Youth offending, youth transitions and recognition

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INTRODUCTION

Offending occurs most commonly in childhood and youth, making young people 'the hapless population' upon which much criminal enquiry (both academic and political) is focused (Brown, 2005, p. 29). The journey from youth to adulthood is neither simple nor prescribed. Young people, because of their age and status as 'youth', are very much left to their own devices in making that journey into adulthood. In so doing, they tend to adopt diverse pathways which often, inadvertently or otherwise, bring them to the door of the youth and/or criminal justice systems. However, despite the power imbalances in 'youth' creating a liminal phase between the protection of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood, young people's behaviour is often seen as abnormal, rebellious or pathological rather than a manifestation of powerlessness in transition. This chapter explores the views and experiences of young people about offending, what prompts it, what encourages it, why and how it ceases, and how desistance (namely, the process of giving up crime) can be sustained. It illustrates the potentially zig zag paths of young offenders in the transition to adulthood, examines the impact of opportunities and barriers on these young people as they move into adulthood, and explores their views on how best to develop effective criminal justice policy and practice for a population which is transient yet marginalised.

The impact of social inequalities and social institutions in determining or undermining youth transitions and conventionality is becoming increasingly apparent. Nevertheless, the majority of young people still aspire towards mainstream goals in their journey towards adulthood (MacDonald 1997; Williamson 1997; Wyn & White 1997). The means through which those aspirations are achieved, however, is a moot point. Because of structural constraints in that journey, notably in relation to their limited status as young adults as well as their limited opportunities for further education and employment, many - notably the more disadvantaged - are effectively excluded from mainstream society and may resort/revert to illegal or devious means of gaining a foothold in society (Merton, 1957) and of gaining social, economic and symbolic capital (Barry, 2006; Bourdieu, 1987). It is on this group of more disadvantaged and

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marginalised young people that this chapter will focus. It will describe recent developments in theoretical and empirical research into youth transitions and desistance, before exploring the views and experiences of young people themselves who have become involved in the criminal justice system in Scotland. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the potential importance of the concept of recognition in reducing the need for offending in youth by offering greater opportunities for integration and a sense of purpose in young adulthood.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS

Traditionally, transitions research has portrayed a linear, psychosocial movement towards conventional goals, namely through the transition from school to work, the transition from family of origin to family of destination; and the transition from living at home to living independently (Coles, 1995). Anthropologists examining the experiences of adolescents in small-scale societies found a further transition, or 'rite of passage' through which young people progress in preparation for adulthood. Whilst the term 'youth' was not seen as a middle phase between childhood and adulthood in such anthropological studies, Van Gennep (1960, cited in Turner, 1967) nevertheless identified three elements in the transition from childhood to adulthood in terms of 'rites of passage', namely:
1. separation - the detachment of the individual from an earlier fixed point in the social structure;
2. margin - a liminal period when there are few commonalities with the past or coming state; and
3. aggregation - the individual has clearly defined rights and obligations vis-à-vis others.

Turner (1969) describes individuals within the 'margin' or 'liminal' phase as: 'persons or principles that (1) fall in the interstices of social structure, (2) are on its margins, or (3) occupy its lowest rungs' (Turner, 1969, p. 125). The elements of transition described by Turner, van Gennep and Coles, amongst others, are predominantly structurally defined and linear, but Stephen and Squires (2003), for example, argue that young people's transitions in late modernity are neither predictable nor linear but are fragmented, cyclical and thus prolonged. Whilst there are 'rites of passage' in some countries which give greater meaning and enhanced status to young people in transition, there are also '*rights* of passage' which can increasingly be extended, undermined and even withheld from young people, contingent on factors such as behaviour, circumstances and risk profile (Nugent, 2014), factors relating to both agency and structure.

THE AGENCY VERSUS STRUCTURE DEBATE IN CRIMINOLOGY

As part of a 'risk society' (Beck, 1992), young people are increasingly expected to define, negotiate and make sense of their own transitions, albeit within the confines of structural constraints. Many accounts of young people's experience of youth transitions suggest that their

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narratives and transitional experiences are guided as much by personal agency and responsibility as by structural factors (see, *inter alia,* Barry, 2001, 2006; Holland et al., 2007; Nugent, 2014, for a critique), not least because of Beck's notion of risk, which dictates that people resolve their own personal problems, overcome structural constraints and 'individualize' their own life projects (Cote, 2002). Whilst the concept of individualization incorporates both structure and agency, the individual is nevertheless at the centre (albeit structurally defined), and factors such as class, gender and social networks are peripheral.

Furlong and Cartmel (1997, p. 114), however, warn against an over-emphasis on individualization at the expense of social and structural change, suggesting that it would be an 'epistemological fallacy' to focus on individual responsibility and self-determination without taking into account the powerful impact of existing social structures. Likewise, Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) argue that post-subcultural studies epitomise the move within a postmodern theoretical environment from an interest in social inequalities and towards an over-emphasis on individualistic solutions. Nevertheless, as long as young people experience 'ageism' – socially, legally and economically – within society, they will continue to have a low status as 'liminal beings' (Turner, 1967), however much they determine their own transitional pathways.

I would argue that not only has structure been misconstrued in criminological circles but so too has agency. The latter tends to refer to the agency of individual offenders and not, as I would argue it should, to the agency of the state, its politicians, policy makers and citizens more generally. Young people exercise agency in a constrained environment, constrained partly by their liminal status in youth and partly by wider structural (i.e., political) constraints, and this results in agency being 'inner directed' – young people blaming themselves for their own predicament – and is manifest in feelings of resignation. Any current agency exercised by the state (e.g., through its youth and criminal justice policies and practices) is 'other directed' – also blaming offenders for their own predicament – and is manifest in battening down the hatches to maintain the status quo. Thus, there is no change on either side and no change to structure which likewise remains static - external to and seemingly beyond the control of both the individual and the state. Contemporary criminologists have thus reached an impasse in trying to combine structure and agency in their current formulation, which has implications for the development of a desistance paradigm (McNeill, 2006).

DESISTANCE IN TRANSITION

When one explores the literature on desistance, the dichotomy between agency and structure still remains. Young people are, on the one hand, seen to grow out of crime (Rutherford, 1986); are deterred by the criminal justice system and thus weigh up the costs and benefits of continuing (Cornish & Clark, 1986); or attempt over time to adopt pro-social attitudes or identities (Farrall, 2002; Giordano et al, 2002; Maruna, 2001). However, on the other hand, would-be desisters are also influenced by the nature and quality of their social bonds, their

access to employment, and the impact of 'turning points' on their lifestyle choices (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Shover, 1996).

In addition, much of the desistance literature conceptualises subjective change (agency) somewhat incongruously as the *precursor* to structural change (for a critique see, for example, Barry, 2012; Bottoms & Shapland, 2011; Le Bel et al*.,* 2008). Rose (2000) suggests that crime control policy requires individual offenders to take responsibility for being prudent and calculating and to provide for their own security - but in a pro-social (law-abiding) manner rather than an anti-social (offending) manner. For those who fail to take responsibility for their own future, criminal justice policy will take on that responsibility for them and 'act upon pathologies through managing… circuits of exclusion' (Rose, 2000, p. 324). The so-called 'responsibilisation' thesis in criminology - seeking to place sole responsibility on young offenders for their behaviour, on the assumption that crime is 'rational' - is symptomatic of late modern neoliberal youth and criminal justice policy (Barry, 2012; Gray, 2005), and it perhaps conveniently hides wider social problems that may be too costly or radical to address.

Thus, theories of desistance tend to put the offender at the heart of the problem *and* the solution by assuming that these individuals have the wherewithal to obtain for themselves traits such as the hope, motivation and commitment required to adopt a law-abiding lifestyle (Giordano et al, 2002; LeBel et al., 2008), what I have referred to elsewhere as 'the individualisation of desistance' (Barry, 2012). High levels of motivation, hope, resilience and self-belief are assumed by many desistance theories as the decisive factor in stopping offending, factors which are subjective, coming from 'within', placing the onus squarely on offenders to get themselves out of the metaphorical hole in which they find themselves (Healy, 2010; LeBel et al, 2008; Maruna, 2001; Morizot & Le Blanc, 2007; Vaughan, 2007). Yet, hope and motivation cannot be created in a vacuum, divorced from external events, since such extraneous events are needed to both encourage hope and sustain motivation. Likewise, cognitive processes and social bonds cannot operate in a vacuum, divorced from the everyday (and historical) reality of politics, policy making, power relations and market forces. Motivation and hope are as much structurally bound as employment and stability are individually chosen. Yet, the prevalence of external barriers to crime-free lives, and the manifest failings and inadequacies of contemporary society to offer an alternative to offending behaviour for these young people, are invariably obscured in theoretical accounts as much as in policy analyses (see, for example, Burnett, 2004; Maruna, 2001, for an overview).

Nugent and Barnes (2013, p. 22) argue on behalf of young people that by focusing on the individual offender, 'the questions that should be asked of society can remain unanswered' and that desistance research should not encourage us to become 'complacent in accepting that just helping young people to stop offending is good enough'. What is missing both from offenders' lives and from the desistance literature is the ingredient of 'exchange' or 'reciprocity' in people's interactions with each other. As Weaver (2016, p. 244) points out: 'reciprocity is central to...

social relations… [and] can be conceptualised as the expression of fraternity which forms a strong social bond'.

The word 'desistance' itself is also misleading and subject to increasing criticism. Canton (2012, p. 589) queries the relevance of the word 'desistance', highlights the misguided emphasis on criminogenic need and risk factors, and suggests that current criminal justice policies and practices fail to 'transcend' the focus on past behaviour:

> In a sense there is no such 'thing' as desistance – which is an absence (i.e. of offending), not in itself a state of being or doing. Desistance is not something that can be pursued as a direct objective, but *something that is accomplished in the course of living a life of a certain kind* (emphasis added).

Weaver (2013) likewise stresses the importance of transcending narrow definitions of desistance:

> Desistance [is] a means to realising and maintaining… individual and relational concerns, with which continued offending became (sometimes incrementally) incompatible… desistance can be supported through means and processes that enable the (re)connection of the individual to social networks that are restorative and allow people to fulfil their reciprocal obligations (ibid, p. 14).

The following findings from the Scottish Desistance Study highlight the emphasis often placed – but rarely evidenced - on this '(re)connection of the individual to social networks' in a restorative and reciprocal way.

THE SCOTTISH DESISTANCE STUDY

The Scottish Desistance Study involved face to face interviews with 40 young people about offending: what prompts it, what encourages it, why and how it stops, and how desistance can be sustained. It also examines the potential impact of opportunities and barriers as these young people move into adulthood and explores how best to develop effective criminal justice policy and practice as a result of their experiences.

The research was conducted over a ten year period, in two sweeps. In 2000/1, I interviewed 40 young people, 20 men and 20 women, aged 18-33 who had been on intensive probation in the past. Ten years later, with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant Ref: RES-061-25-0408), I was able to trace and re-interview 20 of them - 11 men and 9 women, now aged 29-43. In addition, I interviewed a further 20 more recent clients of intensive probation, aged 21-33. This age span, and with the ten year gap between first and second interviews with 20 of the original respondents, enabled me to study changes over time in the crucial phase of youth and in preparation for adulthood.

The original sample from 2000/01 had an average of 35 previous convictions and their offending histories had lasted on average 13 years to date. The new sample from 2010/11 had an average of 30 previous convictions and their offending histories had lasted on average 7 years to date. Both samples were primarily involved in the typical street crimes commonly associated with disadvantaged and disaffected adolescents and young adults, namely, theft, assault and drug-related violence.

In 2000/01, there were 14 self-reported *desisters* but not all of them were successful in sustaining that desistance. In the intervening 10 years, 8 of these people went back to offending and 6 of these had since stopped before the second interview in 2010. So, 2 of the self-reported desisters from 10 years ago had started again and were still offending ten years later. In 2000/01, there were 6 self-reported *persisters*. Ten years later, 3 of them were still offending and the other 3 had said they had stopped. The obstacles to them stopping offending included not having their own home, the influence of peers or substance misuse or addiction, not wanting to lose the money they got from offending and not being able to get a clean slate because of their criminal record. To these respondents, such obstacles are structural in nature, obstacles that they are probably incapable of overcoming on their own. Homelessness, substance misuse, poverty and a criminal record are *real* (structural) obstacles to them, totally beyond their capacity to change, irrespective of their motivation to do so.

Reasons for starting offending

Before looking at why most of these young people said they stopped offending, it helps to know roughly why they started. Most of the sample said that drink and drugs, peer pressure, boredom, to gain attention from family and friends, and money were all influences in them starting offending. The men suggested peer pressure and boredom as major factors but for the women, it was more to gain attention. These reasons for starting are very much to do with wanting to belong, to be needed, to be liked. For example, getting drunk, experimenting with drugs and wanting designer clothes – most of which offences were conducted with their peers - are ways for young people to gain an identity, to belong, to fit in. Getting attention from family or friends, having street credibility or kudos, and going along with the crowd are also ways of belonging. But there were other factors mentioned in starting offending which were more to do with *escaping* reality rather than wanting to fit into reality. Drugs and drink also could be put into this category, as could rebelling against abuse or neglect as a child, and going off the rails following a traumatic event, such as a death in the family. The women were more likely than the men to cite justifications for offending based on escapism.

Reasons for stopping offending

Given that many offenders gain nothing from *not* offending – in other words, there is no incentive to be law abiding at that young age - it is remarkable that they stop offending at all.

One of the respondents from the original sample elaborated on this when I asked him what the advantages were of **not** offending:

> Advantages' makes it sound like you get something for not offending. Life is life… You can only lose your life if you offend, you don't gain anything from *not* offending, if you know what I mean… You can gain stuff from offending but if you don't offend, what do you actually gain? (Pete, 29, 2010/11).

Indeed, given that they gain little from *not* offending, why do they still stop? They give up the profits from theft, they give up drugs without medical help, they stay indoors rather than going out and possibly getting into trouble, and they start paying for essential items with their limited state benefits rather than stealing them:

> [When I was offending] I had as much clothes as I wanted… and the good make-up, everything. I'm having to buy it now… like paying £10 for mascara, which I think is ridiculous… and I actually bought a foundation that was £7. I cringed and I was looking at it and thinking 'I could just lift that in my bag' but I thought 'no'. I bought it, paid for it, and that was it. It's horrible paying for toothpaste and shite (Helen, 20, 2000/01).
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> I actually grudged like honest money, you know, and that was one of the reasons I stole, you know, so that my money was going on stuff that I thought was worth it, which was drink or drugs. And so if I was buying food, you know, I grudged it, I would be really buying the cheapest stuff and minimal stuff as well (Eilidh, 26, 2010/11).

By far the most common reason for giving up was because of commitments – or possibly more likely with the men, potential commitments – to their children or their parents, and the second most common reason – from the younger, newer sample respondents at least, who had had more recent social work supervision[2] - was because of the support they were getting from being supervised by criminal justice social workers. However, the older respondents associated stopping offending more with controlled drug use, which had become more of a problem as they got older.

Other reasons for giving up were more about hope than reality – they *wanted* more in life, they needed to 'grow up', and they feared ill health or a prison sentence if they did not. Wanting a job was only mentioned by one young man, perhaps sadly because many in the sample felt it inevitable that with a criminal record, they were highly unlikely to be offered a job.

Goals and aspirations

The future goals of the respondents in this sample were elicited in both 2000/01 and in 2010/11. In 2000/01, the men's most common goals were to find a job, a house and a partner, and to

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[2] Depending on the age of the individual, offenders in the community in Scotland are managed by youth justice (up to the age of 16) or criminal justice social workers (aged 16 and over). They are trained social workers but have additional youth/criminal justice training.

have children. Ten years later, those goals remained almost identical, suggesting that little had been achieved in the intervening 10 years. However, there was a greater emphasis on these goals in 2010/11 - or perhaps a greater urgency to achieve them as soon as possible, given their age now. For the women, their most common goals in 2000/01 were to find a job and a house, to gain qualifications, and to either have children or gain custody of their children following one or more of their children being taken into care previously because of the mother's drug misuse or offending behaviour. Ten years later, a job and a house were less important, partly because many of the women had children by then and therefore could not work, and those already with children were more likely to have their own tenancy. Some were still trying to get custody of their children, however. Finally for the women, stabilising drugs and in particular coming off methadone became a goal in 2010/11, which it was not in 2000/01.

Interestingly, there seemed little difference in goals and obstacles for the desisters compared with the persisters ten years on. Whether or not they had stopped offending, or perceived themselves to have stopped offending, they still had similar goals and similar barriers to achieving them. But many still gave up offending *in anticipation of* a better life, whether or not it actually materialised. This relates back to our brief discussion of hope just now, which may encourage desistance in preparation for adulthood and mainstream integration. However, how sustainable is hope when one has no income, no job and no constructive purpose in mainstream society? And as the following graphs illustrate, offending behaviour is difficult to shake off in this prolonged period of powerlessness and marginalisation in youth.

The age-crime curve

As depicted in Figure 1, the sample's self-reported age-crime curve shows a prolonged and uncertain pathway towards desistance, not the typical age-crime curve which peaks at 16, drops off sharply in the early-twenties, and usually ends by the late-twenties. It is a longer, more 'zig-zag' path to desistance than it used to be and drug/alcohol misuse and unemployment are undoubtedly significant factors now in this prolonged transition. Desisters seemed less prolific in their offending in youth but nevertheless followed a remarkably similar path to that of the persisters.

Likewise, when we look at the age-crime curve by official reconviction data for this sample, as depicted in Figure 2, the paths of persisters and desisters are very similar with only a range of some 2-4 convictions per year in the late teens and early twenties (except for persisters at the age of 17). Many described themselves at interview rather prematurely as 'desisters' when in fact they were obviously only reducing their offending over time. What made them think they were desisters was, in my view, *hope* rather than any concrete evidence of a change in direction. And concrete evidence, to me, would be opportunities for *genuine* integration into mainstream society, in other words, what many in the sample called 'normality'.

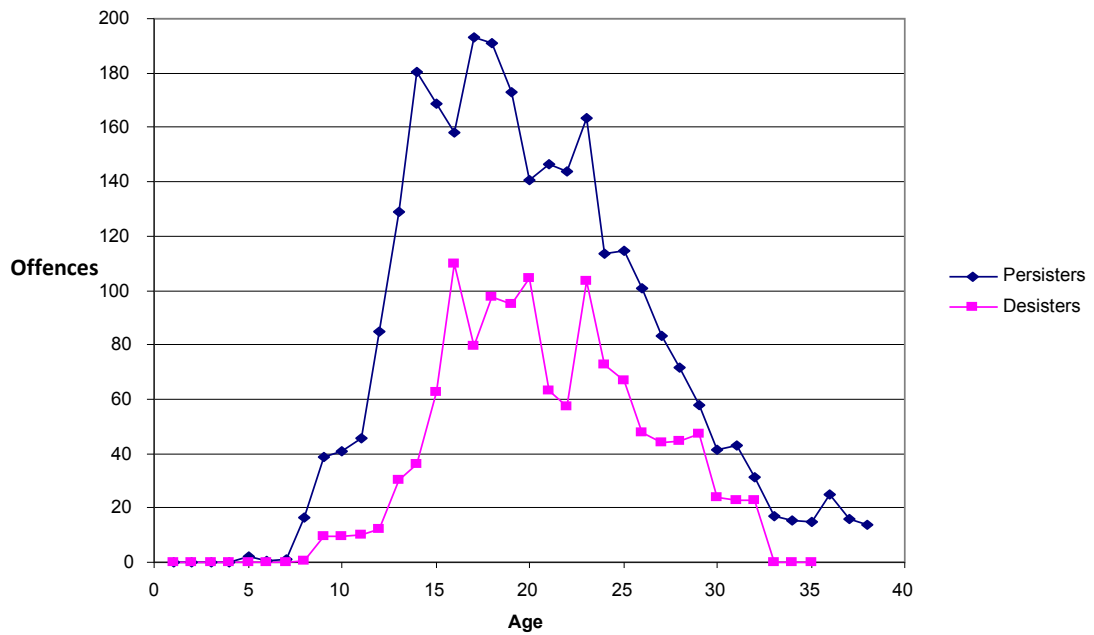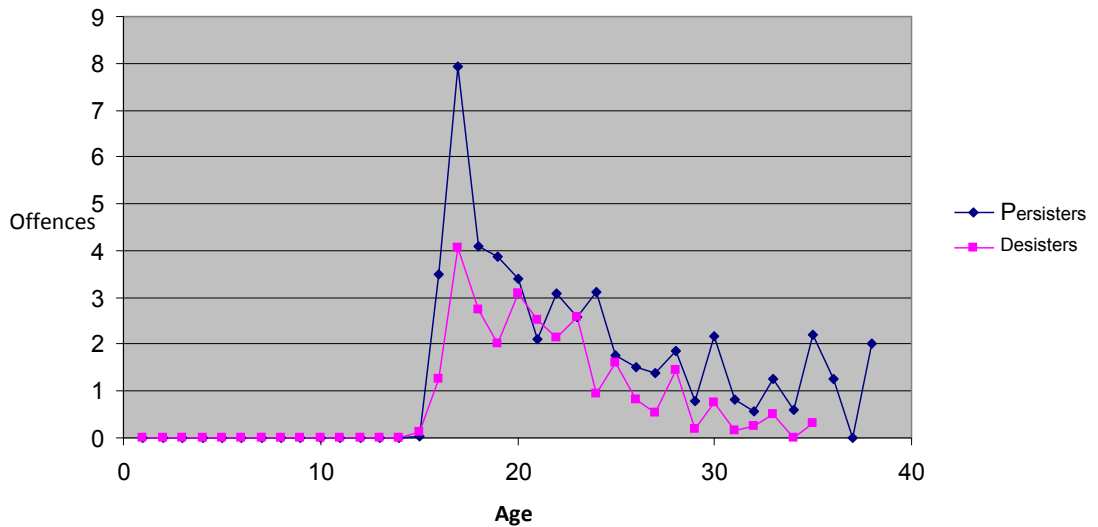Figure 1 - Self-reported offending - persisters and desisters

Figure 2 - Reconviction data – persisters and desisters

If agency is given as much if not more emphasis than structure in contemporary concepts of transition in a 'risk society', then it would seem sensible to assume that the timing of such transitions would vary greatly between individuals, depending on their agency, or capacity, to progress their own life projects within their own specific milieu. However, there tends to be continuity in the overall timing of transitions and desistance, not least as reflected by the age-crime curve depicted above where offending could be seen to increase and decrease over time

in line with young people's wider access to power and social status. This general continuity between age and offending, something that Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) described as invariant across time and place, suggests, therefore, that structural factors are more constraining (a greater threat to desistance) than individual factors are enabling (having the choice to desist from crime).

The hope of normality

There has been a widening of the age-crime curve in recent years, similar to the ones depicted above, where the transition to adulthood, normality and desistance has been extended and delayed for many young people. Hope of normality and conventionality is a common aspiration amongst young people in transition (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011) but there are increasingly few if any opportunities for such normality and conventionality for disadvantaged people with criminal records. However, hope does suggest that normality is within reach, and this may prompt a decision from a young person to desist from crime *in anticipation of* that normality. And, just as hope in a God or an after-life is something that an individual can generate from within, without any external rationale for that belief, so too hope in desistance and normality is something that an individual can generate from within, without any external rationale for that belief.

Hope relates to one's confidence in achieving personal goals: 'the desire for a particular outcome and also the perceived ability and means of achieving the outcome' (LeBel et al, 2008, p. 136). In other words, hope is generated and sustained from within, not from external opportunities, although it might be encouraged and fuelled by such opportunities. Maruna (2001) suggests that long-term persistent offenders have less hope and are more fatalistic – 'doomed to deviance'. But is this because of inherent traits of despair or because of external barriers preventing them from having the opportunities for a normal life? I suspect the latter, but exploring offenders' and desisters' goals will be illustrative of whether hope is a bad dream or the beginning of a normal life. Certainly, this sample's goals from 2000/01 remained stubbornly persistent in the intervening ten years, suggesting little progress in the transition to adulthood afforded them by societal opportunities.

Young people's views on promoting desistance

The respondents were asked two questions aimed at informing policy and practice in the criminal justice field: how they thought agencies could help young people to stop offending, and how they themselves would help young people to stop offending. The main way that these young people suggested offending could be reduced was by telling offenders about their own experiences of offending and the consequences of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. These respondents had a wealth of experiences – almost always bad ones – that they thought might deter others from getting deeper into trouble. Their valuable experiences were also the basis for the suggestion by some respondents that ex-offenders should become workers

or mentors as they are better placed to 'tell it like it is', compared with professional workers who often are perceived to know little or nothing about life other than through textbooks:

> [You need to have] somebody there that's done it. That's what's wrong with care, a lot of the people that are care workers, and that, are all folk who've been brought up in a good home, they've been going to a good school, they've had everything paid for until they're 16 and they've gone out and got work straight away, and they've got their life sorted. They don't understand what it's like to be unemployed, to be on the dole, to be in jail or care or anywhere like that, you know. And folk who understand it can sit there and say to the kids, now look I've been there, I've done exactly what you're doing and this is the way it will end up (Pete, 19, 2000/01).

> You know what? I would like to be a worker that goes… round and tells people, look this is how it is, you know, like real life, not text book junkies, do you know what I mean, that have just read the book and they tell you that you're not rattling, but you're physically strung out to fuck. And they're saying: 'no you're fine'. No, I'm not, you know, I'm pure dying, my legs are fucking aching. 'No, you're fine'! (Emma, 26, 2010/11).

In terms of both *preventing* and *reducing* youth crime, the second most commonly cited intervention was to offer young people better, more affordable leisure activities. Boredom and a lack of constructive alternatives to offending were of obvious concern to these young people. Even though not all the respondents started offending because of boredom, the majority still felt that giving young people more leisure and youth activities in their own communities was an important way of stopping offending:

> Maybe have more, you know, things for kids and that to do. Like up here, there's nothing really, not even a youth club or anything that I know. There's not. Just nothing at all. So kids here just go down the town, you know, at weekends and drink bottles of cider and get themselves in trouble. Whereas I think if they had, you know, somewhere to go at weekends, and things to do, I think they wouldn't go out and get in trouble so much (Fiona, 30, 2010/11).

> I think it has to go back further than the offending. I think it has to be – there has to be stuff put in before people get to the stage where they're offending. Like youth groups, all these kind of things seem to be dwindling away and I know a lot of it is about money but I think there has to be more options for young people, more activity-based stuff that doesn't cost a lot of money. Like cadets and dancing and things, these kind of things. But I think if you can get young people… attending different things like that, there'll be less risk, less risk of hanging about the streets (Theresa, 43, 2010/11).

Thirdly, offenders always mention the need for workers to talk to and listen to them; it is an obvious form of respect and concern that is so important to young people in trouble. Even if social workers do not have first-hand experience, many thought that social workers needed to

be more committed to helping young people, with more time to talk and listen to them, and with less of a turnover of staff:

> I think there should be more – what's the word – like more interaction, more – well, you go in and they must think: 'I've got 10 people to see today', so they just rattle through it… and they're like that [*mimics looking at watch*]: 'oh, I've got another person coming in at half 3'. There should be more – they should look more into what you're all about because like some people say to me, you have to open up. No, I don't have to open up. If I want to, I will. I've opened up to that many workers in my life, I can't be bothered meeting a new one to tell them my life story again… and they wonder how you take drugs!!! Know what I mean? They should have like one worker that gets to know you and you can work with them and you can tell them things. But if you're getting passed from pillar to post. I'm not *wanting* to tell the [entire] social work department my life story (Emma, 26, 2010/11).

Drug or alcohol information and advice was also recommended, but primarily by the original sample who were interviewed again 10 years later. With the benefit of hindsight, they strongly suggested more drug and alcohol input to educate and deter young people from getting into drugs. Drugs were not usually an issue when young people started offending, but experimenting with drugs can rapidly become an addiction during the course of an offending career and can thus delay the road to desistance. One respondent suggested that not only can it take more than 9 months to get onto a methadone programme, but also it is not easy to persuade GPs and pharmacists that young people might want to come off methadone sooner rather than later:

> If they're going to put them down the line of Methadone and things like that, let them know the pros and the cons, not just that it'll help you and you'll get better! They should tell you too: 'oh, you might be on this stuff when you're going to your grave'. Do you know what I mean? They don't let you know the pros and the cons, they just tell you the good bits of it. Well, that's all I got told anyway, as far back as I can remember. I didn't think I'd still be sitting here today on Methadone. Do you know what I mean? (Marie, 21, 2000/01).

And regrettably, Marie was *still* on methadone 10 years later, when she was interviewed in 2010/11.

Another factor was to reduce unemployment as well as homelessness and poverty, but these structural problems were mentioned primarily by the original sample when they were interviewed 10 years later. The new sample and the original sample interviewed in 2000/01 were younger people, arguably less concerned with the politics of unemployment and homelessness – and arguably more influenced by the rhetoric of agency versus structure.

Prevention through early intervention in children's lives, where offending was still only a possibility rather than an actuality, was also seen as important, including giving talks in schools (possibly using ex-offenders as peer educators). However, whilst early intervention in terms of education and advice was mentioned, several suggested that early introduction to the criminal

justice system was inadvisable for young people, because of the likelihood of offending behaviour escalating as a result.

> Stop jailing them and stop putting them in homes and messing with their heads when they're young… Instead of jailing them and damaging them in that way… nurture them properly (Nick, 38, 2010/11).

Finally, whilst a lot of people suggested ways that policy makers and practitioners could help young people stop offending, they often qualified that by saying that the young person had to want to stop.

> You've got to want to do it deep down in yourself. Like you see a lot of young boys now getting into trouble and that, they don't care – especially when you're younger. You don't care, I think, until you have your own kids. But even then, I've seen ones that have got their own kids and they're *still* getting into trouble. It's gotta be the person themselves – I don't think there's anything that people can do unless the person wants help and gets the help (Harry, 36, 2010/11).

RECOGNITION THEORY WITHIN A CRIMINOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Wanting the help, as Harry says, is illustrated by hope. Getting the help is a different matter altogether. The concept of recognition in social philosophy refers to the need for mutual acknowledgement and the resultant struggle for identity and diversity. From a criminological perspective, I would argue that recognition is:

> … the giving and receiving of acknowledgement, encouragement and affirmation to promote social identity and respect. The concept, as used here, has two strands… as an *investment* in others… the provision of opportunities which enable young people to become contributing members of mainstream society… In return for love from significant others and opportunities from the state, young people may invest their confidence, skills, and commitment to a law abiding lifestyle, by supporting others through generativity, sustained employment and parenthood. Recognition can also be seen as a *reward* encompassing love, respect and esteem and ascribing to individuals and groups '*positive* status' (Anderson, 1995, viii, emphasis in original) (Barry, 2016).

Honneth (1995) associates recognition with reciprocal relationships based on respect, which for him form the sole basis for social justice. Fraser (2003), however, disagrees that recognition is all that is required for social justice. She argues that redistribution is also a crucial ingredient of social justice, without which people experience status subordination (misrecognition) and class subordination (maldistribution). She refers particularly to issues of race and gender but I would argue that young people also experience cultural and socio-economic subordination because of their age and liminal status in the transition to adulthood. Few critical theorists focusing on recognition attend to the needs of young people who lack status and rights in transition, although Laitinen (2003) suggests that *potential* personhood becomes *actual* only when it is

recognised by others. Young people, however, could be argued, as liminal beings, to be 'potential' rather than 'actual' persons, in need of recognition, not just from their peers, their families and their local communities, but also from the state – namely, policy makers and practitioners who make decisions about their lives and wellbeing as emerging adults.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF RECOGNITION IN YOUTH

The Scottish Desistance Study illustrates how offending can bring recognition from peers in childhood, how the criminal justice system can create further misrecognition in youth (for example, through having a criminal record), and how integration in adulthood can bring recognition from the wider society – this latter recognition is the normality that these young people strive towards.

Disadvantaged young people have limited power and influence to gain their kind of 'normality' - the responsibilities and achievements associated with mainstream recognition. They have neither the resources nor the opportunities for integration, demonstrating the importance of redistribution. Disadvantage and discrimination of young people exacerbates their liminal status, not least when disadvantage is seen, not only by young people themselves but also by the state, as an individual rather than a structural deficit. In this regard, policies to reduce social exclusion are merely cosmetic, akin to what Fraser (2003) would describe as affirmative politics (insisting that socially excluded groups should be fitted into the status quo) rather than transformative politics (eliminating the underlying structural causes of injustice).

For young people in particular, affirmative remedies would be employability programmes, cognitive behavioural therapy, or targeted access to minimal benefits. Transformative remedies would restructure benefits to make them accessible to *all*, overhaul employment legislation to ensure equal access to employment for all young people, and equalize access to and responses by justice agencies, irrespective of age and status.

Young people have as much right to recognition and redistributive justice as other minority groups, but the state needs to adopt transformative rather than affirmative policies to ensure young people's meaningful integration into mainstream society. As Taylor (1992) said in respect of recognition, it is 'a vital human need' and as Gillian (aged 29) said at interview: 'Put faith in me. Give me another chance. Trust me'. Only when we put trust in our young people and give them the mutual respect and recognition that they strive for, will we as a society be able to promote social justice rather than merely resort to criminal justice.

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