	
	Air weapons offences	<b>3</b>	
	Blackmail	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Consuming alcohol under the age of 18 in a public place	<b>1</b>	
	Conveying letter or article into prison	<b>2</b>	
	Cruelty to animals	<b>4</b>	
	Cruelty to animals resulting in death	<b>6</b>	
	Failure to surrender to custody	<b>2</b>	
	Hijacking	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Inciting a child away from Local Authority care	<b>1</b>	
	Interfering/ taking advantage of an animal for sexual gratification	<b>4</b>	
	Making hoax/ abusive or malicious telephone calls	<b>4</b>	
	Non payment of financial penalty	<b>1</b>	
	Obstruct police or fire service	<b>3</b>	
	Perverting the course of justice	<b>5</b>	
	Prostitution	<b>1</b>	

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
	Public nuisance (common law offence)	2	
	Purchasing alcohol under the age of 18	1	
	Raising false alarm	2	
	Resist arrest	2	
	Sending articles – offensive/ indecent	4	
	Sustained cruel treatment to animals resulting in injury	5	
	Trespass	3	
	Trespassing on a railway	2	
	Unlawful killing of an animal	6	
	Wasting police time	4	
<b>1502</b>	<b>Firearms</b>	<b>5</b>	
	No firearm certificate		
	No firearm licence		
<b>1503</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
	Abusive language		
	Begging		
	Concealment of birth		
	Cycling in pedestrian area		
	Failure to make children attend school		
	Infuriating an animal (Section1 (1) (a) Protection of Animals Act 1911)		
	Littering		
	Nuisance on educational premises		
	Urinating in a public place		
	Vagrancy		
<b>16</b>	<b>RACIALLY AGGRAVATED</b>		
<b>1601</b>	<b>Criminal damage – racially aggravated</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Serious</b>
<b>1602</b>	<b>Other wounding</b>	<b>5</b>	
	Actual bodily harm		
	Common assault		
	Intentional harassment alarm or distress		
	Harassment		
	Putting people in fear of violence		
	Threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour		
<b>1603</b>	<b>Wounding or other act endangering life</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Serious</b>
	Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm		
<b>1604</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>17</b>	<b>BREACH OF CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE – this only applies where the breach has resulted in an additional substantive outcome. Where a young person has been resentenced, please refer back to the original offence for the seriousness.</b>		
<b>1701</b>	<b>Breach of conditions of discharge</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>18</b>	<b>BREACH OF BAIL – this only applies where the breach has resulted in an additional substantive outcome. Where a young person has been resentenced, please refer back to the original offence for the seriousness.</b>		
<b>1801</b>	<b>Breach of conditions of bail</b>	<b>1</b>	

Code	CATEGORY	SCORE	'Serious offence' (ISSP)
19	BREACH OF STATUTORY ORDER – this only applies where the breach has resulted in an additional substantive outcome. Where a young person has been resentenced, please refer back to the original offence for the seriousness.		
1901	Breach of Order	1	

## Appendix D: Mixture modelling estimates: Mean number of offences and mean gravity score of the four identified groups

**Table: D.1 Mixture modelling estimates: Mean number of offences and mean gravity score of the four identified groups**

	Mean	Standard deviation	Convergence statistic	95% Lower bound	95% Upper bound
<b>Group 1 (24%)</b>					
Number of offences 3 years prior	1.252	0.173	1.000	0.915	1.590
Number of offences 2 years prior	2.003	0.169	1.000	1.672	2.336
Number of offences 1 years prior	5.335	0.235	1.000	4.874	5.795
Number of offences 1 year post	0.310	0.166	1.000	-0.015	0.634
Number of offences 2 year post	1.504	0.160	1.001	1.188	1.813
Number of offences 3 year post	1.252	0.110	1.000	1.038	1.469
Number of offences 4 year post	1.240	0.145	1.000	0.953	1.523
Gravity score 3 years prior	1.647	0.105	1.000	1.441	1.852
Gravity score 2 years prior	2.662	0.102	1.000	2.462	2.862
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.720	0.048	1.000	5.624	5.815
Gravity score 1 year post	0.397	0.068	1.000	0.263	0.530
Gravity score 2 year post	2.025	0.082	1.000	1.864	2.186
Gravity score 3 year post	2.031	0.109	1.000	1.818	2.244
Gravity score 4 year post	1.867	0.112	1.000	1.647	2.086
<b>Group 2 (20%)</b>					
Number of offences 3 years prior	1.862	0.216	1.000	1.433	2.285
Number of offences 2 years prior	2.759	0.198	1.000	2.373	3.148
Number of offences 1 years prior	7.485	0.272	1.000	6.955	8.016
Number of offences 1 year post	3.625	0.197	1.000	3.240	4.011
Number of offences 2 year post	0.473	0.182	1.000	0.120	0.835
Number of offences 3 year post	1.152	0.140	1.003	0.888	1.439
Number of offences 4 year post	1.357	0.174	1.000	1.014	1.698
Gravity score 3 years prior	1.991	0.125	1.000	1.746	2.236
Gravity score 2 years prior	2.960	0.121	1.000	2.723	3.199
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.312	0.060	1.000	5.195	5.429
Gravity score 1 year post	4.757	0.075	1.000	4.609	4.905
Gravity score 2 year post	0.648	0.125	1.001	0.413	0.901
Gravity score 3 year post	1.846	0.140	1.001	1.571	2.117
Gravity score 4 year post	1.861	0.141	1.000	1.582	2.135

<b>Group 3 (48%)</b>					
Number of offences 3 years prior	2.062	0.127	1.000	1.813	2.311
Number of offences 2 years prior	3.301	0.122	1.000	3.060	3.542
Number of offences 1 years prior	8.655	0.174	1.002	8.306	8.993
Number of offences 1 year post	5.525	0.130	1.002	5.263	5.776
Number of offences 2 year post	4.478	0.195	1.014	3.751	4.737
Number of offences 3 year post	2.609	0.094	1.003	2.436	2.809
Number of offences 4 year post	2.591	0.109	1.000	2.379	2.806
Gravity score 3 years prior	2.144	0.075	1.000	1.996	2.290
Gravity score 2 years prior	3.366	0.072	1.000	3.225	3.507
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.197	0.036	1.001	5.127	5.267
Gravity score 1 year post	4.712	0.044	1.000	4.626	4.799
Gravity score 2 year post	4.617	0.061	1.000	4.496	4.735
Gravity score 3 year post	3.538	0.081	1.000	3.379	3.697
Gravity score 4 year post	3.201	0.083	1.000	3.041	3.364
<b>Group 4 (8%)</b>					
Number of offences 3 years prior	2.729	0.310	1.000	2.119	3.339
Number of offences 2 years prior	4.399	0.326	1.000	3.763	5.040
Number of offences 1 years prior	9.745	0.460	1.003	8.870	10.694
Number of offences 1 year post	7.576	0.324	1.000	6.944	8.216
Number of offences 2 year post	7.659	0.776	1.018	6.907	11.005
Number of offences 3 year post	10.722	0.716	1.019	7.563	11.330
Number of offences 4 year post	5.360	0.356	1.005	4.560	6.004
Gravity score 3 years prior	2.410	0.187	1.000	2.040	2.776
Gravity score 2 years prior	3.120	0.190	1.003	2.759	3.511
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.013	0.088	1.001	4.837	5.185
Gravity score 1 year post	4.321	0.111	1.001	4.100	4.535
Gravity score 2 year post	4.424	0.157	1.005	4.141	4.788
Gravity score 3 year post	4.663	0.199	1.003	4.241	5.037
Gravity score 4 year post	3.908	0.201	1.001	3.511	4.300

## Appendix E: Sample sizes of key variables – by domain.

Table: E.1 Sample sizes of key variables by domain.

	ISSP cases (n=1789)	Comparison cases (n=704)
<b><i>Individual characteristics</i></b>		
Mean age	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
Gender	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
Ethnicity	80% (n=1426)	86% (n=609)
Asset <sup>204</sup>	62% (n=1119)	85% (n=603)
<b><i>Offender typology characteristics</i></b>		
Eligibility route: (Persistent, serious or persistent & serious offender)	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
Age at first offence	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
<b><i>Criminal history</i></b>		
Data on the frequency of offending (7 years)	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
Data on the seriousness of offending (7 years)	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
Data on sentencing history (7 years)	100% (n=1789)	100% (n=704)
<b><i>Social characteristics</i></b> <sup>205</sup>		
IMD	57% (n=1021)	0

<sup>204</sup> There were 258 variables from Asset collected for this study. It is important to note that not all sections of the form are completed for all participants. For example, where a child is under school leaving age, details on their educational history are collected, while if they are over school leaving age data on training and employment is gathered instead. Similarly, if young people have no history of being involved in social work, this section may be recorded as 'not applicable'. Therefore sample sizes for individual questions often fluctuate. However, in the quantitative modelling, it is the 'total score' that is used and not markers from individual sub-sections.

<sup>205</sup> The main focus of Asset is on personal and familial characteristics. However, the final 'Total score' incorporates implicit measures of the social environment, such as neighbourhood resources; housing; racial and ethnic tensions and local education and training provision