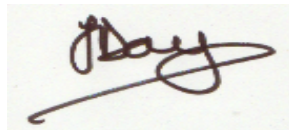


**Transforming criminal lives:
A narrative study of selves, bodies and physical activity**

Submitted by Joanne Kate Day to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Sport and Health Sciences in July 2012.

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Day', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

(Signature)

ABSTRACT

Over the past thirty years attention has turned to how people leave a criminal lifestyle and develop an adaptive identity. Within the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales there exist physical activity interventions designed to give people an opportunity to improve their health and facilitate rehabilitation. A review of the literature indicated benefits to developing further understanding of the role of identity (re)construction, embodiment and physical activity in supporting adult desistance from crime. A narrative approach was adopted to explore the embodied, lived experience of people with criminal convictions and life transformation. Approval was gained to access prisons and probation units in England and Wales. Through purposeful sampling, life history interviews were conducted with 16 adults, 13 males and 3 females, with criminal convictions to explore their experience of change. Six people were successfully desisting from a criminal lifestyle, eight were trying to desist, and two were still involved in crime. 14 semi-structured interviews were also conducted with Criminal Justice staff. A narrative analysis was undertaken to explore the personal and public stories. Firstly, exploring the *whats* (what does the story tell us? Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 2008) and, secondly, the *hows* (what do the stories do? Frank, 2010). From this analysis and interpretation six aspects of transforming criminal lives were identified and explored: embodied transformation, physical activity, spirituality, age and wisdom, claiming an adaptive identity, and maintaining change. These are represented in the thesis through modified realist tales, creative non-fictions and confessional tales to illustrate their role in the process of desistance from crime. Through the analysis, a six-domain 'web' model is proposed as one possible way to conceptualise the active, interdependent and ongoing nature of participants' journeys in transforming their lives. Finally, implications of the study are reflected upon in relation to theory, practice and future research.

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CONFERENCE THESIS-RELATED PRESENTATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Autobiographical positioning

Starting this study I am a White British, able-bodied 35-year-old female with no criminal record. I have never been arrested and I don't have any addictions. I have been stopped by the police only for them to tell me that a light is out on my car. I didn't have an easy upbringing. Looking back I can see how I could've taken a different path in life, one that went against 'conventional' expectations. I enjoy sport and being physically active, especially playing hockey, and the challenge of learning. Both have played a protective role throughout my life. My partner, family and friends are also very important. I'm a Registered and Chartered Forensic Psychologist and I've spent most of my working life employed by HM Prison Service in England and Wales. My role involved assisting people convicted of crimes to not reoffend and assess risk of recidivism. I came across many 'failure stories', people who'd reoffended. When I began this study in October 2008 I didn't know one person I could quote as a 'success story', someone who'd left prison and stopped committing crime. What follows are two short scenes to share the seeds of how I came to this study.

It's the start of this millennium and I am on the first floor of a prison wing sitting in a large, sparse room that doubles as a psychotherapy group room and leisure space for members of an adult male prison-based therapeutic community. Ten chairs are pulled into a circle in the furthest corner. The door at the end leads to the prison landing, the cells and metal stairs down to the ground floor. I look around at the eight men I have been working with. As their group facilitator, and the wing psychologist, I have heard each person's life story as part of the small-group analytic process. I briefly look out the window with its narrow view to the grey brick of another prison wing, beyond lies a patch of grass and then the prison wall. I wonder what has happened to the previous members of this community and those I have worked with on this group. Are they living well or struggling? What helped them to make it?

I recall Si, a community member who died from a drug overdose shortly after being released from prison. I didn't know him that well but one interaction with him stands out. It's our annual community sports day. I really enjoy this day. It's about being active; taking part in a range of sporting activities organised and led by members of the community rather than staff. It's a very different setting. We're in the small sports hall playing a game of mini hockey. I see the ball and as I lunge so does Si and we collide. I just about remain standing and he falls to the floor, physically unhurt, but his glasses have broken. I help him up apologetically and he shows no anger or annoyance. Later I see him in the wing office and check he's okay. He's fine but a plaster now reconnects his broken glasses. I still regret that I don't know if I ensured his glasses were mended. Another member of the community, Dan, enters the office and tells me I have 'anger management issues' in how I play hockey. I disagree with him. I can't recall if Si got his glasses mended before he was released. Were they still broken when he overdosed and died? I've heard many stories of people leaving prison and returning on new sentences. Or they're dead. That's how the prison grapevine worked. I don't recall stories of those who made it. Only that they're not back in prison.

I started this study in a place of familiarity with people's deficits in life. Where they'd 'gone wrong' and where they may go 'criminally wrong' again the future. Alongside this, I've held a belief in people's capability to change. A hope of better, more fulfilling lives, ones that didn't result in harm and destruction. Over time I'd developed a level of cynicism at how hard, if not impossible, this may be for some people. Many stories circulated in 'the system' of who was back, rarely of people who were 'making it'. In 1999, Devlin & Turney published accounts of people who had succeeded in moving away from criminal activity. This was based on the comment that not much was heard about people who've 'gone straight'. I believe this is still the case today.

This charts the start of my thoughts about two related areas. Firstly, how do people transform their lives after spending time in prison? I know how hard some transitions in my life have been. I overcame some difficult circumstances but I haven't experienced institutionalisation personally. Secondly, how does physical activity assist in this process of life transformation? I have generally found it beneficial in my life yet I know it isn't a positive experience for everyone. I can still remember my disappointment when I was picked last for a team game at school and, at age 18, failing to be selected to play hockey at county level.

1.2 Context

I turn now to the broader context in which this study is situated based on my interests.

Transforming criminal lives

Criminal Justice sentences do not present as overly successful in enabling people to turn away from crime. Shepherd & Whiting (2006) analysed the reoffending rates of adults released from prison or commenced a community penalty in the first quarter of 2003 in England and Wales. The reoffending rate, based on convictions in court within two years, was 57.6% (58.8% for men; 49.8% for women). They noted clear differences in relation to age; people aged 18 to 20 years were more likely to offend than those over the age of 40 (see also May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). Ward & Laws (2010) highlight the wide spread belief by the public, and by some professionals, that people living a criminal lifestyle are 'incurable' and 'incorrigible'. This is in contradiction to one of the most robust and stable empirical findings for nearly 200 years within criminology. That is, most people stop committing serious criminal activity. This also remains one of the least understood observations (Moffitt, 1993). Research attention within criminology has historically focused on why people commit crime, become 'offenders' and the

identification of 'risk factors' for recidivism. Under explored, in comparison, is the phenomenon of personal behaviour change and ongoing transformation processes that lead people from persistent criminal activity to pro-social lives and identities.

The role of physical activity

The benefits of sport and physical activity have historically, and currently, been emphasised by Government policy in the UK (e.g. DCMS, 1999; DCMS & Home Office, 2006; DCMS & Strategy Unit of the Cabinet Office, 2002.) Sport, especially for young at-risk people, has been considered crucial in helping to foster a sense of value to society and tackle crime (Crabbe, 2000). This is complemented by a number of high profile sports personalities sharing their story of how sport played a role in enabling them to avoid, or leave, a criminal lifestyle or drug addiction. Simultaneously, evidence for this beneficial role had been clouded by value judgments with 'sports evangelists' on the one hand versus critics on the other who believe it rewards criminal behaviour.

Within the criminal justice system, the Social Exclusion report (2002, p. 6), drawing from social and criminological research, identified nine factors associated with reoffending: education; employment; drug and alcohol misuse; mental and physical health; attitudes and self-control; institutionalisation and life-skills; housing; financial support and debt; and family networks. The sole mention of physical activity in this report related to providing 'purposeful activity' as part of the prison regime. There was no mention of its role in the Probation Service.

At the time of this study, Prison Service physical education (PE) is provided by specially trained Prison Officers called Physical Educational Instructors (PEI) and managed by a Senior Physical Education Instructor (SOPEI). This provision makes a contribution in four ways: (1) providing quality, cost-effective PE that meets the needs of the prison's regime and prisoners; (2) supporting delivery of education and vocational training in the prison; (3) assisting the resettlement of prisoners and the promotion of healthy lifestyles; (4) delivering PE programmes that have been specially designed to support interventions that can change an individual's behaviour e.g. tackling drug addiction (Prison Service Order Number 4250, 19, January 2009). There is a statutory requirement to provide access to physical activity for at least one hour a week for prisoners over the age of 21. PE departments tailor their programme to the needs of the prison. As well as offering fitness courses and qualifications (educational PE), departments also promote healthy lifestyles, seek to engage people who are not physically active, treat injuries, and support people who self-harm and those with

mental health difficulties. Recreational PE provides the opportunity for various activities including gym, games, and squad-based team sports. In a few Young Offender Institutions Sport Academies have been established for rugby and football. This has attracted media attention and the Football Academy at HMYOI Portland was filmed for the 2009 Sky 1 series *Football Behind Bars*, involving the former England footballer Ian Wright. Finally, within prisons people with convictions can gain employment as a gym orderly. This is a responsible position requiring a high standard of behaviour. It can involve mentoring peers and assisting with the teaching of courses under supervision of the PE staff. Many PE departments develop community links through sports teams and the provision of special needs groups. It is acknowledged that one of the biggest challenges lies in building links to assist resettlement back into the community.

Within the Probation Service there has been a history of the provision of physical activity programmes and groups for younger people. These have been focused on developing or acquiring personal and social skills (Taylor, Crow, Irvine, & Nichols, 1999). Currently there is no formal requirement for the Probation Service to offer access to recreational opportunities. The Prolific and Priority Offenders Scheme offers an intensive multi-disciplinary package for people, part of which includes encouraging constructive use of recreational time. This includes introducing people to activities like fishing, supporting access to gyms, provision of clubs such as football and badminton, and gardening on allotments. A Community Support Worker tailors activities to suit people's needs. Support for healthy lifestyles may also be provided through cooking and nutrition courses. Finally, further training and education in the fitness industry, including attendance at college can be supported.

1.3 Outline of thesis

Having provided the entry and context to this study I now provide 'a map' with which to follow my research journey. I begin in Chapter Two by reviewing relevant literature and laying a foundation for a narrative study and identifying the research purpose and foci in attending to under-explored aspects of the process of transforming criminal lives.

Chapter Three provides the methodology of this study including consideration of its underpinning philosophical assumptions. The research strategy and techniques are presented and ethical issues outlined. The analysis, interpretation and representation of the participants' interviews are discussed, and how to judge study quality.

In Chapters Four to Nine I present my exploration of the different aspects of transformation that emerged from the research foci and narrative analysis. In Chapter Four, I focus on the exploration of the body and embodiment processes in desistance from crime. This is followed by a consideration of the complexities of the role of physical activity in supporting pro-social living in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six, I explore spirituality in terms of meaning and purpose and religious conversion, highlighting what matters to people in transforming criminal lives. Attention shifts in Chapter Seven to how narrative identity is constructed, claimed and performed by participants by the representation of four narrative types. In Chapter Eight, I focus on unpacking the meaning of ageing and the role of a narrative notion of wisdom. Within Chapter Nine, I explore what it means to live well and how people keep going in sustaining crime-free lives and adaptive narrative identities.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, I present my reflections and conceptual thinking in relation to making sense of the transformation process. I consider the theoretical and practical implications arising from this study before closing the thesis with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LAYING A FOUNDATION

2.1 Introduction

“[The] potential to survive adversity, and even to thrive as a result of it, is one of man’s greatest assets. Yet we know less about how people come to conquer hardship than we do about why they are overwhelmed by it. The concept of “recovery” has taken a back seat to the examination of “continued pathology”. It is almost as though we have resigned ourselves to failure.” (Brown, 1983 cited in Shover, 1985)

Chapter One illustrated my entry point into this study and my interests in the elusive ‘success stories’ of how people transform criminal lives and the role physical activity may play. This focus led me to three ‘sets’ of literature that are reviewed in this chapter. I begin by considering theories and studies focused on the rehabilitative role of physical activity in a criminal justice context. This focused on mainly young people and provided a narrow and theoretically under-developed perspective. I proceed to the desistance literature that is concerned more broadly with how and why people leave a criminal life. This leads to consideration of the value of a narrative approach, and the construction of narrative identity and personal and social realities (Sparkes & Partington, 2003). I prioritised writings from the past ten years, at times searching further back to review seminal studies or where information was lacking. Considering the implications of these ‘sets’ of literature enabled me to lay a foundation for the theoretical framework and research purpose of this study.

2.2 Rehabilitative role of physical activity

As I noted in Chapter One, physical health, along with mental health, has been identified as one of nine crucial factors that influence reoffending (Social Exclusion Report, 2002). My concern was not to address the relative worth of investment in sport or physical activity compared to other approaches to reducing reoffending. Instead I focus on what can be learnt from the literature as to how it may support ‘pro-social living’. In terms of defining pro-social living I follow Rowson (2011) who proposed that pro-social behaviour is best understood through comparison with anti and a-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour reflects one end of a continuum concerning an active disregard for social norms. A-social behaviour concerns where people operate within permissively accepted social norms and circumstances but do not actively question or

seek to shape them. Pro-social behaviour involves a transition to more reflexive forms of behaviour that involves questioning and shaping social norms. I began with a narrow focus on sport however this broadened to physical activity generally. In the sections below I consider the implications of the literature concerning the value of physical activity, theories as to how it may reduce recidivism, and studies exploring the relation between physical activity and crime.

2.2.1 Value of physical activity

There exists a consensus among scholars, based on extensive empirical research, on the health benefits of exercise. This is most systematic in considering the relationship between physical activity (particularly moderate exercise) and the physical and psychological benefits (Collins, 2003). It has been associated with contributing to a decreased risk of physical problems (e.g. cardiovascular disease, obesity, asthma) as well as psychological benefits, contributing to self-esteem; positive emotion; improved sleep; reduced depression; managing symptoms associated with schizophrenia; substance misuse; reduced anxiety and stress; enhanced body image and self-acceptance; improved social interaction and support; sense of autonomy and personal control; improved perceptions of competence; cognitive performance; and ageing (Biddle, 2000; Biddle & Mutrie, 2008; Boutcher, 2000; Coalter, 2005; Faulkner & Biddle, 1999; Fox, 2000; Fox, Boutcher, Faulkner & Biddle, 2000; Mutrie, 1997, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Downsides have also been documented including sport-related injuries, over-training, and, although considered rare, exercise addiction/dependency that may lead to harmful psychological states (Szabo, 2000).

Coalter (2007) reported that physical activity might have wider social benefits including employment, education, building communities, providing purposeful activity, and reducing anti-social behaviour. A number of researchers have reviewed the value of physical activity impacting on criminal behaviour and social exclusion (Bailey, 2005; Cameron & MacDougall, 2000; Coalter, 2007; Collins, 2003; Collins, Henry, Houlihan & Buller, 1999; Nichols, 2007; Witt & Crompton, 2003). These reviews, focused mainly on young males, highlight its value in terms of having positive meaning for those involved in activities, building self-confidence and self-discipline, mastery, reducing self-destructive and criminal behaviour, encouraging pro-social choices, and offering opportunities for 'active citizenship' and social capital (Bailey, 2005; Cadwallader, 2001; Cameron & MacDougall, 2000; Coalter, 2007). Kaufman & Wolff (2010) note, however, that sport can also perpetuate inequalities and foster alienation so

that the positive and humanistic benefits may not be realised. Most scholars contend that physical activity can be a tool and vehicle for combating social exclusion, particularly if it is people-focused. To reduce reoffending, it needs to be knitted with other aspects of citizenship and work as part of a broader strategy if its transformative potential is to be harnessed. Otherwise there is a risk of increasing levels of anti-social involvement (Cameron & McDougall, 2000; Coalter, 2007).

2.2.2 Theories of how physical activity reduces crime

In determining the value of physical activity for psychological and social benefits it is unclear how an effect occurs and the exact mechanisms of change (Coalter, 2007; Nichols, 2007). Explanations have included biochemical/physiological changes such as an increase in core body temperature and endorphins and changes in serotonin. Psychological changes include ‘feeling better’, increased self-esteem and mastery, time away from negative aspects of our lives, enhanced body acceptance, improved sense of autonomy and personal control, sense of belonging, and benefits from relationships with activity leaders and others in a group. However, it remains unknown what it is about physical activity that helps and several mechanisms are likely to be operating.

Debates about the specific relationship between physical activity participation and crime divide into theories of prevention or ‘offender rehabilitation’ (Coalter, Allison & Taylor, 2000). The former focuses on large-scale programmes targeting particular geographical areas and time periods. The rehabilitation approach focuses on small-scale interventions and intensive counselling approaches. It is the latter that is of interest to this study. Rationales of how change might occur are distinctly lacking in the literature and mainly focus on adolescents and young adult males. Early attempts (e.g. Schafer, 1969) considered the causes of delinquency and addressing adolescent development needs for adventure, excitement and autonomy. The most comprehensive attempt I located to formulate a theory of change is a synthesised model of ‘personal growth’ by Nichols (2007). Although developed for young people it can also apply to adults. He proposed that personal growth is directed by values and this is the key mechanism by which physical activity interventions can reduce crime. The model combines three aspects:

- (1) *Criminological theory*: development of cognitive competencies from deficit-based research into risk factors of delinquency; enhancing protective factors from strengths-based approaches and theories of social development.

- (2) *Youth work*: based on research into skills development focusing on self-esteem, positive life attitude, increasing personal responsibility and social skills.
- (3) *Personal development theory*: Drawing from adventure education and a model of value-directed personal growth focusing on self-concept and becoming more pro-active.

Self-development is proposed to be facilitated by increases in self-esteem, locus of control and cognitive skills; this is influenced by pro-social values leading the individual to be more proactive in taking charge of one's life. Nichols argued that physical activity can be used as a catalyst, medium or tool to facilitate the process of identity change and personal growth, if approached with sensitivity. The focal point is the participant's (re)definition of identity and this is also recognised in the desistance literature discussed later in this chapter. Nichols acknowledged that critical is the transfer of learning and the growth gained from interventions to other settings. To conclude, Coalter (2005, 2007) argued there are strong theoretical arguments for the potentially positive contribution sport can make to reduce crime among at-risk young people. He noted it is best when combined with programmes that address issues of personal and social development and not just playing sport by itself.

2.2.3 Studies of physical activity and crime

Empirical studies on the rehabilitative role of sport tend to fall into three types; having discussed the value of sport I now consider the other two.

Evaluations of physical activity/sport interventions

Studies that have evaluated interventions with 'offenders' or those 'at-risk' have concentrated on young people and prevention schemes rather than rehabilitation efforts. Very early interventions involved 'short sharp shock' for 'young offenders' based on deterrence and punishment. This enforced a physically and mentally demanding environment that imitated American 'boot camps'. Recent efforts include adventure challenge programmes and physical activity or sports-based interventions that promote 'constructive' leisure and healthy lifestyles. Many researchers found they were promising and lead to the development of personal and social skills, provide positive mentoring relationships and increases in physical fitness (Astbury, Knight & Nichols,

2005; Crabbe, 2000; Kelly, & Baer, 1971; Morris, Sallybanks, Willis & Makkai, 2003; Nichols, 2004; Nichols & Crow, 2004; Positive Futures, 2003; Robins, 1990, 1996; Sandford, Armour & Warmington, 2006; Taylor et al., 1999). There are limited meta-analyses in this area. Wilson & Lipsey (2000) reviewed 28 evaluations of wilderness challenge programmes for their impact on male delinquent behaviour. They found moderately positive results especially for those involving therapeutic elements such as individual or group counselling. West & Crompton (2001) reviewed 21 North American outdoor recreation programmes for reducing recidivism rates of juvenile delinquency and found they provide psychological benefits and improve self-concept. Both concluded that results from recidivism studies tend to be positive but provide only tentative support for effectiveness due to methodological concerns.

Bailey (2005) reflected a particular conceptual difficulty is that crime reduction is essentially indirect rather than direct and works through other processes such as improved fitness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and the development of social and personal goals. Nichols (2004) and Crabbe (2000) commented that the evidence of the effectiveness of such programmes in crime reduction is far from clear and although benefits have been noted not all people leading such activities may promote pro-social values. Neither does it mean there will not be any criminal associations or a sense of 'fair play'. The difficulty lies in the under-developed rationales and overly ambitious objectives for activity experiences as a medium to change criminal behaviour. This is compounded by poorly conducted evaluations (Coalter, 2007; Nichols, 1999) and the tendency for value judgments on their worth to prevail. Sandford et al. (2006) concluded that there is a lack of credible research evidence to support the claims made for physical activity to inform decisions about effective intervention design. The need for credible evaluation and monitoring processes is pressing according to many scholars. Other issues include the balance of activities with support and counselling, the need for follow-up support and a view that sport may be part of the solution but is rarely *the* solution (Collins, 2003; Coalter, 1989). To date there is very limited research into the role of physical activity interventions with adults trying to become crime-free (although see Meek, 2012).

Studies of physical activity with 'offenders'

A limited number of studies have researched physical activity and sport in criminal justice or secure settings and with '(ex)offenders' (e.g. Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Berger, 2004; Buckaloo, Krug & Nelson, 2009; Cashin, Potter & Butler, 2008; Gras,

2005; Johnsen, 2001; Leberman, 2007; Martos-Garcia, Devis-Devis & Sparkes, 2009; Nelson, Specian, Tracy & DeMello, 2006; Ozano, 2008; Verdot, Champely, Clement & Massarelli, 2010). The studies conducted suggested it may reduce tension, increase discipline, decrease aggression, enhance psychological well-being, increase self-awareness and self-confidence. It can also provide a way of directing energy and instilling moral value. A few researchers have explored qualitatively the meaning sport and physical activity may hold for people held in prison. Nelson et al. (2006) noted that moderate physical activity might produce benefits, including perceived psychological well-being and provide positive steps toward productive and healthy anti-criminal lifestyles. A common concern is the difficulty of applying learning from activity programmes back into the general prison environment or on release into the community due to 'fade-out' effects (Leberman, 2007). This highlights the difficulty of applying skills learned in one environment to another and the need for follow-up. Most studies focused on young people with limited attention to adults and females. Compared to the general population, there is a lack of research exploring the meaning and potential benefits of physical activity for people with criminal convictions (Cashin et al., 2008).

2.2.4 Implications

It is evident from the above review that the provision of physical activity is no panacea for reducing crime. It holds a potential to support transformation but may also have neutral role or even (re)produce social exclusion and foster alienation. As Collins (2003) noted a prime characteristic of physical activity and leisure is the element of choice. Even when barriers are reduced the person still has the right to refuse to participate. However, there does seem to be a belief that physical activity can become an agent, rather than a mirror, of change in society and play some role to enable people to become 'active citizens'. There is consensus amongst researchers that more work is required to increase theoretical understanding of how physical activity interventions may lead to increases in pro-social behaviour. A key conceptual difficulty is that rehabilitation via physical activity is indirect highlighting the need to further understand the mechanisms of change. This concerns both general psychological benefits and specifically those supporting pro-social living. Researchers have recommended the use of case studies, ethnography and life histories as a method for unpacking and accessing the intricacies of how physical activity is used as a rehabilitation tool.

Few studies have considered the influence of physical activity with marginalised sub-groups (Berger, 1996). As Carless (2003) argued in relation to physical activity and

recovery from mental illness, it is likely a complex web of factors interact for people to gain benefits. Although there are benefits for some people some of the time it is still unknown who will benefit from what or in what way. Much of the literature is based on at-risk adolescents and young adult males with criminal convictions. Limited attention has been given to adults, particularly females, across the life-course. None of the studies I reviewed explored the experience and meanings for people of taking part in voluntary physical activity programmes and/or gained fitness qualifications in prison and making the transition to a pro-social life.

2.3 Desistance literature

Given my interest in ‘success stories’ of how people transform criminal lives and requirement for a broader theoretical perspective I turned to the growing field of desistance. Similar to other fields such as mental health, Criminology, in regard to offender rehabilitation, has placed much emphasis on identifying the causes of problems, pathology and the ‘anti-social trajectories’ of people. This has resulted in a focus on the identification of dynamic risk factors (criminogenic needs) and stressful life events associated with recidivism and a ‘deficit-focused’ paradigm. In addition, another dominant literature or paradigm focuses on research involving meta-analyses concerning ‘what works’ in reducing reoffending. Neither of these paradigms explore in depth the ‘black box’ of how people exit a criminal lifestyle and it is the ‘desistance paradigm’ that tends to pursue this broader agenda focusing less on risk reduction and more on engaging with the person (McNeill, 2002, 2012). It offers explanations as to how and why desistance from crime occurs. This perspective recognises the need to explain pathways out of crime and how people build an adaptive lifestyle. As Veysey, Martinez and Christian (2009, p. 2) commented,

“The way into criminality isn’t necessarily the way out in reverse.”

This field has emerged in the past thirty years and knowledge on this topic is still relatively limited especially in relation to causal processes (Kazemian, 2007). There already exist extensive reviews of the literature (see Laub & Sampson, 2001). By foregrounding the processes of change, rather than modes of intervention, this ‘paradigm’ recognises the complex personal, interpersonal, social and cultural contexts of ‘criminal careers’ and their termination (McNeill, 2006). In this section I review definitions of

desistance followed by the main theories, models and studies and implications for this study.

2.3.1 Defining desistance

Kazemian (2007) and Healy (2010) noted that differing definitions and measurements of desistance have been developed and at present there is no consensus among researchers on these issues. Some regard a year or two crime-free whereas others claim only after the ‘offender’ has died do you get a ‘true’ age of desistance. Laub & Sampson (2001, p. 5) noted that desistance has been defined as “ceasing to do something” and Shover (1996) defined it as the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation. There has been some agreement that desistance is best viewed as a *process* rather than a state and that it is not an irreversible transition. Thus, it can be considered a “zigzag” and “curved” path with crime and non-crime cycles and combines stopping and staying stopped (Ezell, 2007; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001). Desistance is therefore conceptualised as a dynamic, non-linear ongoing process that may involve lapses and relapses similar to recovery from addiction.

2.3.2 Theories and models of desistance

Desistance scholars seek to identify the determinants of crime cessation and are primarily involved in descriptive and explanatory tasks with less emphasis on specifying implications for practitioners and policy makers (Ward and Laws, 2010). Three main theoretical explanations have been provided for desistance (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2002, 2006, 2012). Firstly, *maturational reform* theories based on links between age and the ‘growing out’ or ‘burn out’ from crime due to time and maturation. This emphasises the psychosocial and physical/physiological maturation processes considered crucial in leading to ‘dampening’ effects on crime participation (Glueck & Glueck, 1937). This perspective has been criticised for considering neither social/institutional processes nor ‘unpacking the meaning of age’ (Maruna, 2001, p. 30).

Secondly, *social bonds and life transitions* suggests that informal social control and/or ties to family, employment, education or religious institutions explain changes in criminality across the life-course. Important is not just the presence of ties but their quality, strength and interdependence. Sampson & Laub (1993) argued social bonds provide individuals with a stake in conformity and a reason to go straight.

A criticism of these two approaches is that they lack an understanding of the subjective experience of desistance (Maruna, 1997, 2000, 2001). This led to the

perspective of *cognitive transformation and narrative changes*. This emerged from qualitative research seeking to understand ‘success stories’ through the examination of the views of people who have transformed their life. Shover (1996) found that ‘desisters’ tended to alter their view of their criminal activities. This involved a growing awareness of time and revising aspirations to include goals such as contentment, peace, and harmonious relationships. Maruna (2001) argued that by analysing the individual’s subjective experience of ‘going straight’ this can aid understanding of social bonding and ageing in the desistance process as changes are attributable, in part, to transformations in personal and social identity.

A focus on either solely subjective or social/cultural factors in desistance research has been criticised for treating people as ‘super-agents’ or ‘super-dupes’ (Farrall & Bowling, 1999). Increasingly an integrated approach is commonly accepted combining these strands together. For example, the life-course theory developed by Laub & Sampson (2003) views desistance as a complex process occurring over time that depends on structured routine activities (e.g. employment, associating with law-abiding peers), social controls (bonds with family and friends), and agency. Farrall (2002) also argued for the importance of the relationship between ‘objective’ changes in the person’s life and his or her ‘subjective’ assessment of the value or significance of those changes. Thus, desistance resides in the interface of developing personal maturity, changing social bonds associated with certain life transitions and the individual subjective narratives and identity (McNeill, 2006). Healy (2010) noted that many key issues remain to be fully addressed in desistance theory and research. Firstly, identifying the subjective factors associated with change and how these interact with the social and cultural context. Secondly, the mechanisms underlying a shift from a criminal to a conventional lifestyle that includes a focus on the early stages of change.

Maruna & Farrall (2004) distinguish primary desistance (achievement of a crime-free period) from secondary desistance (underlying change in personal identity where the person labels themselves an ‘ex-offender’). Healy (2010) further argued a comprehensive model of desistance needs to account for those who have not yet begun to change, the time it takes to attain desistance, and recognise some people remain drifting between ‘conformity’ and ‘deviance’. Some researchers are not convinced a distinction between primary and secondary desistance is helpful. Bottoms, Shapland, Costello, Holmes & Muir (2004) argued it is simpler to focus on the absence of criminal behaviour and study any significant crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career.

They proposed an interactive conceptual and theoretical framework for researching desistance. It does not aim to be original but calls attention to five concepts:

Pre-programmed potential: The potential for reoffending based on factors in the person's social and criminal history (i.e. 'risk-factors').

Structures: The social arrangements external to the individual that enable or limit action by them, for example, employment.

Culture and habitus: The social world where the members share certain assumptions, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour often passed on within the group. Habitus (drawing on Bourdieu) involves durable individual dispositions arising out of the prevailing culture guiding choices about lifestyle.

Situational contexts: These may lead to a reduction of crime potential in a person's life. This might be a deliberate choice but may also be accidental.

Agency: Taking a full account of the person's own self-understanding of actions. This can be constrained by lack of both self-awareness and contextual awareness. Choice should be seen as being taken within specific social contexts.

Bottoms et al. (2004) contend that dramatic change may happen for some but suspect for many progression is faltering, hesitant and oscillating. They proposed a steady progression in a conformist direction recognising that people will oscillate on a continuum between criminality and conformity.

Desistance models

Within the literature researchers have attempted to capture the non-linear progression and different aspects of the desistance process. Table 1 (adapted from Weaver & McNeill, 2010) presents three models. Few, if any, have been empirically tested.

Table 1: Desistance process models

Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph (2002)	Vaughan (2007)	Bottoms & Shapland (2011)
<p>Based on unstructured life history interviews with women and men exploring mechanisms of life change. Symbolic interactionist and ‘agentic’ view recognising structural constraints.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General cognitive openness to change precedes and accompanies behaviour change. 2. Exposure to ‘hooks for change’ (combination of person and environment). Must have ‘cognitive connection’ seeing a positive development as incompatible with a criminal lifestyle. 3. Able to envision and fashion an appealing conventional self. New identity supplants the marginal one left behind. Provides coherence and a filter for decision-making. 4. Desistance complete when no longer views criminal behaviours as positive, viable or personally relevant. 	<p>Focus on agency and understandings of ultimate concerns. ‘Moral conversation’ with oneself required, possibly recasting what ‘truly matters’. Narrative identity and moral assessment of past actions important.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discernment: Review possible lifestyle choices beside persisting concerns around a criminal lifestyle. Willing to consider different options. 2. Deliberation: Review of pros and cons of various options and compare to sticking to what know or not. Fashioning a new identity depends on considering one’s current identity as viewed by others. 3. Dedication: Re-order concerns and interests to allow novel commitment to emerge. Regard new identity as morally incompatible with an ongoing criminal lifestyle. May not occur immediately. 	<p>7-step model based on longitudinal study of male young adult ‘recidivists’. Progression is affected by pre-programmed potential and social capital.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Triggering event: Influences current offending leads to 2. Decision: Wish to try to change leads to 3. Think: Begin to think differently about themselves leads to 4. Action: Take action towards desistance. 5. Threats: Experience barriers, temptations and obstacles. 6. Maintenance: Seek reinforcers to maintain change. Failure may lead to relapse and return to beginning. 7. Successful maintenance: Develop a crime-free identity.

Weaver & McNeill (2010) argued it is not enough to locate the individual in the change process. It is also necessary to locate the process in its social/physical context and the spiritual positions people may occupy as they move through and negotiate their personal and social lives. Any further developments of models of the desistance process need to take into account the differing elements of structure, agency and culture.

I now consider two areas that have implications for further theoretical development of understanding the desistance process: resilience and strengths-based approaches to rehabilitation and, secondly, the role of the body in crime and desistance.

Desistance and resilience/strengths-based approaches

Some scholars have linked the desistance process to resilience research. For example, Rungay (2004, p. 413) viewed desistance,

“as a process in which skills and advantages accumulate over time, mutually reinforcing each other and progressively enhancing the offender’s capacity to avoid recidivism.”

Rumgay argued that the process of desistance is initiated by perception of an opportunity to claim a pro-social identity during a period of readiness to reform. This is sustained by a deployment of strategies of resilience and survival in conditions of adversity. Desistance theory and strengths-based approaches to rehabilitation also have a natural resonance with each other. Ward & Laws (2010, p. 12) propose the rehabilitation of offenders is a value-based and capacity-building process and,

“Rehabilitation initiatives should look to provide the social and psychological capital to enable offenders to create meaningful and law-abiding lives within the community. This may necessitate giving individuals opportunities to participate in treatment programs or it could involve supporting natural desistance processes. Often it will entail a combination of the two types of intervention strategies.’

Ward & Laws argued by combining desistance and strengths-based approaches this potentially provides a richer way to work with people convicted of crime. The aim is to counter determinism and criminal essentialism thus providing a balance and complement to the focus on risk and deficit-based approaches or ‘failure stories’. Similar benefits could be gained by incorporating insights from a resilience perspective.

The body, crime and desistance

There has been a paucity of attention to the body and embodiment in criminology and forensic psychology. Quetelet (1833, cited in Maruna, 1997, p. 65) made the early argument that men’s ‘physical vitality’ and ‘passions’ are related to crime. That is, criminality peaks when physical development has almost been completed, it then diminishes along with ‘physical vitality’ and ‘passions’. Le Blanc & Loeber (1998) also concluded a decrease in physical strength and fitness with age may be a general principle of desistance. Early researchers, currently much discredited, focused on identifying physical characteristics and body types in the study of the etiology of criminal behaviour (e.g. Lombroso-Ferrero, 1972; Sheldon, 1949).

Glueck & Glueck (1956) found that mesomorphs (athletically fit, muscular with hard and heavy bone and tissue) were the body type most likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour and discovered the crime rate declined at about 30 years of age. They attributed this to maturation defined as a time of slowing up and more effective emotional and physiological integration. More recently researchers have turned to a

physiological view of the body and explored somatotypes and body mass index to identify associations with criminal behaviour (e.g. Brzycki, 2008; Maddan, Walker & Miller, 2008), and the neuro/biological and genetic causes of crime from a life course perspective (e.g. Collins, 2004; Ellis, Das, & Buker, 2008; Wright, Tibbetts & Daigle, 2008). Limited consideration has been given to the body's role in desistance. One suggestion is that reductions in male androgens (testosterone) occur over time and these are associated with changes in criminal cognitions and behaviour (John Wright, personal communication, 15th May 2009).

From a sociological perspective, Lyng (2004) has argued for a 'criminology of the skin' and consideration of the embodied nature and character of criminal action. Wahidin (2002) and Wahidin & Tate (2005) centralised the issue of corporeality to understand how women elders negotiate time in prison and the construction of gendered prison identities. In relation to desistance, Giordano et al. (2002) noted in their study of female's movement *out* of crime that they did not consider the role of corporeal processes, which they state,

“undoubtedly play important roles in the basic change mechanisms and are likely even more important to consider as they relate to *derailments* or setbacks.” (p. 1055).

Maruna (2001) in his desistance study reported those who were identified as 'success stories' were on average better looking and better spoken than those recommended for his 'persisting' sample. He commented that self-presentation is not a permanent trait and several 'desisters' mentioned how they used to look, sometimes showing pictures of their 'past selves' where they did not look so well. He proposed that part of the process of desisting might be finding enough value in one's self to maintain a presentable appearance and the ability to appear 'respectable' in a conventional manner. He also observed that 'desisters' seemed far from burnt out, if anything they seemed to charge themselves up emotionally, psychologically and physically to desist. This begins to provide some hints at possible embodiment processes in desistance.

It could be argued that what is missing is the fleshiness of the body and a perspective on bodies is needed that moves from seeing them as docile and passive to one that is more active and agentic. That is, an approach is required that acknowledges the *lived* body and which takes into account the effervescent, emotional, fleshy, and sensate nature of our embodied being in the world (Tulle, 2008). This suggests further potential to considering the role of the body in desistance and life transformation.

2.3.3 Desistance studies

There has been a number of quantitative and qualitative desistance studies conducted, the former focusing on the prediction of desistance and the latter exploring the mechanisms of the process. Historically, there existed a strong qualitative tradition, particularly life histories, in theorising about criminal behaviour. This was evident in the work of the Chicago School of Criminology. Recently the positivist paradigm has largely predominated. This, Maruna (2001) commented, has meant the subjective elements of human life have largely been neglected in the study of crime and criminal behaviour. This has certainly been reflected in the evaluation of current day intervention and rehabilitation efforts. A number of researchers have however conducted in-depth qualitative research in order to explore the subjective meanings and lived experience of desistance (e.g. Albert, 2007; Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon, 2010; Burnett, 1992; 2004; Byrne & Trew, 2008; Christian, Veysey, Herrschaft, & Tubman-Carbone, 2009; Farrall, 2002; Gadd & Farrall, 2004; Haggård, Gumpert, & Grann, 2001; Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; Kenemore & Roldan, 2006; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 1997, 2001; McIvor, Jamieson & Murray, 2000; Meek, 2007; Meisenhelder, 1977; Michalsen, 2008; Murray, 2006; Rex, 1999; Richie, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Shover, 1985, 1996; Sommers, Baskin, & Fagan, 1994). This research has consistently suggested there are similarities in reform from crime and recovery from other problem behaviours such as addiction to alcohol and drugs. As Ward & Laws (2010) noted studies tend to show certain theoretical influences. The major areas identified by this research are now summarised.

Age and health

Studies identified a burn out process where the person no longer has the energy to continue, gradually decreasing the frequency and severity of criminal activity and eventually stopping. Given the risks associated with some crime, one of the most powerful influences on desistance is the fear of death and serious injury. A few noted some people may simply become too ill or incapacitated to continue living an active criminal lifestyle (Ward & Laws, 2010).

Marriage, job, education, military service, education, prison, spirituality

Studies have indicated the importance of social factors and life transitions such as a job, education or training, involvement in new interests, including vocational activities and hobbies, that provide structure and meaning (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Burnett, 2004). Giordano, Longmore, Schroeder & Seffrin (2008) focused on religion as a specific

'hook for change' described by some of their participants in the Ohio Lifecourse Study. Quantitative analysis did not indicate that high levels of spirituality were associated with a pattern of sustained desistance. However, in-depth life history data did document some positive effects of religion and spirituality for some individuals under some conditions. Prison may also have an effect as people end up on long sentences and desist due to incarceration. Secondly, people may have had enough of prison, police, courts and the 'system' motivating desistance from crime (Ward & Laws, 2010). Marriage or partnership with a pro-social person and gaining a new circle of non-deviant friends may encourage desistance. Sampson & Laub (1993) and Bouffard & Laub (2004) identified military service as an important factor in desistance although recognised that it may lead to negative effects too such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Narrative/cognitive transformation

Studies have observed the interaction of desistance and the development of pro-social thinking and a coherent, pro-social and adaptive narrative identity (Maruna, 2001; Ward & Marshall, 2007). Shover's (1996) sociological analysis of adult males in America who had persistently thieved and desisted found that a resolve and determination to desist was important as well as a confidence in the ability to do so. Shover proposed a criminal calculus that changes with age as the costs of a criminal lifestyle, such as long prison sentences and dying, outweigh the optimism regarding gains.

A seminal study is Maruna's (2001) ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with 'active' and 'desisting' 'offenders' (The Liverpool Desistance Study). He argued that to successfully maintain abstinence from crime 'ex-offenders' need to make sense of their lives and this commonly takes the form of a life-story or self-narrative. He drew on McAdam's (1993) theory of identity in which modern adults create an internalised life story to provide their lives with unity, purpose and meaning. Maruna proposed that a subjective self-narrative is developed through social interaction whereby each person's self-story is based on a limited range of stories suggested/imposed by culture, society and social group. Maruna found evidence of a condemnation script with 'active offenders', characterised by a lack of agency and choice, powerlessness, and seeing oneself as a victim. With 'desisting offenders', Maruna observed a redemption script that incorporates the 'real' self; an optimistic perception of personal control over one's destiny and the desire to be productive and give something back to society, particularly the next generation (the 'generative script'). He argued this might form a larger

construct called ‘maturity’ or ‘reformed self’. This narrative may help the individual find a meaning in a life filled with shame and failure. Maruna (2001, p. 7-8) proposed,

“to desist from crime, ex-offenders need to develop a coherent, pro-social identity for themselves. As such, they need to account for and understand their criminal pasts (why they did what they did), and they also need to understand why they are now “not like that anymore”. Ex-offenders need a coherent and credible self-story to explain (to themselves and others) how their checkered pasts could have led to their new, reformed identities.”

Gender

Females are just not as likely to be ‘criminal’ in comparison to their male counterparts. However a small number do go on to become involved in a persistent criminal lifestyle and the numbers of women imprisoned in Western societies is increasing (McIvor, Trotter & Sheehan, 2009). It has been suggested there may be gendered pathways into crime leading to the assumption of gendered pathways out of crime (Giordano et al., 2002). Studies have highlighted the role of intimate relationships and child-bearing having a critical influence on women’s desistance than for men (Michalsen, 2008). Literature also emphasises women’s close relationships to family and domestic life rather than power/success in an occupational context. Graham & Bowling’s (1995) study in Britain found that desistance occurred more abruptly for women than men and was often linked to the birth of a child. However, the evidence is contradictory and studies have identified greater similarities between females and males in the desistance process. For example, Baskin & Sommers (1998) interviewed 30 women who had desisted from crime and found similar reasons to men.

2.3.4 Implications

Theory and research into the processes of desistance has developed greatly over the past thirty years. The consensus is that an integrated perspective and comprehensive model is required to capture how and why people change and stay changed. Some have argued the model also needs to account for those that have yet to consider change (Healy, 2010). There remain a number of gaps. There is a lack of research into primary desistance and intermittency and many studies are retrospective with some focusing on the current experience of desistance. There is also a difference between deciding to desist and then actually desisting (Maruna, 2001) that would benefit from further exploration. The ability to maintain transformation may be unrelated to the initial cause for ceasing behaviour in the first place. Hence, there is need to focus on identifying

factors allowing for long-term persistence and not just ‘causes.’ Resilience and strengths-based approaches may offer useful theoretical lenses to generate insights.

The role of maturation, social bonds and narrative/cognitive transformation are consistent findings. There remain areas that require further exploration and explanation. Sampson & Laub (1993) argued for further qualitative research to unpack the meaning of age and consider the subjective view of transitions in exploring pathways to conformity. Recreational and leisure interests are referred to in various studies but have not been explored in depth. Finally, the concept of embodiment provides a unique and under-developed theoretical lens in the study of desistance and the construction of an adaptive narrative identity (the ‘body-self’).

The common discourse in criminology and forensic psychology is based on a deficit-model and showing the handicaps and obstacles faced by people rather than emphasising collective strengths and abilities (Maruna, 2001). A concern with the dimensions of positive or fulfilling lives has been limited although recently scholars have begun to challenge a narrow view of offending and desistance. This suggests that simply living crime-free is not an adequate marker of success as people may have a range of desires and goals that signify a fulfilling life. Although people may stop committing crimes problem behaviours may still exist as well as a poor quality of life.

Previous desistance scholars have tended to situate their analyses on either the structural, agentic or cultural aspects of desistance. Less attended to within the literature, and absent in much of the positivist-founded research on criminal careers, is the concept of agency (Bottoms et al., 2004). What is apparent from the desistance research is that there are many paths to reform. Maruna, LeBel, Naples & Mitchell (2009) noted that although criminologists are eager to study desistance they are wary of the idea of ‘personal transformation’ even though change probably involves this aspect. The usefulness of life narratives have been emphasised as a powerful vehicle for understanding transformation from one societal status to another (Christian et al., 2009). Veysey et al. (2009) noted there are commonalities when people were asked as to how they changed and what was needed to sustain it; identifying basic human needs such as hope, people who believed in them and meaningful things to do. They argued that in many fields that consider change (illness to wellness, addiction to recovery), an essential element in all is the concept of identity transformation. Currently we lack knowledge of the mechanisms of identity transformation and the necessary and sufficient conditions under which transformation is possible. Porporino (2010, pp. 62-63) argued there is,

“a need for a more fundamental understanding of the actual mechanisms of action that lead to desistance; that transition from an offending to a non-offending lifestyle that sometimes seems to happen spontaneously, sometimes unexpectedly, sometimes after interventions but not because of it, and often without any obvious or formal intervention at all.”

Hence, there is further need to attend to how people construct pro-social lives and identities and how this reconciles a criminal past. This leads me to consider the narrative approach that provides a useful lens with which to consider this process.

2.4 Narrative approach

The narrative turn in social sciences has meant that researchers have begun to treat seriously the view that people structure experience through stories and a person is a story-telling animal (Bruner, 1986, 1987; Crossley, 2000a, 2000b; Smith & Sparkes, 2006). Sparkes (2005) noted there is growing interest in narrative theorising along with a recognition of the value of this approach in a range of health arenas such as nursing, primary care, psychotherapy, and bioethics. This leads to a more sophisticated appreciation of people as active social beings and focuses attention on the way personal and social realities are constructed through narrative and storytelling.

Numerous authors have forwarded the idea that human psychology has an essentially narrative structure and acts as an organising principle for human action (Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). Spector-Mersel (2010) noted that telling stories are a central channel by which we impart meaning to the world, ourselves, shape our identity and provide a base for social interaction. As Smith & Sparkes (2009, p. 3) stated,

“We live in, through, and out of narratives. They serve as an essential source of psych-social-cultural learning and shape who we are and might become. Thus, narratives are a portal through which a person enters the world; play a formative role in the development of the person; help guide action; and are a psycho-social-cultural shared resource that constitutes and constructs human realities.”

Somers (1994) proposed that ontological (personal) narratives are those that people use to make sense of and act in their lives. Public narratives are those attached to cultural and institutional formations. Hence, narratives are personal and social. Culture provides people with a menu of narratives from which the person selectively draws shaping experiences and their story (McAdams, 1993; Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009). Further our

culture provides stories that teach us, “what a “worthy” life is, what we should aspire to and what we should avoid, what is good and what is evil, what is forbidden and what is permitted.” (Spector-Mersel, 2010, p. 208). Narrative coherence has been argued to be a guiding post for the living of lives. The underlying assumption is that a ‘good life’ is one that can be told as a ‘coherent life’ (Bamberg, 2004).

Scholars also suggest that life events and our sense of self are inextricably linked to perceptions of the physical body. The body, therefore, is a storyteller and narratives are *embodied* (Becker, 1999; Eakin, 1999, 2008; Frank, 1991, 1995; Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes, 2007; Sparkes, 1996; Sparkes & Silvennoinen, 1999). This brings attention to how bodies perform, create and are created by narratives and how bodies are drawn and propelled to specific narratives and are constructed in them (Smith & Sparkes, 2008a).

There has been limited, although growing, attention to narrative inquiry and narrative identity (re)construction within Criminology and Forensic Psychology (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007; Maruna, 2001; Ward & Marshall, 2007). Where this has been adopted, as highlighted earlier, a shift in narrative identity has been identified as a likely influence in the process of long-term desistance from crime.

2.4.1 Narrative identity

Identity (re)construction can exist at personal, the community and societal levels. There is a general consensus from those that study narrative identity that individuals draw on lived experiences to plot their stories, and provide coherence and continuity to their lives, and to construct meaningful identities (Ezzy, 1998). The stories we tell, the facts we elaborate on or withhold and the specific words we use all contribute to how others see us. Eakin (1999, 2008) and Frank (2010) both highlight the *relational* nature of the self and that in sustaining our identity we make use of models of identity that are provided by the cultures we inhabit. The self is socially constructed and central to it are the stories and narratives told around us. Some of these narrative scripts can be life enhancing and some constraining. Further, Eakin (2008) argued that when talking about ourselves we perform a work of self-construction, ‘calling’ our narrative identities into being.

It has been proposed that the rehabilitation of ‘offenders’ depends crucially on the construction of a more adaptive narrative identity. Ward & Marshall (2007) noted the importance of providing continuity between an old ‘offending self’ and the construction of a ‘new self’. This is a dynamic, interpersonal process that requires the

provision of both capabilities and environments that are able to facilitate and sustain a person's attempts to fashion new lives and selves.

Studies with men and women have explored how identity is 'worked at' leading to the suggestion of a number of themes and strategies of identity (re)construction in desistance and recovery from addiction (Hänninen & Koski-Jännes, 1999; Opsal, 2011; Maruna, 2001; McIntosh & McKeagney, 2000; Richards & Jones, 2004). I referred earlier to Maruna's (2001) seminal study that highlighted the role of a *redemptive script* leading to a 'reformed self'. Adopting this narrative assists the 'ex-offender' to find meaning in a life filled with shame and failure. It has been argued, drawing from labeling theory, that this identity transformation also includes a looking-glass effect. That is, people believe they can successfully change their lives when those around them start to believe that they can (Maruna et al., 2009). A *knifing off* of the past has also been highlighted, although without a future script this may not produce identity or behavioural changes (Laub & Sampson, 2003). However, it has been argued this is more a process of *reconstruction* than amputation (Maruna & Roy, 2007). There may also be differing concerns at different phases of identity transformation. Long-term desistance has been associated with a change of behaviour alongside the assumption of an identity of a 'changed person' (Maruna et al., 2009). Porporino (2010) noted that the concerns of people early in the desistance process (e.g. employment, dealing with substance misuse) may be different than for later on (e.g. redemptive script, generative concerns, personal aspirations for new meaning, desire to gain pro-social legitimacy). Most studies have tended to focus on an individualised perspective with limited attention to an embodied, relational, and contextualised perspective (although see Russell, 2010).

2.4.2 Implications

The narrative approach has been applied in the study of desistance, recovery from mental health, and sport injury offering insights into the processes of overcoming adversity and how people (re)story their identity (Carless & Douglas, 2008, 2010; Carless & Sparkes, 2008; Crossley, 2000a, 2000b; Smith & Sparkes, 2005, 2008a; Sparkes & Smith, 2005). However, there remains relatively little attention to this approach in Criminology and Forensic Psychology despite recognition of its benefits in complementing positivistic forms of research (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007; Maruna, 2001). In relation to exploring the transformation of criminal lives it would be useful to have a greater consideration of the social and cultural context in the construction of identity

and explore further how an adaptive, pro-social narrative identity is claimed and performed, from a ‘storied resource’ perspective (Smith & Sparkes, 2008b).

2.5 Theoretical frameworks

Having reviewed the literature, several areas requiring further understanding have been identified in the implications sections above. In seeking to address some of these aspects I have been drawn to certain frameworks and theoretical lenses. These have informed the approach I have taken in this study to analysis and interpretation, acting as ‘thinking tools’. Given my interest in ‘success stories’ and understanding the meanings of transforming criminal lives, this study is located within a ‘narrative paradigm’ (Spector-Mersel, 2010). The benefits of this approach are providing a perspective that enables to think about the person who is socially and culturally located whilst at the same time expressing individuality and agency (Day Sclater, 2003). Secondly, to inform understandings of *embodied* aspects I have drawn on the work of Frank (1991), Shilling (1997, 2003, 2004, 2008), and Smith & Watson (2001). To consider how adaptive identities are actively constructed and how stories may ‘work’ for people I turned to the dialogical perspective of Frank (2010). Finally, a resilience framework (Davis, 1999; Hauser, Allen & Golden, 2006) and strengths-based approaches to ‘offender rehabilitation’ (Laws & Ward, 2011; Ward & Maruna, 2007) informed my thinking on how people stay crime-free.

2.6 Research purpose and foci

The purpose of this study is to explore aspects of the lived embodied experience of how adults transform criminal lives and construct a pro-social life and identity. The research focus was concerned particularly with exploring ‘success stories’ and unpacking further how people overcome adversity and transcend their circumstances, secondly, the role of physical activity, embodiment and identity (re)construction in this process. Hence, this study aims to offer further insights into the individual and agentic aspects of how criminal lives are transformed. Thus, making a contribution to knowledge and understanding of the desistance process and the use of physical activity as a rehabilitation tool. To do this, a narrative study was conducted exploring male and female adults’ personal stories of transforming a criminal life with attention to public (institutional) stories.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed three ‘sets’ of literature describing key theories, models and studies. This analysis led to the identification of relevant gaps in the literature and areas warranting further research. Taken together this laid the foundation for the theoretical framework and the research purpose and foci of this study and thesis. In the next chapter, I provide a description of the methodology employed to explore these aspects of life transformation.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of this study, highlighting the value of undertaking a qualitative research approach given its purpose. I discuss the research strategy, data collection process and ethical considerations followed by a description of the analysis undertaken and forms of representation chosen. Finally, options for how the quality of the study may be judged are presented.

3.2 Purpose and paradigms

At the close of Chapter Two I outlined the purpose and foci of this study to explore how adults transform criminal lives to pro-social ones attending to the body, physical activity, (re)construction of identity, ageing, and enduring change. In this section I briefly summarise the key philosophical issues that informed the research approach adopted. Given the current acceptance of qualitative research it is unrealistic, and unnecessary, to provide a comprehensive guide to the debates concerning paradigms and questions of ontology and epistemology (for in-depth discussions see Guba, 1990; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Lincoln & Guba 2000; Sparkes, 1992). Guba (1990, p. 17) proposed that a paradigm is “a basic set of beliefs that guide action.” These underpin and direct the way that a researcher will work and make sense of a phenomenon. Qualitative research is based on a different set of postulates to the generally more dominant positivist research tradition that often takes its lead from the Natural Sciences. The former’s emphasis is on understanding patterns of meaning through closely looking at people’s words, actions, and records rather than their mathematical significance. Table 2 provides a brief summary of its philosophical underpinnings drawing from Creswell, (2007); Maykut & Morehouse, (1994); and Sparkes, (1992).

By locating a study within a naturalistic and interpretive paradigm, attention is drawn to how human experience is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2008). Individuals are considered to seek to understand the world within which they live and work, developing subjective meanings of these experiences that are varied and multiple. A complexity of views is sought and the resulting interpretations are shaped by the researcher’s own experiences and background. Its strength is that it provides an understanding that is contextualised capturing human experiences, perceptions and situations that are often too complex for one construct or instrument.

Hence, the goal is to gain a deeper understanding of experience from the perspectives of participants rather than obtain generalisable results (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). As Bruner (1986) argued, it is the examination of people’s stories that can capture the particulars of people’s lives and what they mean. Given how people transform criminal lives is the central concern of this study, it is the interpretive approach that is sympathetic to this goal and the appropriate paradigm within which to frame this study.

Table 2: Philosophical assumptions underlying an interpretive paradigm

Assumptions	Interpretive/Naturalistic Paradigm
Ontology: What is the nature of reality?	Reality is subjective, multiple as seen by participants in the study.
Epistemology: What is the relationship between researcher and those being researched?	The knower and known are interdependent. Researcher attempts to lessen distance between self and that being researched.
Axiology: What is the role of values?	Researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and biases are present.
Rhetorical: What is the language of research?	Use engaging literary style of narrative using person voice and qualitative terms and limited definitions.
Methodology: What is the process of research?	Ideographic methodology and use inductive logic. Studies the topic within its context using an emergent design.
Logical: Are causal links possible? What is the possibility of generalisation?	Inductive from the ground up rather than handed down from theory or perspective of researcher. Events shape each other and multidirectional relationships can be discovered. Only tentative explanations for one time and place are possible.
Teleology: What does it contribute to knowledge?	Seek to discover or uncover propositions.

3.3 Rationale for qualitative research

Qualitative research is an umbrella term under which are sited a number of approaches. Rather than offer a definitive definition it is more useful to note the range of shared concerns and characteristics of this approach (Creswell, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Willig, 2008). There is a tendency to be concerned with learning the *meaning* of how people make sense of the world, events and manage certain situations. The research usually takes place within *naturally occurring settings* and interpretations are made by researchers of what they observe and understand. These interpretations cannot be

separated from the person's own background and prior understandings. The initial study plan tends not to be tightly prescribed so it can evolve over time leading to a possible broadening or narrowing of focus leading to an *emergent design*. The researcher plays a key role by gathering information through examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants. Data analysis tends to be inductive with patterns, categories and themes built by the researcher from the bottom-up, rather than top-down testing of theoretical frameworks. Theoretical lenses can be used to make sense of issues and frame a study. Qualitative studies often result in a *holistic account* where researchers try to develop a complex picture of a phenomenon identifying complex interactions between factors. Willig (2008) helpfully distinguished between two meanings of qualitative research. 'Big Q' refers to open-ended, inductive research methodologies that are concerned with theory generation and explorations of lived experience and participant-defined meanings. 'Little q' refers to the incorporation of non-numerical data collection techniques into hypothetico-deductive research designs. The latter does not work from the bottom up nor seek to engage with data to gain new insights into the ways participants construct meaning or experience their world.

I adopt a 'Big Q' approach for the following reasons and not solely because of personal preference. Firstly, my purpose is to attempt to understand the meaning of human action in transforming criminal lives. My goal is to embrace the uniqueness of individuals and capture complexity and richness whilst maintaining sensitivity to issues of stigma and social exclusion. Secondly, as a detailed understanding of the issue is sought this requires delving into the messiness of everyday human existence. This is best achieved through a methodology that includes talking directly with people in their natural settings. My aim is to enable individuals to share their stories, to hear their voices and hopefully minimise the power relationships that often exist between researcher and participant. This is pertinent where there is a predominance of failure stories. Next, a qualitative approach is useful when partial theories and models exist for explaining a phenomenon. In this case, further work is required to understand corporeal aspects that are not currently captured by existing desistance theories. Finally, a qualitative research is particularly valuable where a social context is not well understood and issues or criteria are not immediately obvious. Where 'insider' values and perspectives are important in addition to the 'official' perspective. These reasons, plus the added value of qualitative research to act as a counterweight and complement to existing positivistic studies, I believe, lead to a 'Big Q' approach simply providing a better fit for my research concern than quantitative measures and statistical analyses.

3.4 Research strategy

According to Bulmer (1984, cited in Sparkes, 1992), *general methodology* encompasses philosophical issues within social science and underpins an investigation. A *research strategy* refers to the way empirical studies are designed and carried out and *research techniques* refers to the ‘operations’ used to yield data about the social world. The latter two are rarely independent of the first. In this and the following section I outline the narrative research strategy and techniques adopted in this study.

3.4.1 Narrative inquiry

Chapter Two highlighted the relevance of a narrative approach to understanding the process of life transformation and (re)constructing identity. The focus of this discussion is the rationale for applying a narrative inquiry to address my research concern. There are a number of versions of narrative psychology although an assumption that underpins the majority is that researching narratives can tell us much about the ways in which people construct meaning in and for their lives. Narrative researchers share in a belief in the importance of stories, an interest in the structure and form of the stories people tell, and the implications and permutations of those narratives for individuals and societies (Willig, 2008; Crossley, 2000a, 2000b). A narrative inquiry is grounded in the attempt to understand specific experiences undergone by individuals. Thus, it is applicable to my concern to understand aspects of peoples’ lived experience of how they construct, and maintain, a pro-social life and identity.

A narrative theory of psychology advocates the need to focus attention on human existence as it is lived, experienced and interpreted by each human individual. Further, the experience of self, others and the world is tied to the linguistic and moral resources made available to us in the culture in which we are brought up (Crossley, 2000a, 2000b). By collecting a description of a person’s life, a key event or period within it, personal accounts and shared narratives are one source for tapping into the social world. They enable exploration of individual and collective meanings whilst engaging with sensitive and emotional experiences. It ably contributes to my concern of integrating the personal and emotional with the social and structural dimensions of people’s lives, values and perspectives. It provides a voice to otherwise neglected perspectives making a critical contribution to understanding fluid processes like overcoming social exclusion and maintaining desistance.

Maruna (2001, p. 39) proposed three reasons narratives are of empirical interest in researching criminal behaviour. Firstly, an emerging body of research suggests that personal narratives, can guide and organise human behaviour patterns. Secondly, personal narratives are dynamic so in theory they are amenable to change in a way that other factors, such as chronological age, are not. Finally, personal narratives are contextual and cultural artifacts, therefore one of the best ways to understand a particular subculture/group at a point in time is to analyse the stories that members of the group are telling. Maruna argued a potential benefit of a narrative approach to the study of desistance from crime is that it offers a challenge to behaviouristic determinism and the notion of the 'intractable criminal'. A narrative inquiry also opens up the possibility to empirically examine cognitive mediators between environmental influences and individual behaviour. This is useful for identifying implications for policy and practice to complement deficit-based approaches to 'offender rehabilitation'.

Further, Smith and Sparkes (2009, p. 6-9) provided an analysis of the benefits of undertaking narrative inquiry in Sport and Exercise Psychology. Those applicable to my study include offering a counterweight to (neo)realism and (post)positivism that dominate this areas of research. Secondly, it is beneficial in illuminating meanings and understandings of social and personal experiences, specifically how involvement in physical activity may bring a sense of meaning to some people's lives, enabling the complexity of being human to be described and shown. Third, it promotes itself as a relational form of scholarship that attends to how relations between people and certain social practices are cultivated through a storied process of social interaction. It is of value since it emphasises that researchers do not simply collect stories from participants but often enter into a storytelling relation with them. This requires researchers to seriously consider how they might operate within such relations and what consequences may arise. Fourth, as narratives are personal they reveal a great deal about the lived experience of an individual or a group. This enables exploration of socio-cultural life and people as both social and individual beings. It can also inform the available narrative resources a culture makes available for individuals. Importantly through exploring people's stories this can generate insights into the (re)construction of identities and how this process may influence issues such as life transformation. Finally, it encourages researchers to take seriously the embodied character of social and psychological practices including its corporeality, feelings, emotions, history, culture and communal practices.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the narrative inquiry approach. It is one form of research and should not be elevated above others. Further scholarship is required in this area, there are still many definitions of what narrative inquiry is and a number of unresolved issues (Smith & Sparkes, 2006, 2009). For example, in researching narrative identity McAdams, Jossleson & Lieblich (2006, p. 4) identified three dilemmas. Firstly, the extent to which narrative identities espouses unity versus multiplicity. Secondly, the relative contribution to narrative identity of individual agency versus the impact of society/context. Thirdly, the extent to which narrative identities display stability and continuity versus the extent to which they show personal growth and development. The point is to recognise its value whilst simultaneously acknowledging the narrative approach is not without its problems.

To conclude, narrative inquiry provides a beneficial and appropriate strategy for this study's purpose and foci. One of the characteristics of narrative psychology is its focus on meaning and interpretation as created through the stories people tell. This provides a supplement and useful counterweight to positivistic studies in Sport and Exercise Psychology, Forensic Psychology and Criminology. As Kirkman (2002) argued, narrative inquiry is invaluable where there is a wish to retain the complexity of individual lives and to investigate multiple interactions among individuals and cultures. Finally, the approach is well suited to studying life transformations and the construction of identity; providing valuable implications for those working with people trying to change. However, I concur with Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber (1998 p. 174) that, "narrative studies are not, in any absolute way, better than statistical or experimental studies. Each approach is more suitable for some purposes than for others."

3.4.2 Life histories and stories

This study primarily draws on the basic tenets of the life history strategy to understand how people transform their lives and the meanings this holds. I followed the work of Atkinson (1998) and Plummer (2001) and their approach to researching life stories. Atkinson (1998, p. 8) defined a life story as, "the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another." He noted it is the essence of what has happened to a person and it can cover the time from birth to the present or before and beyond. It includes important events, experiences and feelings of a lifetime. Atkinson argued there is little difference between a life story and a life history and they are usually different terms for the same thing. The

key point is that when it focuses on a person's entire life it is usually referred to as a life story or a life history. It can therefore be considered that, "A life story is a fairly complete narrating of one's entire experience of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects." (p.8). A key distinguishing feature is that the presentation of the life story is kept in the words of the person telling the story. Secondly, a life story narrative often includes aspects of our lives we want to pass on to others, the parts we have come to understand and viewed as the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, and lessons from a lifetime. Thus, "a life story narrative can be as valuable an experience for the person telling the story as it is a successful research endeavour for the one gathering the data." (p.7)

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At the final meeting with Simon we discussed his story summary. As we reached a close he thanked me and said he found taking part in the study a very useful process and it had been good. I said, 'No, thank you.' Laughing, Simon said it was meant to be him helping me.

Many narrative studies tend to be based on interviews of some kind that can be viewed as 'narrative occasions'. Mishler (1986) and Gubrium & Holstein (2001) further conceptualise research interviewing as a discursive accomplishment rather than a standardised protocol. The interview is considered to be more of a conversation where interviewees develop narrative accounts along with the interviewer and so render events and experiences meaningfully and collaboratively. It is two active participants who jointly construct narrative and meaning. The interviewer and person telling their story are collaborators, composing and constructing a story together. The goal in narrative interviewing is to generate long detailed accounts rather than brief and general statements. This requires longer turn taking than is customary in ordinary conversations. There may be several stories and details, such as specific incidents or turning points, that are important in addition to obtaining general evaluations. Consequently, storytelling can occur at unexpected times and can take the form of 'big' or 'small stories' (Georgakopoulou, 2007). One of the key principles is the need for the researcher to give up control that necessitates following participants down their trails and tangents. It is through this process that genuine discoveries about a phenomenon can potentially emerge. Atkinson (1998) reflected that the researcher is never really in control of the story actually being told. They may get a brief, unembellished, unemotional story or they may get a fabricated or strategic story. This can still be helpful to one's research interests in exploring why this was chosen and the purpose this may serve for the teller. It is important not to rely on single interviews, especially when

studying biographical experience, and ideally combine with observation or ongoing relationships, or conversations, over time with participants. Plummer (2001) noted the difference between long and short life stories, this study seeks to obtain a short life story that has a more precise focus and is concerned with more than just one individual's life. Generally these are gathered through in-depth interviews with open-ended questions and gentle probes taking between half-an-hour to three hours.

Similar to narrative inquiry, the biography perspective should not be seen as a universal panacea or a superior method to others (Miller, 2000). There are particular circumstances under which it is beneficial, particularly when aiming for a holistic approach. This is achieved in two ways. Firstly, biographical data ranges across time as the person speaks in the present but biography ranges over the past. A typical life history will cover the events of the participants' life up to the present. Hence, this approach is indicated when there is an interest in the effects of change across time. A participant can move back and forth in their life history and makes linkages between different types of events and segments of their life. In this way partially reliable information on previous psychological states of an individual may be gleaned. Secondly, the approach situates itself midway between social structure and the individual as a social actor. To tell one's biography means telling about constraints and opportunities that were available in the past, how these were dealt with and the interplay between actor and social structure. Finally, any biographical accounts, as well as the life it purports to represent, will be presented as incomplete. Hopes and plans for the future may exist and the strategic nature of the biographical perspective can expand from the past through the present and into the future. A person's account of their past life can also be influenced by anticipation of the directions they believe their life may take in the future. The life history perspective is particularly appropriate when seeking a viewpoint that is aware of the context of changing social structure and the passage of time.

Other researchers have highlighted the strengths of the life history approach. The particular value for this study are that it provides an opportunity to consider the life-course and gain a sense of an individual's perspectives, experiences and understanding of their 'whole' life. A life story is told in many ways and we are continually telling others who we are and what we are about (Plummer, 2001). Secondly, it enables a consideration of both social structures as well as personal narratives. Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 8) noted, "by studying and interpreting self narratives, the researcher can access not only the individual identity and its systems of meanings but also the teller's culture and social world." One strength of this strategy is

the way in which through time the life story develops and changes, and it constructs and transmits both individual and cultural meanings. It offers an opportunity to explore and try and understand how a person lives a life in a culture. Thirdly, if the goal is to understand the unique experience and views of an individual, Atkinson (1998) argued there is no better way to get this than in the person's own voice. A life story can serve as a primary means for understanding the pattern of an individual life, looking at life-as-a-whole and carrying out in-depth studies of individual lives. It aids understanding of others' positions in life and their description of themselves in relation to others. Finally, it offers a bridge between experience and general theory. Life histories can show how well theories may explain and interpret a single story and how well it can be used to understand other stories (Strauss and Glaser, 1977).

3.4.3 Sampling

This study is situated within an interpretive paradigm, therefore when identifying cases to research it is essential to select those that will provide the most illuminating and useful data to address the research purpose. The intention is not to provide a precise statistical representation of the researched population as would be expected within a positivistic paradigm. As Plummer (2001) noted, life history research involves the strategy of seeking examples that are information rich. My aim was to reflect the different stories of how people try to, and do, transform criminal lives with the expectation that it will generate insights into aspects of the process. Creswell (2007) recommended in a narrative study there is a need to find one or more individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, are distinctive and can shed light on the phenomena being explored. I sought what Plummer (2001) described as a *marginal person* who, he argued, is often the most fruitful choice as it is a person that has lived in two societies. It was essential that a participant was fully aware and informed of their cultural world, fairly articulate, and able and willing to share and verbalise their story (Spradley, 1979). My intention was to collate first order narratives and experiences where individuals tell stories about themselves and their own experiences. By focusing on the stories to emerge this recognises that all people have stories to tell (Gergen, 1994).

My approach to selecting participants to interview consequently involved a combination of purposeful and maximum variation sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Purposeful sampling involves selecting individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the central

phenomenon being researched. Rather than aiming for representativeness, the decision on whom, and where, to speak to people links back to the study purpose and foci. This involves choosing participants that deliberately represent characteristics known or suspected to be of key relevance to the research questions. Maximum variation sampling involves an attempt to understand a phenomenon by seeking out persons that represent the greatest differences in that phenomenon. Thus, participants are sought to represent a range of experience and the goal is to deliberately seek to maximise the contrast among participants, enabling multiple perspectives, and the inclusion of extreme cases. The snowball sampling technique, where one research participant recommends another from their social network, was also applied in this study.

In the early stages of study design I developed a sampling criteria. This was based on my research interests and wishing to hear people's experiences at different phases of transformation and currently. The criteria provided a useful starting point. In practice, it was the ongoing process of sample selection and data analysis that guided my emergent sampling approach. I defined indications of a persistent criminal lifestyle as people who have a number of criminal convictions including prison sentences (at least one preferably more). Initially I defined three groups:

“Ex-offenders”: Persons living in the community and made the transition to a pro-social lifestyle and no recorded or self-reported crime for at least one year.

“Stuck”: Persons not currently making the transition and active in a criminal lifestyle. Likely to be in prison or on probation license/order.

“Trying” and *“Transition”*: Persons currently trying to transform in the community or just about to be released from prison, on probation license/order.

I also aimed to access males and females proportional to the probation and prison gender mix. I focused on older adults aiming for people varying in age from 25 to 40 years plus, and sought people that participated in sport or physical activity. I also wished to speak to staff to consider the ‘public narratives’ of working with people that are trying to change and the role of physical activity including a managerial perspective by speaking with at least one senior manager. The final samples for the interviews are provided below in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Life history interview participants

Participant	Gender, age, ethnicity	Criminal activity, occupational status, location	Physical activity	Interviews (June 2009 to May 2011)
“Ex-offenders”				
Simon	Male 44 Caribbean	Crime-free over 6 years. Full-time employment with ex-offenders. City.	Gym, resistance & CV	4 interviews over 5½ months: 9 hours
Christine	Female 49 English African	Crime-free over 9 years. Full time employment with prisoners with addictions. City.	Running on treadmill at home	4 interviews over 3 months: 7½ hours
Jack	Male 42 White British	Crime-free over 7 years. Full-time employment with addiction service. Rural.	Gym in past, currently looking after 3 young children	3 interviews over 13½ months: 9¼ hours
Andrew	Male 35 White British	Crime-free for one year. Unemployed. Rural.	Fishing, allotment, walking	2 interviews over 3 weeks & 1 phone call: 2¾ hours. 1 Interview with wife: 25 minutes. Informal discussion with Probation Officer.
Eliza	Female 47 White British	Crime-free over 9 years. Two part-time jobs one with ex-offenders. City.	Gym, swimming	4 interviews over 2 months: 4½ hours
Tom	Male 35 White Caribbean	Crime-free over 7 years. Full-time employment with at risk youth. Town.	Thai boxing, fishing, cycling	4 interviews over 6 months: 8 hours
“Stuck”				
John	Male 47 White British	Active in crime. Unemployed. In prison.	Bodybuilding	4 interviews over 3 months: 7 hours and 5 chapters of autobiography. Informal discussion with Probation Officer
Rebecca	Female 34 White British	Active in crime. Unemployed. Rural. Probation Order.	Horse-riding, swimming	3 interviews over 2 weeks: 2¾ hours and drug programme file. Informal discussion with Probation Officer

Participant	Gender, age, ethnicity	Criminal activity, occupational status, location	Physical activity	Interviews (June 2009 to May 2011)
“Trying”				
Mark	Male 33 White British	Trying to change. Unemployed. In prison.	Gym Orderly, weights, fitness, tennis, volleyball	3 interviews over 1 month: 4 hours Informal discussion with PEI
Sam	Male 39 White British	Trying to change. Unemployed. Rural. Just completed Probation Order.	Swimming, fishing	5 interviews over 7 months: 7½ hours Informal discussion with Probation Officer and Community Support Worker
Dean	Male 35 White British	Trying to change. Unemployed. Voluntary work in a gym and educational courses. Rural. Probation License.	Tennis, gym, walking	6 interviews over 5 months: 5¾ hours. Informal discussion with Probation Officer
Jamie	Male 31 White British	Trying to change. Voluntary and then full-time worker in Drug Rehab. Rural. Probation License.	Weights, fitness	3 interviews over 7 months: 4¾ hours. Informal discussion with Probation Officer
Stuart	Male 38 White British	Trying to change. Unemployed. Voluntary work. Town. Probation Order.	Football, weights	1 interview: 2½ hours
“Transition” from prison to community				
Jason	Male 26 White British	Trying to change. Full-time employment as sales representative. City. Probation License.	Rugby, weights	5 interviews over 7 months: 8½ hours and observed rugby match for 2½ hours
Ryan	Male 30 White Welsh	Trying to change. Temporary full-time jobs. College course. Rural. Probation License.	Weightlifting, football, rugby, cricket	5 interviews over 6 months: 9¼ hours. Informal discussion with PEI and Probation Officer
Ben	Male 35 White British	Trying to change. Part-time landscape gardening. Town. Probation License.	Football, badminton, weightlifting, circuit training, fitness	2 interviews over 4 months: 2¾ hours. Informal discussion with PEI

60 interviews with a total contact time of over 98 hours and recorded interview time of 57½ hours.

Table 4: Semi-structured staff interviews

Staff Role	Gender	Location	Years in service	Date & length of interview
SOPEI	Male	Category C male prison	23 years	Oct 2009 80 mins
SOPEI	Female	Category C male prison	10 years	May 2010 56 mins
SOPEI	Male	Category D male prison	23 years	Feb 2010 72 mins
PEI	Male	Category C male prison	23 years	Oct 2009 80 mins
PEI	Male	Category D male prison	19 years	Feb 2010 65 mins
PEI	Female	Category D male prison (previously closed female prison)	11 years	Feb 2010 63 mins
PEI	Male	Category C male prison	18 years	May 2010 60 mins
PEI	Male	Category C male prison	30 years	May 2010 26 mins
Senior Manager	Female	Prison Region (worked in both Probation and Prison Services)	3 years in current role	June 2010 77 mins
Probation Officer	Female	City probation office	9 years	Nov 2009 62 mins
Probation Support Officer	Female	City probation office	8 years	Nov 2009 74 mins
Community Support Worker	Female	Rural probation office	1 year 7 months	Feb 2010 56 mins
Probation Officer	Male	Rural probation office	17 years	Feb 2010 77 mins
Probation Support Officer	Female	Rural probation office	6 years	June 2010 62 mins

14 interviews with a recorded interview time of just over 15 hours.

Table 3 comprises 16 people with criminal convictions that took part in the study. Both Jason and Eliza each had one conviction that had resulted in a prison sentence. Only Eliza would have described herself as not living a criminal lifestyle prior to her prison sentence. In terms of sampling I found that trying to restrict in relation to age and ethnicity was practically impossible. This was especially the case when trying to locate people that had been crime-free for a long period. All the participants were able-bodied and had a capacity to reflect on and articulate their experiences. The following section shares how I came to meet each participant. I made the decision if anyone was willing to speak with me I would meet with them to hear their story. Hence, I followed Jason's transition and met with Eliza and they both provided valuable perspectives on life

transformation. In terms of deciding when to stop, I followed the renowned concept in qualitative research of saturation point where newly collected data tends to replicate previously collected data. A point is reached where the diminishing returns from data collection efforts mean you can be reasonably assured you have conducted a thorough study. This was also balanced with practical limitations of time, money and access factors that impinged on this doctoral research. Many of the interviews took place in locations that were at least one and a half hours travel each way as my search expanded across England and Wales. The decision to cease interviewing was made balancing my personal resources of time and money with a belief that a sufficient amount and quality of data had been collated. This decision was reached with my supervisor acting as a 'critical friend'.

3.4.4 Gaining access

The journey to finding people who may be willing to participate in this study and share their lived experiences entailed persistence, valued connections, and an element of good fortune. From my previous job I'd maintained connections with colleagues and an awareness of the research approval requirements. I now provide the brief story of how I came to meet the participants and staff who shared their experiences and perspectives.

A good friend and work colleague facilitated an introduction to my first participant, Simon. She was aware of my study and, from a work-related meeting, knew Simon had served prison sentences and transformed his life. One e-mail introduction and a phone call later we'd arranged to meet. During our first meeting Simon suggested meeting Christine, and after e-mail contact she agreed to take part.

The first step to gain access to people on Probation or in Prison required me to submit a research application to the NOMS South West Area Psychologist. I gained approval that included the requirement to obtain permission from the Governor of each of the five prisons I wished to approach to speak to their staff and any people serving a sentence. One prison declined and four agreed to assist and contact was made with staff. This enabled me to interview nine prison staff and four participants, Ryan, Jason and Ben who were in prison and shortly to be released, and Mark who was still serving a long sentence. The participants were recommended after discussion with staff about the study and whom they thought could assist. The next step was accessing prisons to undertake the interviews. This was dictated by their organisational priorities. For example, a prison that was keen to assist during initial discussions in 2008 later declined when I requested formal access due to an upcoming inspection and the impact

of national organisational changes. This was despite their view of the research as useful. The final stage involved requesting permission via phone calls and e-mails from each Prison Security Department to use a Digital Voice Recorder to record the interviews.

Within the Probation Service I gained approval from the Area Chief Officer that enabled me to make contact with teams within the area. This was greatly facilitated by the Area Senior Researcher who I'd spoken with and was supportive of this study. I followed this with phone calls and e-mails to Senior Managers within Probation teams resulting in a named contact person. This led to interviews with five members of staff. One probation team supported contact with four participants, Sam, Dean, Rebecca and Andrew. Andrew suggested I spoke with his wife who helpfully agreed to share her views on how he'd changed. The team also introduced me to Jack who was working for a drug agency and had been crime-free for over seven years. They contacted him and he gave agreement for them to give me his phone number, I phoned and he agreed to participate.

Another probation team recommended someone currently serving a prison sentence and wrote to him asking if he would like to take part. John contacted me by letter and I had to gain agreement from the South West Area Psychologist to access an additional prison. The Prison Governor agreed for me to interview John during prison legal visits and a member of the prison probation staff assisted with gaining approval from the Security Department to use a digital voice recorder. The team recommended another person that they considered a success and via e-mail introduction I arranged to meet with him however he did not turn up. I waited for an hour and left an answer phone message followed by an e-mail to say sorry I'd missed him and to contact me if he wished to take part. I did not receive a response. Sometime later I was speaking with a member of the probation team and they told me he'd returned to being supported by them on a voluntary basis. I was unable to conduct an interview with a Community Support Worker who worked for an addictions agency within one probation team. Their manager would only approve it if I obtained NHS ethics approval for my study. I concluded the work was too great to justify interviewing one person.

After six months I found the trail for finding people who were no longer in a criminal lifestyle went cold. In order to locate potential participants I sent e-mails to six charities that support people who have criminal convictions asking if they were aware of anyone who may be interested in taking part. Fortunately two responded which led to e-mail introductions to Eliza, Tom and Stuart. Two of the charities responded that they were unable to assist due to current work priorities or corporate decisions to not assist

with such requests. Two charities did not get back to me. Of the two that assisted one supported research with people who have criminal convictions and the other delivers physical activity interventions as part of its services. The latter charity asked, with the participant's informed consent, that I provide them with a short story of how the person benefitted from their physical activity intervention.

Two factors influenced access. One was staff shortages where departments were, quite rightly, focused on getting their core business achieved first and foremost. My study was not a priority. I was fortunate that all the staff expressed an interest in the study and how it may help them to reflect on their work and improve it. Another contextual factor during the study, and currently ongoing, was significant national organisational changes across the Prison and Probation Service. This was leading to staff uncertainty over the future of jobs, roles, departments and services.

The approval and access process was elongated and multilayered. It required patience, persistence, acceptance, professionalism, flexibility, responsiveness and, most of all, extremely helpful participants and staff. In undertaking this study a constant risk was not being able to locate willing participants. A particular challenge was to find people that had been crime-free for a long period of time. All but one could be considered 'high profile' in that they now work with people who have criminal convictions, addictions or are 'at risk'. Their stories are 'out there' both in terms of the local community and more widely in some cases too.

3.5 Research techniques

3.5.1 Life history interviews

This section provides an overview of the life history interview process. As part of this life history research strategy an interview guide was developed (see appendix A) tailored to my study's focus on the phenomenon of people transforming their lives and exploring embodiment, physical activity, identity reconstruction, ageing and ongoing desistance. It was informed by the interview protocols of Lieblich et al. (1998) and Smith (2003). The guide provided a framework with questions grouped into nine areas:

- A 'Grand tour' question asking how the person got to be where they are today and telling me something about their life.
- Identifying chapters, phases or stages of their life similar to a book.
- Views of self, age, crime, a central theme/message for their life.
- Involvement and view of physical activity, sport and leisure activities.

- Key turning points and transitions.
- Setbacks, obstacles and stigma.
- Views of ‘success’ and a good life.
- Future plans, goals, hopes, and dreams.
- Opportunity to add anything else.

Prior to meeting, an information sheet was e-mailed or assisted explanation of the study over the phone (see appendix B). During the first meeting the purpose of the research was re-explained, including what was involved in taking part, and participants were given the information sheet. I explained that no incentives were offered to assist and most, if not all, the participants said they volunteered in the hope that what they share may help others to change. An informed consent form was signed and witnessed (see appendix C). On two occasions consent (Andrew’s wife and Tom) was recorded on the Digital Voice Recorder due to forgetting the form. Participants were offered the opportunity to have copies of transcripts which some accepted for their own information. A personal information sheet was then completed (see appendix D). The interview protocol served as a general framework rather than a prescriptive tool to guide our meetings. At the end of each interview in my research journal (see section below), I made a note of the areas covered. The interview was transcribed and prior to our next meeting a review of the transcript or interview recording was undertaken identifying areas to be explored. For example, for some participants the life chapters were explored comprehensively in the first interview for others not until the second or third one. As far as possible I aimed to be flexible to ensure that control was handed over to the participant and enable them to present their story in their own words. At the start of each meeting it was agreed how long they had to spend and at what time they needed to leave. The interview would end at the agreed time or when the participant decided to stop.

The majority of interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, the Olympus VN-5500PC. One of the reasons I chose this device was because it had long recording time and it looked similar to a mobile phone that I hoped might seem less intrusive. As soon as possible after the interview the recording was uploaded onto a password protected university computer, backed up and then deleted from the recorder. For six interviews and one feedback phone call I did not use or partially used the recorder. On five occasions these were feedback interviews and I decided not to use it and made observation notes instead. On two occasions participants were struggling with

personal issues and using it felt insensitive. It was agreed I would make notes after the interview for one person and partially recorded a meeting with another. On one occasion when I went to turn off the recorder I realised it had not recorded. The participant agreed I could make notes instead. Fortunately this was a brief interview as the participant had arrived late and had another appointment to attend.

Initially I thought I would do a series of interviews over a short period of time. In reality the timing of interviews varied due to the time participants were able to commit and what was going in their lives. The shortest timescale was one interview in one day with the longest being three interviews over thirteen months. Interview length varied from twenty minutes to four hours. For the participants trying to change it tended to be shorter but more interviews whereas I found those who were crime-free there were fewer interviews that lasted longer. The interviews took place in a variety of mutually agreed locations including cafes (24 interviews), participant's work place (10 interviews in an office and one in a needle exchange van), probation office (11 interviews), a motorway service station (one interview), an allotment (two interviews), prison visits (five interviews), and a prison gym office (six interviews). On four occasions other people were present during the interview. A PEI in the prison gym office as the security department required a member of staff to be present for me to record my first meeting with Jason. Another interview took place in a shared office where three others worked and Stuart informed me they were fully aware of his story. Interviewing also took place on an allotment with Andrew and his wife; although others were around we sat on chairs some distance away. Fortunately it was easy to rest the recorder nearby and it was surprisingly clear even with birdsong in the background.

Each recorded interview was transcribed. Preparation of a transcript is a theoretically saturated activity. They represent a public record in the way that field notes do not and they contain taken for granted theories of language and identity. Thus, interviewing and transcription practices play a major part in constituting the narrative data to be analysed (Riessman, 2008; Silverman, 2005). Transcribing is also a process of infiltration and is therefore an interpretive practice. Riessman (2008) argued that by definition transcripts are incomplete, partial and selective representation of what 'actually' occurred. Mishler (1986) proposed that how fine the detail needs to be depends on the aim of the particular study and remains a matter of judgment. In this study, with its sociological and psychological focus, I decided it was reasonable to transcribe only as much detail as required. I believed it was important to end up with a manageable system that was easy to implement. Although transcription is an important

step in analysis, I followed Crossley (2000b) and Flick (2009) in not wanting to get overly caught up with exactness and preciseness. This is because fine details can interfere with the readability of the transcript and what I required was a full transcription of the interview including questions and answers. A general guide to transcribing is four hours for every hour of interview. I found I took five hours. This included transcribing followed by listening again to the interview, amending the transcript and adding non-verbal expressions and pauses.

Once the life history interviews were completed I aimed to provide each participant with a short one-page summary of their story. I did not get an opportunity to feedback to three participants. Rebecca's Probation Officer felt it was best not to meet as she was struggling with drug use and had been arrested. Contact with Ben stopped after we did not meet for the third interview and Stuart did not respond to my two e-mail messages. The purpose of feedback was to ensure they felt it reflected what they had shared with me and check my interpretation of the key themes and message(s) of their life story. In agreement with Sparkes (1992) the purpose of going back to participants with these stories was not as a test of 'truth' but rather an opportunity for reflexive elaboration and collaboration of the construction of their life history. At the end of the interview process I asked participants how they found the process and thanked people for taking part. I was often left with the offer that I could get back in contact if needed. Many participants shared it had been useful to reflect on their journey through life.

3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

I undertook semi-structured interviews with prison and probation staff that worked directly with people who have criminal convictions. This enabled access to public narratives and, given time and job pressures, was likely to be the most effective and efficient form of gaining their views. At the start of the interview the study was explained, an information sheet provided (see appendix E) and an informed consent form (see appendix F) was signed for each participant. I offered all staff the opportunity to have copies of transcripts and a few accepted for their own interest. A semi-structured interview guide (see appendix G) was developed covering seven areas:

- Professional background.
- View of successful pro-social living and a good life.
- View of change and age.

- View of sport, physical activity and leisure activities with people with criminal convictions.
- Turning points and transitions.
- Setbacks, obstacles and stigma.
- View on research focus.

As recommended by Willig (2008) the guide started with more public questions followed by questions of personal experiences and perceptions of how people transform their lives. When possible, attempts were made to incorporate the staff members' own terms and concepts and to restate their comments to show I was listening and check I had understood them. Two techniques were used to facilitate elaboration. Firstly, asking for examples or events and experiences. Secondly, expressing curiosity by asking for clarification in order for implicit assumptions and expectations to be voiced. Thirteen of the interviews took place in offices at the participants' workplace and one in a café. No other people were present and all were recorded using the Olympus VN-5500PC. All but one staff member I had met at least once prior to undertaking the interview so we were not unfamiliar. Following Willig's (2008) description of semi-structured interviews, it was the research questions that directed the meeting. On one occasion I was very limited for time so I prioritised questions to ask based on what I had gained from other interviews. At times there were tangents and if these answered a later question I did not repeat that question unless to gain clarification or further reflection. This process was less conversational than the life history interviews and much more researcher-directed in terms of what was covered. I followed the same transcription protocol I described earlier for the life history interviews. Many of the staff expressed at the end of the interview they'd appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the work they do and their experience of people transforming their lives.

3.5.3 Research journal

The role of the journal was to give an expanded account of impressions and contact with participants and staff. It acted as a diary and a place to jot notes throughout the time data was collected. It provided a valuable tool in which I could reflect and debrief from interviews and make notes that informed initial analysis of participants' life stories and experiences. Immediately after an interview I made handwritten notes about reactions, where we met, and impressions. As soon as possible after the interview I typed this up into an electronic journal, this provided another opportunity for further reflection and

comment. The journal recorded the journey of meetings with participants and staff prompting attention to atmosphere, non-verbal behaviour, reflections on the research focus and process of the study. Below is an example extract.

25/06/2010

Field: We sat in the probation office and Dean mentioned a tooth problem causing him some pain. He said he felt the last meeting was like a counselling session as he felt lighter after having the realisation he has greater practical support on release this time. I mentioned some people find these kind of interviews can be quite therapeutic and was pleased he'd found the realisation helpful. I also reminded him I am not a counsellor or a therapist. Dean responded that he hoped I wasn't taking too much on and I said thanks for asking and I try to make sure I take care of myself. I asked Dean how things were going generally and then put the recorder on. As I was about to leave I spoke briefly to Dean's Probation Officer who mentioned there had been no signs he was involved in criminal activity, although he could pick his friends more carefully, and Dean was doing the best he'd done in the past seven or eight years.

Atmosphere: Dean is easy to chat to and our meeting felt like a guided conversation.

Non-verbals: Dean is always courteous and polite. He maintains good eye contact and is thoughtful and considered in his responses. His eyes at times today seemed to show sadness.

My reflections: Dean mentioned feeling a bit depressed which I could sense. His concept of what is 'fun' seems to have shifted. He presented as being in limbo between 'crime life' and 'being normal'. I asked about being 10% connected to crime and drugs and Dean said he needed to move to being 100% no crime or drugs.

Process: We've covered most of the guide and two more meetings, one to explore how he views a good life and one to feedback, feels about right.

3.5.4 Data organisation

At the start of this study I intended to manage the data collected using NVivo and I set up a project file to organise data and aid analysis. I found though I experienced too great a level of removal from the stories and returned to a traditional paper based approach; using hand written notes on transcriptions in conjunction with word documents to record analyses and interpretations. I organised the data using paper files and Microsoft Word computer documents providing an audit trail of the research process.

3.6 Research relationships and ethics

The term *researcher-as-instrument* (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Creswell, 2007) is used to describe the unique position taken by qualitative researchers. It is they who are the ones that gather the information and although use a protocol it is the *researcher-as-instrument* who is required to be responsive, adaptable and holistic. Plummer (2001) noted that a good relationship between the researcher and the subject is important. The life history approach more than any other involves establishing and maintaining a close relationship with the person. If there is an underlying dislike, lack of respect or hostility this is hard to do. Taking part in life history research can be satisfying. Plummer argued to know that somebody is sufficiently interested in one's life and willing to take it down

in detail can be rewarding. It can be gratifying to clarify one's view of one's own life and to obtain a document about oneself. As a researcher it is important to explain the purpose of the research and one's own motivations for doing it. When I introduced the study to potential participants I was up-front in sharing the reasons for my interest in life transformation. For the life history interviews, I explained the approach, how the process would work and that it was up to them how they wished to talk about their life. I followed Stud Terkel's advice (cited in Plummer, 2001, p. 139),

“The first thing I'd say to any interviewer is ... 'Listen.' It's the second thing I'd say too, and the third and the fourth ... 'Listen ... listen ... listen ... listen.' And if you do, people will talk. They'll *always* talk. Why? Because no one has ever listened to them before in all their lives...”

I also followed Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) suggestion that the interview is best approached as being 'active' and an awareness that although I had techniques to hand to guide the interview process it could also be affected by my mood and how well the participant and I got along. Thus, I attended to personal factors including my emotional attentiveness, engagement, and degree of reciprocity in conversation as much as the wording of questions, clarifications and probes (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The semi-structured interviews can also depend on the rapport established between interviewer and interviewee (Willig, 2008). It combines features of a formal interview as well as an informal one such as the open-endedness of the questions and the emphasis on narrative and experience. Although rapport can be established quickly it can also be disrupted suddenly when interviewer's role as a researcher becomes salient. For example, choosing to reframe an opinion due to awareness of the interview being recorded. I found these interviews required sensitive and ethical negotiation of rapport. It was important not to abuse the informal atmosphere and encourage the participant to reveal more than they may feel comfortable with afterwards.

3.6.1 Ethics

Ethical considerations were of paramount importance for this study. Individuals on a prison sentence or a probation order/license are classified as vulnerable people under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This section outlines how ethics were approached and the following section some dilemmas that arose during the study. Firstly, I submitted and gained approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Exeter. In order to enable an emergent design

without continual recourse back to the committee I included a range of data collection protocols. For example, the possibility of taking photographs, asking to speak a significant other of life history participants for their perspective, and accessing official records. The ethics application was informed by the University of Exeter Data Protection Guidance for Research Students; The University of Exeter Ethical Research Guidelines; BSA Ethical Guidelines (2002); BPS Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines (2006); and BPS Ethical Guidelines on Forensic Psychology (2002). After I gained ethical approval from the University, as described earlier, I submitted a research application to HM Prison Service South West Area Psychologist in accordance with Prison Service Order 7035 (the specified process at the time of applying). The standard ethics procedures summarised below were followed:

- Providing information sheets and inviting questions about the study prior to gaining informed consent.
- Ensuring participants were aware there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and they did not have to talk about anything they felt uncomfortable discussing. In addition, explaining the life history interview asks about their life and may evoke emotions, including distress. I created a list of possible agencies (see appendix H) people could contact for support. I ensured all participants knew they could stop, take a break at any point and withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.
- To ensure confidentiality I informed participants who would access the recordings, how transcripts would be anonymised and data would be kept securely. I invited participants to choose pseudonyms of which four did, the rest were content for me to choose or for their actual name to be used. I decided to use pseudonyms for all participants.

3.6.2 Ethical dilemmas

The dilemmas that arose during the study fell into two broad categories: care of individual participants and researcher self-care. The main issues arose with the life history interviews with none arising from those with staff. Over the duration of the study consent and attention to ethics remained an ongoing negotiation. At times I reminded participants their participation was voluntary, they could withdraw at any time for no reason, and they did not have to talk about any topic they felt uncomfortable discussing. I adopted Josselson's (2007) notion of an *ethical attitude* in narrative

research where there is a duty to protect and honour the privacy and dignity of those who take part in studies and contribute to knowledge. There is simply no good general set of rules or guidelines that ensure moral behaviour when working with other people's narratives. The *ethical attitude* is therefore about taking responsibility in a human relationship coming from an ethics of care and not just rights. I consciously attempted to adopt a caring and responsible role in my relationship with each participant; that is to do no harm. I followed Plummer's (2001) belief that ethical life story research sees the participant as 'an active end in themselves' and not solely a 'passive means to the researchers ends'. With this in mind I consider below the ethical issues I encountered.

Care of individual participants

Some of the participants knew each other as they lived in the same rural community or had been in prison at the same time. On occasions people would ask after others and I would respond in general terms that they were fine the last time I spoke with them. During my first interview with Jason in prison a PEI had to sit in otherwise I could not record the interview. I kept the interview on what I thought was 'safe' topics. However I mistakenly did not address directly the issue of confidentiality with the staff member. When I met with Jason just after he'd been released he told me the staff member had spoken to him after we'd met and, 'did his head in'. He asked me if I thought it would have affected the interview. I responded I was sure it did, as did he. I apologised stating that although I could not change what happened I would ensure it did not occur again.

I was late meeting Ben by ten minutes for our third meeting. We had spoken the day before and I explained I was travelling quite far and might possibly be delayed. This seemed fine. Having realised I was going to be about 10 minutes late I sent a text just before we were due to meet. I arrived at our agreed meeting place and Ben was not there. I phoned a few times and left a message when it went to answer-phone. After waiting over an hour I left and sent a message to say sorry we had not met and hoped we could rearrange. Later that evening I got a text from an unknown mobile number stating, 'Fuk off' to which I did not respond. I spoke to my supervisor and agreed to leave it for Ben to contact me if he wished to meet again.

Many participants spoke about how speaking about their life had been a useful process. On a couple of occasions people told me they did not want to share certain experiences. I did not ask further and ensured they were aware that was absolutely fine. Eliza became visibly upset talking about the events leading to her arrest, I ensured she was okay to carry on and we moved on to discuss less sensitive topics before the close

of our meeting. John told me after our first meeting it had 'done his head in' a bit as he'd been avoiding thinking about release. I apologised and said that was not my intention and he replied it was not my fault and he was okay. I provided him with the list of agencies and he said he would also be speaking with his Probation Officer soon. Many of the interviews took place in public places. After my first meeting with Tom he requested that we met elsewhere as he knew one of the café staff from his job. I was appreciative he was able to tell me he was uncomfortable and we were able to find an alternative location to meet. On occasions I felt that participants 'hosted' me. Simon would ensure we always had drinks and participants often offered to buy coffee or tea.

Researcher self-care

Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong (2007, p. 328) argued, "Researchers undertaking qualitative research on sensitive topics, need to be able to make an assessment of the impact of the research on both the participants *and* themselves". Tracy (2010, p. 849) also commented, "The most successful researchers are willingly self-critical, viewing their own actions through the eyes of others while also maintaining resilience and energy through acute sensitivity to their own well-being." A risk for researchers that are not able to de-brief is the carrying of research stories that may be detrimental to their emotional well-being (Warr, 2004). To address this issue I aimed to conduct only one life history interview a day. This was not always possible as it was more convenient to interview two participants at a probation office in a day. In-between interviews I ensured I took a break and, once completed, I used note-taking in my research journal as an opportunity to debrief. Each month I reviewed the progress of this study and completed a lessons learned log. This enabled me to consider ethical issues that had arisen and use supervision sessions to process and agree responses. I found it useful to build in activities, such as exercise and watching films, to 'switch off' from processing stories. I addressed the issue of my personal safety by ensuring my partner, Paul, was aware of the area I was visiting and the time I would be finished. When I traveled to an unknown area for the first time I arrived early to get my bearings. Not once during any interview did I become concerned for my safety. At one point during this study I experienced a high level of pressure due to attending a Coroner's Inquest as an expert witness immediately followed by a serious health issue of a close relative. During this time I found an inability to 'indwell' with participant's life stories as I sought to manage my own emotional well-being. I focused on other research activities

returning to 'indwelling' when I felt I could do them justice. I was fortunate this occurred close to the end of data collection and it led to some self-questioning:

02/2011

During the process of this research I have become aware of how some life stories have touched on my own. Specifically, I have been faced with my own active silence of certain stories in my life. This has had an unexpected impact. I've asked myself why I'm so involved in hearing and eliciting stories from others and choose to silence my own. After reflecting, and discussing with others, I will return to this post-study. What it highlighted was how it can be socially acceptable to open up and share some stories but not others.

3.7 Analyses and interpretation

This section outlines the phases of analysis and interpretation undertaken and was not as smooth as I portray. Analysis is a pervasive activity throughout the life of the study and not just a stage during it (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The collection of data and analysis proceeded in an iterative manner and analysis of early interviews informed questions in later interviews and analysis. There currently exists a variety of ways to do narrative analysis and scholars in this area recommend it is beneficial to use multiple forms. Below I set out my approach that was ultimately rooted in my inquiry into aspects of how people transform criminal lives. I concur with Frank (2010), Gubrium & Holstein (2009) and Riessman (2008) that state there is not a prescribed method a researcher should follow for doing narrative analysis. There are no canons, formal rules or standardised techniques rather it is an intuitive and flexible process. Hence, I referred to previous work, guidelines and exemplars rather than a prescriptive step-by-step approach to analysis and interpretation. I undertook a process I felt was relevant and appropriate to this inquiry and the stories and experiences the participants shared.

My analysis focused on the ontological and public narratives as defined by Somers (1994) and the personal and interpersonal level as proposed by Murray (2000). The personal level focuses on how the individual interprets the world and the interpersonal level considers the character of interaction between individuals and how the person constructs identity through narrating their life to others. The analysis was also informed by Holstein & Gubrium (2000) and their notion of analysing the *whats* or the *hows* of social life. The *hows* focuses on questions about why a story is told in certain ways and the *whats* focuses on the content and the plot of what is said (Sparkes, 2005). In addition I make use of their notion of analytic bracketing which is the shifting back and forth between the *hows* and *whats* of the narrative. This is a methodological, rather than ontological, action and a strategy for shifting perspectives in order to capture complexity. It is also a way of putting some empirical interests to one side while

focusing on others (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Many narrative scholars advocate multiple forms of analysis, as this is more valuable than applying just one type. Analytic bracketing facilitates exploration of different aspects in terms of what and how it is said as well as applying different theoretical lenses and sensitising concepts. What follows is an outline of the phases involved in my analysis and interpretation of the narratives.

3.7.1 Phase one

After an interview, and as soon as practically possible, notes about it were made in my research journal including initial analytic thoughts. The interviews that had been recorded were transcribed or detailed observation notes typed up verbatim. Prior to the next interview, I read the relevant interview transcript and notes or listened to the interview recording in its entirety to get a sense of the areas that had been covered and of the narrative. For each transcript, or observation notes, codes were recorded on the margins. This code was put on a word document followed with a memo that defined the code. For life history interviews this led to a document for each participant containing initial impressions from the interviews, research journal, and other information.

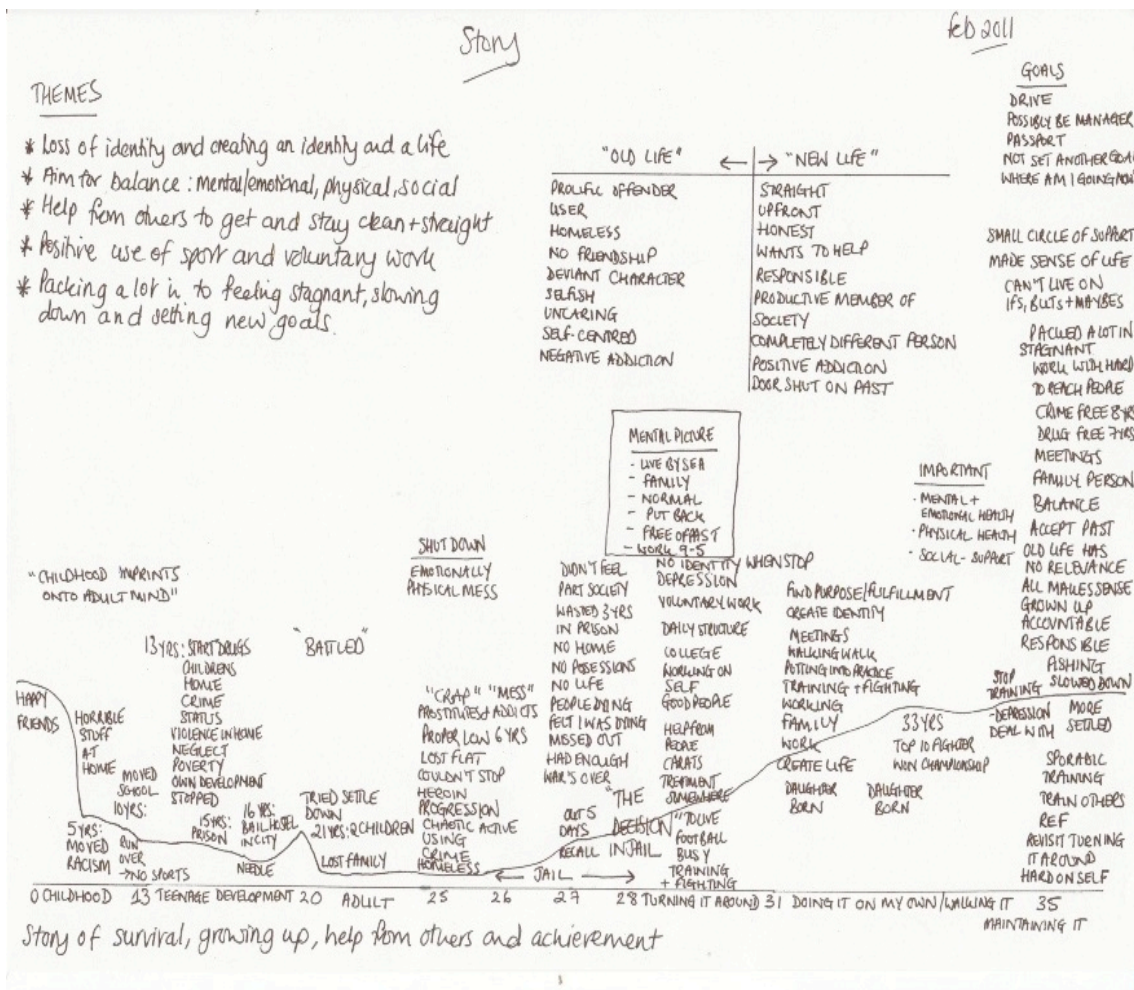
3.7.2 Phase two

Within this phase focus was on the *whats* of the life history interviews, specifically, what does the story tell us? This analysis is useful for considering a person's whole story, to see how identities shift over time and identifying turning points (Riessman, 2001). The focus is on the complete life history of the individual and what content it presents. I followed Lieblich et al.'s (1998, pp. 62-63) holistic-content perspective:

- Immerse self in the material several times until a pattern emerges usually in the form of keeping focus on the entire story.
- Put an initial and global impression of the case into writing noting contradictions to the general impression as well as unusual features.
- Noting special foci or themes in the story as a whole. A special focus is distinguished by the space given to the theme and its repetitive nature although omissions in some aspects of the story or a brief reference can indicate a foci.
- Coding various themes in the story and reading separately and repeatedly in each case. Tracking and examining patterns and contradictions to the themes.
- Writing and discussing the case can be productive with other independent readers. The goal is interpretive work and not to obtain inter-rater reliability.

Writing the case led to two documents for each participant. Firstly, a record of global impressions, special foci, patterns of assumptions, turning points, and the plot and structure of each life history. Secondly, I constructed a lifeline for each participant recording key events and phrases as spoken by the participant over their life, the key foci of the person's story (i.e. what the story seemed to be about), and four to seven sub-themes that emerged from my reading of the story. This resulted in a visual graphic I named a 'short story summary' that were shared and amended with the majority of participants (see figure 1 as an example). Lifelines, also referred to as timelines, have been used beneficially in research where people are asked to reflect on their past, present and future and as a way to represent critical events and pathways to 'recovery' (Bagnoli, 2009, Berends, 2011). This was an opportunity to provide a concise and holistic summary of participants' stories of their lived experience. A great deal of information can be shown whilst still capturing richness, uniqueness and complexity.

Figure 1: Tom's story summary



3.7.3 Phase three

This phase of analysis involved a continued focus on the *whats* applying a thematic approach (Riessman, 2008) to reading both the life history and staff semi-structured interviews. These areas were driven by this study's focus on embodiment, physical activity, ageing, and sustaining desistance. The following questions assisted analysis:

- *Embodiment*: Where, when and how does the body become visible and what does this mean? What is the corporeal dimension of transforming a life? What is the body telling me about the story and storyteller?
- *Physical activity*: What role does physical activity play in desistance?
- *Ageing*: What is said about ageing? How is ageing talked about?
- *Sustaining desistance*: How do people keep going? How is success viewed?

I colour-coded transcripts to identify where, for example, physical activity, the body and ageing arose. This led to a number of codes that I further analysed leading to a second level of themes for both participants and staff. The staff semi-structured interviews were thematically analysed using the same process focusing on quotes on the following topics: success, (un)healthy living, identity/mindset, turning points, setbacks, sustaining desistance, how improve services and 'other points'. For the topic of success a third level of analysis was undertaken leading to a higher order abstract theme. A prominent theme that emerged from the life history narratives, that was not part of my initial research focus, was spirituality including religious and non-religious aspects.

3.7.4 Phase four

The next phase of analysis focused less on themes and more on *how* the life histories worked for participants (Frank, 2010), and asking what the stories do and how they work on the storyteller. Rather than thematically coding content this requires a more artful listening and questioning of the stories exploring the relationship space between a story, a storyteller and a listener. A performative analysis was undertaken to explore *how* identity is constructed, claimed and ultimately performed. This was informed by sensitising concepts from the narrative literature including coherence and restorying. In order to understand what kinds of identities are constructed in the stories I drew on two approaches. One proposed by Spector-Mersel (2011) who proposed six mechanisms of selection that are considered to be the organising principles of narration. This is a

holistic strategy that fitted well with the approach of my inquiry. This involved establishing a valued *Endpoint* - the point of the story to be told.

I also focused on asking what stories do as proposed by Frank (2010). This dialogical narrative analysis involves letting stories breathe by studying how they do what they can do. This is more a method of questioning to allow movement of thought. The analysis focused on building a typology of narrative forms. Frank (1995) argued that a 'narrative type' is the most general storyline that can be recognised as underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories. Frank acknowledged there is a risk of putting people and stories into boxes and encouraging the monological stance that the boxes are more real than the stories. However, he argued that if hermeneutic openness is sustained typologies can also enhance appreciation (Frank, 2010). The types are of narratives and not of people themselves; each story is an instance but also depends on other stories. He argued that a typology of narratives recognises that people use narrative resources available to them culture in constructing their stories. Thus, the task is to always listen for another type. The benefits of this approach are in their usefulness in guiding listening and storytelling and how narratives may change over time. It can also assist on an individual level, "naming narrative types can authorise the telling of particular stories, and it can also liberate people from stories they no longer want to tell." (p.119). Below I outline my journey in identifying a typology:

Immersion: This involved reading the content and how storytellers dealt with problems of narration so that thought was given not just to content but also the storytelling itself. I began to list types along a continuum I referred to as human functioning. This involved attention to the capacities stories have in different ways and reflected the types of work that stories do and how they do it. I was particularly informed by the questions of who is holding their own in life and how? And what is the point of the story being told (i.e. the *Endpoint*)?

Revision: The types become identifiable as they were named and were then compelled or collapsed depending on the descriptive force of its names. Those stories that did not fit the type led to the expansion of a type or the creation of a new type. There is no rule to say when to stop. Eventually a point is reached where as an analyst you have enough. I also shared versions with independent others to confirm whether they recognised the types as expressing something about the stories they described.

Retelling: Frank recommended that the best way is to tell stories to oneself. To tell the story requires attention to what the story's distinctive capacities are, what work the story is doing and what issues it raises. Typology building depends on these foci of attention. I retold the stories in a series of short stories based on the actual narratives and experiences from participants' life histories. These add richness, depth and significance and show some of the personal elements alongside contextual aspects to people's stories.

My typology building did not occur in a discrete event. Throughout the process of this study I was trying to make sense of the stories I was being told. A key breakthrough came after I shared my continuum with a fellow PhD researcher. This led to my realisation that it contained a typology of narratives: destruct, survive, cope and flourish. They were there all along I had just not conceptualised the stories that way.

3.7.5 Analysis and interpretation summary

Interview transcripts, observation notes, research journal entries, short story summaries, and word documents of the development of codes, impressions, and themes provide an audit trail that makes the analysis procedure more explicit (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I employed a combination of an inductive and a deductive approach to analysis. I began with analytic interests that guided my inquiry into participant's stories of lived experience and staff perspective. This is most evident in the thematic analysis. It was also inductive by being open to topics that were not related to interests and emerged from analysis and interpretation. This was apparent in the identification of spirituality.

3.8 Representation

This section is concerned with the dilemma or challenge of how best to represent research. Qualitative scholars have argued that writing is a way 'knowing' and a method of discovery and analysis. They recommend an awareness of different genres and emphasise that how we write is an, 'analytical issue' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Plummer, 2001; Richardson, 2000a). Sparkes (2002) commented that one of the goals of qualitative research is to retell lived experience and make the worlds of others accessible to the reader. With this in mind there are various forms available to represent the analysis and the research. As Sparkes argued, it is important to make strategic, principled, reflexive and informed choices about when to use different forms of representation and why that form serves a purpose better than another form. It is not

arguing that one genre is better than the other. Rather there are a variety of practices available. Plummer (2001) noted that Denzin has described that social science writing has passed through various moments one of which is a 'crisis of representation'. Sparkes (2002) argued this is still around nearly ten years ago in terms of new models of truth, method and representation being sought and, I would argue, this issue is still as pressing today.

There are a number of rationales as to why a different way to represent data might be useful. In relation to my study I believe it is important to give voice to the participants' stories that have and are trying to transform their lives and a traditional approach is not always reader friendly. By showing a story rather than telling this may have more of an impact, be more persuasive and further understanding in an accessible way so that someone outside of the research community can read and understand. This thesis draws on three forms of representation.

Modified realist tale: This is beneficial as an accessible genre within which to pragmatically connect theory to data and provide a depiction of a social world in its complexity. It creates a space for people's voices to be heard in a coherent context with specific points in mind (Sparkes, 2002).

Confessional tales: These are used throughout the thesis where I judged appropriate by incorporating journal extracts or a story of my experience. The rationale is to show the dilemmas I experienced and reveal more about myself as an author including my own prejudices, assumptions, embodiment, emotions and perspectives in doing the research. The purpose of this is to complement and provide further insight and expansion to the realist tale. It enables my authorial presence to be brought into the open and discussed.

Creative non-fictions: These are stories based on participants' life histories. This form enables me to portray complexity without obscuring alternative interpretations and condense experience to create a sense of empathetic understanding. The purpose is to elaborate and make points without linking to theory at times and *evoke* and *show* rather than *tell* a point. The aim is not to be tied to a theoretical position or finalise participants' stories. All of the participants' lives are still ongoing, living and breathing. My aim is not to bury voices beneath layers of analysis but to capture their humanness, the mystery of lived experience and the emotional texture of the experience (Sparkes, 2002).

These representational choices were not simply made because I enjoy writing those genres. I am most comfortable with the scientific tale, which I personally find easier to write. I did however in part choose these genres that were similar to scholars and writers that have inspired, engaged, and challenged my thinking.

3.9 Judging a qualitative study

The debates and discussions concerning how to assess, judge or evaluate the quality of a qualitative study are prevalent in the literature (see Bochner, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Richardson, 2000b; Seale, 1999, 2002; Sparkes, 1998, 2001; Sparkes & Smith, 2009; Tracy, 2010). One debate is on whether to use a global or universal approach or one that is more specific to the qualitative approach undertaken in the research (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2007). Another debate is whether to use a specific criteria or a set of best practices or guidelines that allow fluid application to a specific research study. Seale (2002, p. 99) argued, “Good quality social research has the character of a well-crafted artefact.” Criteria should be regarded as providing ‘debatable principles’ rather than ‘rules to follow’ (p. 107). My aim here is not to extend discussion of these debates but rather to offer a position so the quality of this study can be assessed. One way to position oneself is to offer a number of lists that could be considered and one or more picked to aid judgments about the quality of this study. The three offered below have been chosen for two reasons: they have been applied to similar studies and they are of specific relevance to a narrative inquiry. They should be considered a list of characteristics to judge quality rather than as a preordained and universal standard (Sparkes & Smith, 2009).

Firstly, Tracy (2010) provides an eight-point conceptualisation that represents ‘universal’ hallmarks for high quality qualitative methods across paradigms. This offers a common language of excellence for qualitative research, a pedagogical compass and may assist engagement with ‘power-holders’ who know little about qualitative work or regard it as ‘just a good story’.

Worthy topic: The topic of the research is relevant; timely; significant; interesting.

Rich rigor: The study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs; data and time in the field; sample(s); contexts(s); data collection and analysis processes.

Sincerity: The study is characterized by self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases, inclinations of the researcher(s); transparency about methods and challenges.

Credibility: The research is marked by thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit knowledge; showing rather than telling; triangulation or crystallisation; multivocality; participant reflections.

Resonance: The researcher influences, affects, or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through aesthetic, evocative representation; naturalistic generalisations; transferable findings.

Significant contribution: The research provides a significant contribution conceptually/theoretically; practically; morally; methodologically; heuristically.

Ethical: The research considers procedural ethics; situational and culturally specific ethics; relational ethics; exiting ethics.

Meaningful coherence: The study achieves what it purports to be about; uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals; meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings and interpretations with each other.

The second list is drawn from Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 173). They noted the interpretive perspective asserts that narrative materials, like reality itself, can be read, understood and analysed in diverse ways. This is not necessarily an indication of inadequate scholarship. They proposed in narrative inquiry what is significant is not referring directly to the truth-value of a narrative study; rather it's the sharing of one's views and making sense of narratives in the eyes of a community of researchers and interested informed individuals. They offer four guidelines to evaluate narrative studies:

Width: The comprehensiveness of evidence. This dimension refers to the quality of the interview or the observations as well as the proposed interpretation or analysis. Numerous quotations in reporting narrative studies, as well as suggestions of alternative explanations, should be provided for the reader's judgment of the evidence and its interpretation.

Coherence: The way different parts of the interpretations create a complete and meaningful picture. Coherence can be evaluated both internally, in terms of how the parts fit together, and externally, against existing theories and previous research.

Insightfulness: The sense of innovation or originality in the presentation of the story and its analysis. Close to this criterion is the question of whether reading the analysis of the life story of an ‘other’ has resulted in greater comprehension and insight regarding the reader’s own life.

Parsimony: The ability to provide an analysis based on small number of concepts, and elegance or aesthetic appeal that relates to the literary merits of written or oral presentations of the story and its analysis.

The final list offered is by Richardson (2000b) reflecting on how to judge ethnographic work and offers five characteristics combining a creative arts lens with an analytical/science lens.

Substantive contribution: Does this piece contribute to our understanding of social-life? Does the writer demonstrate a deeply grounded (if embedded) human-world understanding and perspective? How has this perspective informed the construction of the text?

Aesthetic merit: Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Does the use of creative analytical practices open up the text, invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

Reflexivity: How did the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? Ethical issues? How has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgments about the point of view? Do authors hold themselves accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people they have studied?

Impact: Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually? Generate new questions? Move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me to action?

Expresses a reality: Does this text embody a fleshed out, embodied sense of lived-experience? Does it seem “true”- a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”?

3.10 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the philosophical and methodological underpinnings of this narrative study and described who was spoken to and how data was collected, analysed, interpreted and represented. I provided a list of options for judging the quality of the research to aid the reader to make decisions about the quality of this study. This lays the foundation for the following six chapters where I share and represent the analyses and interpretations that emerged in this research. This begins with a consideration of the body and embodiment processes in transforming a criminal life.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRANSFORMING BODIES

4.1 Introduction

“Selves without bodies don’t make much sense in human terms.”
Jenkins (2008, p. 68)

This chapter is a modest attempt to explore the social and personal significance of the body in the process of life transformation. I do not suggest that this will provide a simple answer or the whole story. Rather my aim is to focus on the body and embodiment processes and gain further insights into how people desist from crime. I begin by presenting the conceptual frameworks that provide the analytical lenses to give a reading of the life stories and staff interviews and enable an exploration of the ‘body-self’. This is followed by representing the narrative thematic analysis that identifies the different aspects of an embodied identity transformation. This brings to the fore the significance of acquiring *embodied care* and *physical capital*. The chapter closes with a discussion of the potential insights that a consideration of the ‘transforming’ body and body-self relationships can provide for theoretical development in understandings of desistance and identity (re)construction.

4.2 Sociology of the body

Within Chapter Two I commented on the paucity of scholarly attention to the body and the concept of embodiment in Criminology and Forensic psychology. Drawing from Yarnal, Hutchinson & Chow (2006), I argue that conceptualising the notion of the ‘mind and body’ within a framework is central to generating further theoretical insights into life transformations and capture the embodied nature of the change process. To do this I draw on recent work from the sociology of the body. In this section I outline two perspectives drawn from this sub-discipline to act as a heuristic guide in my exploration of the ‘transforming body’. Allen Collinson & Hockey (2007) highlighted that the concept of embodiment opens up how to think about the body as both a living and lived experience. This directs attention to how the body and the embodied nature of lived experience is also integral to the process of identity transformation. Prior to presenting these perspectives I present the overarching position adopted. Waskul & Vannini (2006) provided the following definition of embodiment from a general interactionist perspective where there the body is considered more than ‘a tangible, physical, corporeal object’ it is also,

“an enormous vessel of meaning of utmost significance to both personhood and society. ... From this perspective, the term “embodiment” refers quite precisely to the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a subject-body.” (p. 3)

The shift to thinking about identity to include the body and physical experiences and the idea that we never perceive our world as pure consciousness owes much to the phenomenological approach of Merleau-Ponty (Tulle, 2008). Goffman (1959) also recognised the body as a site for learning and that people do not merely have a body, they actively ‘do’ or ‘perform’ a body so it is fashioned, crafted, negotiated, manipulated and ritualised in social and cultural conventions (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). Hence, there is a relational element involved whereby transforming a body requires constant and significant interactions with other bodies, selves and objects in its environment in which the performances of others are ‘read’ by cultural members as actors. This focuses attention on the ‘performing’ of identity and the notion that to engage in a particular kind of activity is to be that kind of person (Lofland, 1980).

Howson (2004) noted that to present ourselves as competent social actors we all engage in body work which helps to present ourselves as particular kinds of people and create an identity for ourselves. Goffman (1959) highlighted the notion of embodied intention and that bodies and their presentation have a fundamental role to play in the construction of personal and social identities and the consequent maintenance, or not, of those identities (Ford & Brown, 2006). The body is not static and it is forever both ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ and therefore capable of both action and performance in the constitution of self-identity (Grosz, 1994; Griffin, 2010). We see the world and operate from the vantage point of our own body and so embodiment is a critical component of social interaction. As Howson (2004) stated,

“Social constructionism and symbolic interactionism highlight the importance of the human body for social expression and interaction, for making and remaking social life.” (p.7). Thus, “competent social interaction and the acquisition of personhood is dependent on becoming competent embodied beings.” (p. 12).

The body is consequently a crucial dimension of identity and of social interaction and is constantly in the process of making, remaking, being and becoming.

I draw on two perspectives to provide the ‘thinking tools’ with which to explore the participants’ life stories and the role of the body in desistance from crime. These are

not the only perspectives available, however I consider these are beneficial to guide my analysis. Each will now be outlined in detail.

4.2.1 Embodied social action

Shilling (1997) draws on the work of Bourdieu and pragmatist theory to elaborate the notion of habitus to consider the modalities of action that might account for continuity and change. This provided a potentially relevant analytic lens given my focus on transformation rather than demonstrating the difficulty of change and the reproduction of criminal lives. Shilling (2003) proposed there are intractable problems faced by theorists that seek to explain social action without accounting for the embodied character of humans. He argued there is the need for balance between extreme social constructionism and biological determinism. The human body is important as it shapes our identities and structures our interventions in and classifications of the world. Our sense, knowledgeability and capability to act are integrally related to the fact we are embodied beings. Social relations affect the development of our bodies but the body is not simply explained away by those relations. Shilling (2003, p. 10) stated, “Human bodies are taken up and transformed as a result of living in society but they remain material, physical and biological entities.” He argued there has been uncertainty within sociology in terms of identifying what the body actually *is*. This has been compounded by the lack of a common approach to the body in society; consequently there is little which unites the diversity of studies which have been produced on the body and embodiment. Shilling (2008) therefore developed,

“an analytical framework, informed by pragmatism’s account of the external and internal environments of human action, that explores how people’s embodied appearances, identities and capacities are shaped by various combinations of habit, crisis, and creativity.” (p. 1)

And argued,

“that while we are not simply our organic bodies, it is by *living in, attending to, and working on* our bodies that we become fully embodied beings able to realise our potentialities in a variety of ways.” (p. 7)

This framework provided a tool with which to analyse embodied action without becoming reductionist and to incorporate the external social and physical environment and the internal environment of bodily being. Pragmatism views humans as always already active and so it is not the initiation of action that has to be explained but the

characteristics of how people act in certain situations (Shilling, 2008). The focus of this approach is on the corporeal dimensions of social actions. Shilling (2008, p.12) proposed three phases of embodied action, habits, crises and creative actions. These emerge as pre-reflexive and intentional human beings engage with the complexities of the world around them, “and discover the possibilities of action made available to them by their bodily potentialities and situated lives.”

Habitual continuity: Where embodied individuals discover routinised modes of behaviour that are more or less effective in joining them to, and managing, their surroundings. They enable people to operate effectively. There is a relative equilibrium in the relationship between the social and physical environment, biological need and bodily potentialities. Habits can affect an increase in the capacities of an embodied individual and they can damage and constrain. They are more than reoccurrence of acts as they can have significant consequences for a person’s physical being and identity as they, “reside in and shape the deepest recesses” of the embodied person (p.15). Shilling noted that habits are open to change and individuals can seek to learn new habits though this can be difficult. It is most likely to succeed with a change to the external environment that forms part of the routinised behaviours. There may be times when a habit can be blocked and if shown to be inadequate, the next phase is entered.

Crisis: This occurs when a habit becomes ineffective due to a conflict between the external physical and social world in which people live and their internal world of biological needs and bodily potentialities. It may also occur when previously successful habits clash which leads to the need to make a choice. If habits continue it can lead to ineffectiveness and possibly damage the person who rejects the need for change. This may threaten the continuity and coherence of an embodied individual and is unlikely to be welcomed or enjoyed. This can be a prelude to ‘new beginnings’ leading to the third phase.

Creativity: This is performed when there is a need to find a solution when a habit(s) have ceased to be effective. It is associated with actions where aspects of the self or environment are changed in order to repair or enhance one’s embodied capacities for action. This re-establishes a productive relationship between the embodied subject and the environment or re-secures the person a stability essential to living. Creativity requires practical reflection and an

engaged deliberation with one's surroundings. This includes bodily feelings and experiences. Creative choices are made by being 'sensitive' to the integrity of options and a 'feeling' of having done justice to all the facts. A new mode of acting can take root and become routinised as habit. Experiences of revelation or epiphany may occur when a person is in the grip of a realisation that their relationship with the environment could be radically different.

The three modalities should not be seen as entirely separate but as related ways of acting undertaken in practical contexts which cycle in and out of people's lives depending on their specific circumstances. Shilling argued it is possible for those stigmatised within a community to reflect critically on their 'spoiled identity' and discover they are more capable than society assumes and seek to develop an alternative sense of self. This in turn can have positive consequences for their health and physical capacities. This is because pragmatism views the development of identity as not requiring a 'domination' of one's environment rather it is likely to require initiative, adventure, experiment, and intelligent engagement with and evaluation of the circumstances in which people find themselves. This approach provided a flexible and dynamic framework with which to analyse the understudied corporeal dimensions of an embodied social action such as transforming criminal lives and identity.

4.2.2 Narrative body

The second perspective is the narrative body which is situated in the stories we tell to ourselves and the stories others tell about their own and others bodies (Waskul & Vannini, 2006). By focusing on peoples' body narratives it provides another way to explore how people experience their bodies and the interaction with identities over time and in specific contexts (Sparkes, 1999). A number of scholars (Jackson, 1990; Silvennoinen, 1999; Sparkes, 1996, 1997, 1999) suggested that the body often defines life events and our sense of self is inextricably linked to perceptions of the physical body. The body is a storyteller and narratives are embodied (Becker, 1999; Eakin, 1999, 2008; Sparkes & Silvennoinen, 1999).

Frank (1991) draws attention to the corporeal character of bodies which provide people with a means of acting as well as constraining. When making sense of our experiences, he argued that we not only tell stories *about* our bodies we tell stories *out of* and *through* them. The body is cause, topic and instrument of whatever story is told. The kind of body one has and is becomes crucial to the kind of story told. Eakin (1999,

2008) proposed that the self is a storied and embodied process as well as relational and dynamic. Human identities can therefore be considered to be grounded in the experience of their bodies. If storytelling is an embodied and relational activity it has been argued that we must pay attention to both the language people use to communicate and how bodies perform, create and are created by narratives. Just as bodily experiences are shaped by and help shape narrative both the physical body and the stories we tell impact on our sense of identity, how order is imposed on embodied experiences, and how we make sense of events and actions in our lives (Sparkes, 1997, 1999). As Connell (1995, p.53) suggested, “bodily experiences are often central in memories of our lives, and thus our understanding of who and what we are.”

Sparkes & Smith (2011) commented that there needs to be recognition that some people can have a greater opportunity than others to (re)negotiate and change aspects of their lives as bodies in relation to specific types and categories such as gender, age, social class, sexuality, ableness, ethnicity, race and religion. The way a narrative is told will depend strongly on the cultural discourses available to the person in their particular social location in time, culture and society. Hence, narrative plays a role in shaping life and connecting the materiality of the flesh to wider discursive formations and structures in society (Phoenix & Sparkes, 2009; Sparkes & Smith, 2011).

The narrative or storied perspective provides an important lens with which to analyse the transforming body and the body-self-society relationship of the individual (Sparkes & Smith, 2002). This approach has mainly been used in research concerning the sociological study of the body in sport, physical activity and ill health. This chapter considers the analytical framework offered by Frank (1991, 1995) and although developed from understanding the ‘ill body’, Ford & Brown (2006) argued his insights can relate to all human activity. Firstly, as they prompt consideration of certain body problems that all individuals must face. Secondly, the role of agency is recognised and attributed to the body. Frank theorised there are four questions that the body must ask itself as it undertakes action in relationship to some object.

- (1) *Control*: how predictable the body’s performance will be?
- (2) *Desire*: is the body lacking or producing?
- (3) *Other-relatedness*: the body’s sense of its relation to others. Is the body monadic and closed or dyadic and existing in relation to others?
- (4) *Self-relatedness*: is the body associating itself with its own corporeality or feel disassociated?

As bodies respond to these four action problems over time body usages emerge which act as a 'typical' solution to these problems. Frank identified four 'ideal' types that suggest a typical style of how the body is experienced and used in action. They do not represent real world people but are constructions to describe theoretical extremes. In real life actual body-selves are likely to represent a mixture of these ideal types:

The disciplined body: This body is based on making itself predictable mainly in actions of self-regimentation and its model is the monastic order. Desire is lacking and it is monadic, becoming isolated even when performing among others. It is disassociated from itself and the most important action problems revolve around control. Its most serious crisis is loss of control.

The mirroring body: The body remains predictable as it reflects that which is around it. Its medium is consumption and attempts to recreate the body of the individual in the image of other bodies. Although open to the external world it is monadic in its appropriation of it. It endlessly produces desires through consumption and is associated with itself.

The dominating body: The essential quality of this body is the construction of their desire as lacking. It is aware of its own contingency and feels threatened by the unknown. It is dyadic in relation with other bodies but is against rather than for them. It is disassociated from itself and this enables it to punish and absorb punishment. Its medium is force and the model is war.

The communicative body: This is an idealised type and is in the process of creating itself. It represents an ethical ideal to strive for. It wants to relieve the suffering of others through sharing the story of their experience. Contingency has become its possibility and it is dyadic rather than monadic in relations with others. It is associated with itself and desire is producing.

4.2.3. Approach to analysis

My analysis of embodiment processes in transforming criminal lives draws on the phases proposed by Shilling's embodied social action framework and considers Frank's typology of the narrative body. In this respect I consider the desistance process to be a form of *embodied and storied social action*. Each action phase will be considered and, following Smith & Watson (2001), I highlight where, when and how the body becomes

visible in the participants' and staff stories and my interpretation of their meanings. At this stage I do not consider the narrative resources and 'elective affinities' to which participants are drawn as this is considered in Chapter Seven.

4.3 Physical aspects of transforming a life

4.3.1 Habits

Within this section the focus is on themes of the body that emerged when participants were habitually involved in a criminal lifestyle. There were many stories of how their body was involved in lives of *aggression and violence*. A Probation Support Officer spoke about an individual, nearly 30 years old, whose knees were beaten with a baseball bat and who was thrown out of car at high speed because he had not paid back 'drug money'. He would not name the people that did it as, 'he accepted the violence that goes with that world.' Simon shared how he used sport in an aggressive way in prison to avoid fights. He would play football and, 'make an impression' and, 'go back to normal very quickly'. This was to make other prisoners wary of him and consider him 'unpredictable'. While in care from early involvement in crime and running away from home Mark explained if you did not show your aggression then people would 'walk all over you.' He described how he would always fight people whether they were 'bigger or harder' as he believed it was important to show you could 'handle yourself' so that people would 'leave you alone'. Jason described that looking back he was not happy selling drugs and described the lifestyle as very argumentative, and, 'just like a war' and 'a headache, massive headache.' Jack described how has been 'slashed in the face' and 'smashed about':

I have to remember I have been there, and I have hit people and I have done things, and I have been a drug dealer ten years so I probably was a little bit of something but I'm not. I didn't feel I was.

Christine shared with me the story of the scars on her arms which came from self-harming when she felt fed up and a failure in life. Her Mother had seriously self-harmed and she believed it was a learnt behaviour. Christine explained how another scar came from when she was so angry with her Dad she punched a window and cut the tendons in her arm. The hospital had to cut further to pull the tendons down which resulted in greater scarring. When she was younger she explained she gained a reputation from fighting and shared if she returned to her life she would be 'a monster'.

Secondly, when discussing their criminal lifestyle many of the participants, particularly those with serious drug addictions, described a similar *routine* to Mark:

Jo: What was your life like out there?

Mark: Hectic.

Jo: Yeah, what would be

Mark: Living day-by-day, just getting money for drugs. Well that's what, you know, ripping off everybody, robbing, looking like a mess. I came in [prison] nine and a half stone, near death, you know what I mean. From crack and heroin.

Sam described struggling with habits in his lifestyle at the time we met:

In and out rehabs, in and out prison. In and out of court. In and out of police stations until you break that cycle, stop taking or obviously get methadone or subutex or ... But I mean even now I still dabble and I know people that its .. its killed. Friends that died from it. Like I got a blood clot in my leg at the moment ... and I still ... I still cannot say no. I still ... still take it now and then, do you know what I mean, when I got a bit of money and stuff. I don't know whether it's just habit where I've been doing it for so long.

John spoke about prison and how his body adapted to institutions and although, 'it sounds terrifying' he said, 'you learn to live with it, like I was saying earlier your body learns to cope with it and you do just cope with it.'

Many of the participants had cut off themselves off from other people or *other bodies*. Nearly all told me that if they were still heavily involved in a criminal life they would not have been speaking to me for this study at all. Andrew shared that from an early age he learnt that he needed to look after and survive by himself. This kept him away from people and prevented him getting close to others. Sam described that he ended up unable to have proper relationships with people linking this to his identity:

In a way you just become sort of a robot sort of thing you know. Yeah. And all you keep thinking about is getting, using and everything else goes out the window do you know what I mean? Like family and then you forget, you know, forget about how other people like say brothers and sisters or your family, your Mum and Dad or whatever. Forget how people see you, do you know what I mean? Yeah. And then you just don't really care really, I don't suppose.

Rebecca who had been progressing prior to our meeting and recently got back into a crime routine shared her Dad told her, 'You're not the person six months ago' and:

They said it in court the other day at my review. They said even though I'm looking better now than I was a couple of weeks ago I'm still not the same person that I was six, seven months ago. And I can see that's totally different. Totally different.

A *physical deterioration* and *bodily neglect* was described over time in a crime and drug life. A PEI spoke about his experience of seeing people coming into prison:

A lot of these lads have been on drugs you know, and they're not physically, you know, they've never been physically fit. Never been mentally prepared for anything that's a challenge to be honest.

A Senior PEI responded when I asked about people that come in and out of prison a lot:

So I don't suppose it's a very healthy lifestyle, umm, come into prison looking about ten years older and world-weary almost.

Some participants expressed a deterioration particularly after leaving prison when health gains did not last as Ben described:

I was in a physical mess, I was you know. My body was rejecting the heroin you know, it's not as if I was clucking, it was my body telling me that enough was enough. I'd got to a stage that ... I was a physical wreck you know. Just because I had nice clothes and that didn't mean I looked well. I didn't. You know I was about seven stone.

For some death of their body-self is a very real prospect. Rebecca told me that in her current state if she does not change the next thing for her will be death when change will be too late. Jamie told me how he is surprised he is still alive:

Even my Mum, I remember one night I was on the run from the old Bill and stopped at my Mum's house and woke up the next morning and she was looking at me and I said, 'What you looking at me for?' She said, 'I was just looking at you. I thought you was dead.' For your own Mum to say that was ... it was horrible.

A stark reality is that with ongoing body-self neglect some people do end up with serious health issues and premature death. Linked to the theme of physical deterioration is a lack of *physical awareness* of the body for some. When I asked participants if they realised how they looked some stated that they did not know or had convinced themselves that they were looking well and, 'everything was okay'. A few of the participants told me stories of photos taken of them that they were shown by the police or by family where they could see how bad or 'dodgy' they looked. Tom shared his experience of how he looked in a life of crime and addiction:

Jo: So what did you physically look like?

Tom: I was a physical mess. Before I went to jail my arms was about that thin [extends arm and shows wrist size] the same size as my wrist all the way up. No definition. All I had was track marks. That's it. That's it. Didn't have no home, no possessions, the clothes I stood up in, that's it.

Jo: Yeah. Were you conscious at the time of how you looked?

Tom: No. You just don't, you don't care. Smell, do you know what I mean. You know when you're homeless yeah, how can you keep yourself clean? Do you know what I mean. Right, even when I was starving right and I had money for food right, I couldn't buy food 'cause I didn't have anywhere to cook it. Do you know what I mean. Just simple things like that. Can't get a hot drink, you can't cook nothing, you can't get a bath, you can't wash your hair, you can't brush your teeth, it's a fucking joke. Do you know what I mean. I remember being like in a car park at Sainsbury's or Waitrose one of them places yeah, by the bottle bank yeah, do you know what I mean, broad daylight, summer, lying on cardboard, just cardboard over me, do you know what I mean, just absolutely physically knackered and people looking down tutting, putting their bottles in.

A Probation Support Officer spoke of her experience of a person she supervised not being aware of their body-self:

And we've just been called again just because he's not engaging, just coming in so out of it that he just cannot engage with you, you know, he'll be asleep, I don't know, he'll be absolutely sparko. But he wouldn't recognise that he had his own drug problem. Still refused to believe he had a drug problem. And twice he's come in with his hands all covered in blood, fresh and dried blood, where he's injected and hasn't seen what's happened to him. It's ... I think that is destroying, you know, when you see somebody young doing that.

What emerged as people spoke about their lives in crime and drugs was the risk that people took with their life and with others. Many shared stories of the number of times they had overdosed and recounted incidents of accidents and injuries from being involved in a criminal life. Most felt lucky to be alive and knew of people who had died from living in this lifestyle. Some seemed to view themselves as omnipotent or 'genetically better'. This indicated the perception of an 'invincible body'. Underpinning much of this lifestyle was a *lack of care* for their body-self, other bodies, and the world. Jack described this when explaining why he would overdose from drugs a lot and how it never stopped him nor changed him:

But ... who cares? You know, I suppose that was my problem.

He likened the lifestyle to being like animals:

If we're just monkeys that fell out of a tree then just get on with it. That's what I used to say. Just enjoy yourself and then you flippin' die and go to the [...], who cares.

Jason described while drug dealing he didn't care about working and his priority was impressing his mates. Andrew stated he didn't care about anybody in that life. A key turning point for Ryan was his first prison sentence and he said at that time he thought, 'I don't really care anymore' and, 'This is how it is like and I can live with it.'

In considering Frank's body types the participants description indicated the presence of a *dominating* body. This is shown with a body at war with others, disassociated from itself and lacking desire, and contingent. At times rather than a disciplined body there is what I term an 'uncontrolled body'. This is shown in John's story of entering a bodybuilding competition. He described how at that time his life was 'starting to fall apart' and before being announced on stage he went into the toilet and injected heroin. He reflected this was 'a silly and mad thing to do'. He had spent months preparing and explained the problem with his life is that it was 'totally unexpected.' I asked if it had always been like that and he replied, 'Yeah, I haven't got a lot of control over that myself sometimes.' The perception of lack of control over the body-self tended to emerge when people were stuck or struggling and described how change felt too overwhelming and their external world too chaotic.

4.3.2 Crises

The second phase of embodied action is crisis and many participants described turning points and times in their lives where they experienced a 'wake up' call of having had enough. During interviews this was often difficult for participants to articulate this experience. A PEI described how he could see in people's eyes when they'd had enough referring to 'tired eyes'. Participants spoke about people dying, a sense of their own mortality, running out of time to live a 'normal life', and hearing others' stories about a better life influencing this process. Some referred to their bodies as Andrew explained:

Yeah and as I said you know I got to the stage where I didn't want to be like that no more. You know, I wanted to live life and if I carried on using I wouldn't. I'd eventually die. If not physically, emotionally you know. I was already dead but I couldn't, you know. But there's, I could've got more worse I suppose but I never.

Ben shared while he was in prison on this sentence:

I was a fucker, well I was, yeah and I made a conscious decision mate. I sat in my cell with like three years, I can't do this long. I'm tired. I'm tired of putting on a brave front and telling everyone it's okay when it's not. You know, it's like a jacket full of lies. You know, when I was going behind my door, my head was falling off, 'cause I was sitting there thinking, 'I can't do this no more'. And I did, I just put my hands up and said, 'You know what? You've won.'

Stating further later in our meeting:

It's like my body's told me, it said, 'Ben are you done with this?' And I'm done with it.

Tom described:

When you've had enough it's like a bloody brick. Do you know what I mean. Like, you know, there's no fight left, there's no fight or ... the fights gone out of you. Do you know what I mean. You're just defeated. You're just a shell. You're a shell. Spiritually, emotionally, body wrecked. Do you know what I mean. Doors shut all around you. There's no one going to help you or pick you up and nurture you. Do you know what I mean. You know. You're just defeated. ... sorry to speak too much about it. But you know like, you're just defeated and that's when you hit that point, that's what allows this [change] to happen.

From participants and staff stories what became apparent was that the body-self may experience a number of times where they are in crisis or have a 'wake up call'. This did not always lead to the next phase of transformation. There would be what Tom helpfully termed, '*glimpses*'. This would be a period of trying to change followed by a return to 'old routines/ways' or 'reverting to type'. For example, John told me he intended to continue to body build when he gets out of prison but also shared in the past this lasts a few months before he is 'back into drugs and crime'. He spoke about wanting to be an 'invisible man' on release from prison as he did not want to face the challenge of doing what he needed to do to sort himself out and feared failing. Jack mentioned people he knew aged 30, 40 years that may give up drugs but are probably still 'doing something' such as 'drinking alcohol every weekend and getting into fights'. However, for others, the crisis signals a new beginning where a solution is sought to ineffective habits.

4.3.3 Creative transformation

This section focuses on the themes of the body that emerged from participant and staff interviews in trying to cease ineffective habits and forge a new way of acting that did not involve crime or drugs. Staff shared their observations of seeing people's body-self transformed. This included having more skills, confidence, focus, energy, being calmer, the way hold self and talk about their life, and improvements in their skin, hair, weight and teeth. As one Probation Officer expressed when I asked how people came across:

Happy, fine, laughing, normal if there is such a thing as normal [short laugh]. They're just regular people. Regular people getting on with their regular lives, doing their daily stuff, but they don't have the drugs.

A shift in appearance was also considered to reflect a shift in a person's identity as highlighted by a Probation Support Officer:

They look really different. 'Cause there's that whole, it's not about just putting on weight, it's about dressing differently, it's about being somebody other than what they used to be.

Participants described *continuing practices* and *routines*, some of which started in prison, in their daily lives in the community. This involved creating stability and a structured day. This was particularly the case for Simon who said for him, 'it is a lifestyle' and his life is, 'very routine'. For Jack it meant a whole way of life and practice that was more than, 'just not breaking the law' it is, 'how you are day-to-day with yourself and with others.' He explained by comparing himself to others who had experienced a religious conversion:

How can you give a testimony saying about God's changed your life and you no longer break the law when you've actually just bought three bent phones off someone? And they'd be like, 'Oh you need to chill out.' You know, legalist they call me and all this stuff. But in my heart it was automatically wrong it was just weird, you know, not in a legalistic way but just like, 'Don't you think that's a little bit weird?'

Andrew who had not offended for a year described not pushing himself too much as he was aware he could make mistakes. He felt he had got lazy in jail and was working on 'getting used to being back outside properly'. Andrew's wife also commented how he's changed in wanting to do more things and has a more positive attitude to life. Ryan after being released from prison for a month spoke about how he had not committed crime or used drugs. This was showing him that he could do it outside of prison, especially when he dealt with difficulties and did not revert to 'old ways'. He found by sticking with sorting things out it had 'come off'. When I asked how he was different he spoke about new ways of acting:

Yeah. Definitely. ... Well ... when I ... being a criminal and drug user I'm always looking for something to steal. I don't do that anymore. I don't look for drugs anymore. I still think about drugs. But I don't think ... I could really do with some now. I still think about them and think of all the times I was on them but it's more a case I think, 'Fucking hell I was in quite a mess then.' I think of things, you know, do I really want to be like that again? Just things to help me keep going the way I am going like. Even like when I get in the car I never used to wear a seatbelt and I'd put the visor down with the mirror so I could always keep an eye out behind me when I was a passenger in the car. But now I don't. I wear a seatbelt and I've got the visor up and just little things you know.

Sam noted how a drug worker observed how far he had come:

Yeah, yeah [drug worker] was saying the other day I've come a long way in the sort of two years where I started my script and that. Yeah come a long way really from being homeless and ... you know drinking every day and just a real mess you know. Sleeping rough ... shoplifting, thieving, you know like. Just, you know, injecting every day, getting scrapes and scars up me arms and just real mess do you know what I mean. And just not a nice person to be around like either really.

Tom described that as he stopped using drugs he progressed quickly once his body 'started to work' and he could eat, sleep, get emotional and led to 'normal' routines:

Because once you put it [drugs] down, you find you've got some money now because you're not spending [.....]. So you can buy some toiletries, you can buy yourself some food. You can start to be generous and buy some clothes. You know. 'Cause it's, you know what I mean, it's like either down the throat or you know what I mean? You know. Just normal humanistic things which you've deprived yourself of.

Tom also shared how telling others about his experience of change he realises he has chosen 'the right path'. He was reminded of this when he spoke at a prison recently:

The last share I done up there was about two, three months ago and I was in the room right sharing in this jail with people that I'd used with. [Name] who I was robbing, running in and grabbing the tills with in the shops and all that yeah and nicking the handbags out the car and all that, my last three weeks of active using. I was sharing with him, he was still in jail, been in and out, in and out, he's like an old man, he's younger than me. He's like an old man and that's the drugs, ravished him. And seen another guy [name], big massive arms now you know what I mean. Still in jail, you know, but I thought he was dead. Basically I was in this room sharing with people that I'd used with, people that I'd lived with, people that I done things with, do you know what I mean, and I was nearly seven years clean and they were still in jail. And if you need a clearer sign or whatever that you've chose the right path that was then, do you know what I mean. 'Cause I'd left. I was allowed to unlock the gates, they unlocked the gates and I went home. Do you know what I mean, and they're still there.

All participants commented upon a physical improvement and this was tied to a transforming body-self. For those earlier in the change process there was a sense of physically being '*in limbo*' between 'criminal' and 'normal' worlds. For example, Dean felt he was still working towards feeling 'normal' and did not yet feel comfortable in being a part of society. Jason was unsure whether he was able to 'blend in' while playing rugby outside of prison. Ryan noticed how people could see he was not using drugs as they would speak to him whereas in the past he said people would not even make eye contact with him. However he explained he still 'felt like a criminal'. This physicality was reflected in my research journal at times as summarised below:

On occasions during meetings with people trying to change they told me they'd been physically intimidating and could be unpredictable and 'just lose it'. Sometimes, when talking about crime, their eyes seemed to 'harden' yet when they spoke about progressing and smiled I saw a 'warmth'. With people that had been crime-free for longer I would never have known they'd been involved in drug addiction or crime. They seemed 'conventional' but also characterful and had a definite physical presence. Assertive, assured, but not over-powering. A couple of times I found myself envious of their energy, passion and appetite for living life.

Christine shared the significance of body-self changes in relation to her appearance not long after she came out of a drug rehabilitation programme:

I thought, 'I wonder what you look like really?' [laughs]. 'Cause my hair, I was just so used to seeing this person in the mirror that hated dying her hair. She gets [dye] all over the place [laughs]. Hated it. And I'd have to do it every two weeks and my hair was growing fast and I thought 'I can't keep doing this'. So I thought one day 'I wonder what you really look like, who you really are?' So one day I just cut all my hair off. My [children] thought I was mad but I knew what I was doing [laughs]. I thought 'I'm going to cut it all off really short'. It didn't look good but I knew that I just needed to let it grow and it would be okay. I thought 'No, let me see if you like yourself as you really are.' Do you know what I mean? So I allowed my hair to grow and be natural.

And Christine commented on how she currently views the scars on her arms:

And it's funny now, it's kind of like before I used to hide them, right, but now I put shorter sleeves on and it doesn't matter. Do you know what I mean? I think 'Well that's my past, that's what happened in the past it's not who I am now'.

With a sense of amazement at her own body-self transformation she further stated:

It's like when I see people now who say when they look at me, 'Christine, you don't even look like you've ever taken drugs.' I think 'Wow look how far I've come.' Do you know what I mean? Look how far. I'm changing on the inside, you know, and it's starting to show on the outside. Yeah.

As people reflected on how they were transforming there emerged a shift in their *care* for their life and others and a sense they were less willing to take risks. Jack reflected on the reasons for this shift:

But that's because maybe we didn't know a good life and that. I do now and I don't want to die 100 per cent. I wouldn't even go blummin' surfing just in case I die do you know what I mean, it's like [slight laugh], 'This is dangerous, I'm out of here.'

Dean spoke about how he would no longer put his life at risk and do things that are so out of control. He described feeling his life has been, and still can be, manic but that life has more value. Although he was still struggling to overcome drug addiction he shared:

The thrive that I've got you know to wanting to be like normal or to like do normal things is a lot more than not caring anymore now. When I went through all those years just not caring about anything now I do. You know. I do want more. I do want better. I don't want much you know, I just want normal really. If there is normal you know. I just want everyday life you know. I suppose that would be it. ... Yeah.

For some participants they believed there must be a reason why they were still alive. This was clearly articulated by Ben:

There's so many times that I've overdosed, so many times I've had accidents you know, I've fell out of windows, I've been stabbed and shot at, you know, and I'm still here. Why am I still here? Because everything in this world happens for a reason. If [.....] that I was going to give back or ... help someone, or what they've gone through, the whole of that lifestyle to be where I'm sitting here now I wouldn't of. Because if I was just going to be another waster, a junkie, I would've been dead years ago. I look at it and say to myself the reason why I'm still here is because I can be of use and an example to others, you know, and if that means just helping one person then so be it.

Simon, Tom, Christine, Eliza, Jamie, and Jack all work in jobs where they are assisting *other bodies* to change and transform their lives. They deliberately use their own body-self experience to connect with others. This also takes place outside of the workplace and in their daily lives. Christine is involved in volunteer work with street pastors and Jack described:

I was talking to some guy on the street the other day. And he's just got clean and he's got some serious ingrained, you know, drug addict, fairly skinny, got all the tattoos and only a young lad but he's just like out there and, 'This is boring innit?' I said, 'Listen [name] if you do not do something you're not going to make it.' And I say this to 'im, I said, 'If you, I know it's a cliché, but the decisions we make today turn in tomorrow, as in if you don't do anything today, tomorrow's going to be exactly the same. You might be clean but', I said, 'You're not going to last very long. You're going to be bored senseless.'

For many this was not just 'a transformation' but a *transforming process*. Christine said she still felt uncomfortable wearing dresses and that change is a slow process. She is still learning habits like eating well and having healthy balance. Jack mentioned he is:

learning not to speak from a spoiled heart at times which can have negative consequences.

Andrew was still working on his people skills and recognised there may still be times he would be willing to risk a prison sentence if someone hurt his family. Eliza commented she is still not quite comfortable, 'in her own skin.' Tom is still working on his tendency to be his own worst critic and Simon is seeking to balance faith with autonomy.

The above discussion indicates that as people are transforming there is a sense of desire for life that is producing, an engagement with other people and greater association with one's corporeality and greater predictability in the body's actions. This suggests a movement towards what I term a 'controlled body'. Where there are indications of contingency there is striving for Frank's idealised body type, the *communicative* body. Particularly participants who were working in jobs and volunteering to help others overcome crime and drug addiction. They would use their past experiences and share their story. Hence, relieve the suffering of others by offering hope they too could transform their body-self.

4.3.4 An ‘unexplainable’ aspect

A number of times as participants shared their experiences they would struggle to find the words to explain the shift into, and how they remain, in this creative phase. It was difficult for them to make sense of why this was different to other times they had attempted to change their life. Why this was not just a *glimpse* but *transforming*. The staff I spoke with also struggled to describe how they believed that someone seemed to be genuinely changing their life. For example, one Probation Officer shared:

I think it ... I mean everybody comes in and they say, ‘Oh yeah I’m never going to do it again. I’m never going to do it again’. But you can just tell the ones that mean it. And you just know that there’s something and they do mean it. It’s really hard to describe but they, you just know and they prove it. And they’re not, they don’t brag about it they just quietly get on with it. And that’s a difference, rather than bragging about it I suppose.

As I reflected on and tried to make sense of this unexplainable aspect I gained a sense from participants’ stories that something profound had taken place with the body-self and it’s connection to the external environment. The heart was often used a metaphor indicating a *connection* ‘deep’ in the body-self. Eliza, for example, told me when she shared her story, ‘I speak with my heart and I’m absolutely genuine about what I say.’ Christine stated her, ‘Heart is right’. When Jamie explained how he now feels good helping others he ‘knows’ that he is ‘really doing good’ and would pat his chest by his heart. When I asked him about this he said this is where he ‘feels it’. Mark described:

Plus you’ve got to want to do it [change]. Deep down you’ve got to think, ‘fuck this’ you know what I mean?

Christine explained further when I asked her to expand on why the rehabilitation programmes she did before did not ‘connect’ but later made sense once she was in a creative transforming phase:

Yeah, I’d hear it in my head and it would make sense but it was something, it didn’t connect on a deeper level. The penny didn’t drop. Do you know what I mean? It didn’t, it meant something in my head but it didn’t mean anything in my heart. It wasn’t that it didn’t mean anything. I’d get the information and the information would be stored but ask me about it and I wouldn’t know what I learnt. I couldn’t get that information but then I started to see all the information come out in different times of my daily life and I’d think ‘Oh, that’s what they’re talking about’. Information started to come back in something I was doing, I’d think ‘Okay, that’s what they meant’. It was going there, I was hearing it, but I didn’t fully understand what they meant. How it meant in my life and how I could change it in my life.

This highlights a visceral element to the desistance process which is nigh on impossible to translate into words. However, it does suggest that some notion of body schema, the body's learned capacity to undertake tasks, is in operation. Yarnal et al. (2006) suggested that a well-developed body schema and knowledge about and confidence in one's body capacity might be central to a strong sense of personal identity.

4.4 Acquiring physical aspects

The previous section represented the different aspects of an embodied identity and life transformation. I argue that these are indicative of two key embodiment processes that are presented below.

4.4.1 Embodied care

A key feature which emerged from the stories told by participants such as, Simon, Christine, Tom, Jack, and Andrew was a shift in the sense of care people showed towards their body-self, others and their interactions in the external environment. This sense of caring appears to be embodied. It is shown in interactions, non-verbal behaviour, social skills, gestures of kindness, thoughtfulness, as well as use of language. Hamington (2004) argued from a philosophical perspective that care is basic to human functioning yet it is often overlooked and has remained largely ignored and unthematized. He noted there are many uses of the word care and proposed it is central in social interactions and has embodied aspects. Specifically he stated that although difficult to define,

“Care is a way of being in the world that the habits and behaviors of our body facilitate. Care consists of practices that can be developed or allowed to atrophy.” (p. 2).

Hamington proposed three interrelated aspects.

- (1) *Caring knowledge*: What the ‘body knows’ and does not always translate well into words. This can be developed and attended to or neglected and lost.
- (2) *Caring imagination*: The ability to transcend our physical limitations and extrapolate care knowledge to others.
- (3) *Caring habits*: Physical habits the body acquires that are more than a repetition of movement as they are held in the body. They are an expression of the body's caring knowledge.

The human capacity to care, Hamington argued, is a basic aspect of human behaviour and integral to relationships. It is facilitated by corporeal existence and it can be developed or held back by the practices adopted. In this way care is linked to the habits our bodies develop. Care is also a process and Hamington noted, “[it] is most adequately reflected in the stories of peoples’ lives.” (p. 35). With regard to caring habits and knowledge, Hamington described three types of caring habits: *acaring* which is a morally neutral pattern the body uses to navigate its environment; *noncaring* which is evident in harming another embodied being; *caring* which involves exhibiting a regard for growth, flourishing and well-being of another. Care is regarded as a choice. One method by which we learn the habits of caring is from others and by being cared for ourselves. This can come from a tacit knowledge of the body and not just what is articulated. In this regard human interaction can create ‘moments’ of care. What this notion of care captures is a transformative quality and provides a useful concept for framing the embodied changes described by the participants and the emergence of a *communicative* body.

4.4.2 Physical capital

The second aspect, which is linked to the notion of embodied caring discussed above, is the movement from bodily neglect to healthier bodies that are fit for a better life. Shilling (2004, p. 474), drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, developed his conception of the body as a form of physical capital and described the concept as,

“the value placed on the size, shape and appearance of the flesh ... While our physicality has become a possessor of symbolically valued appearances, it is additionally implicated in the prosaic buying and selling of labour power and the accumulation of other forms of capital.”

Other forms of capital include economic (money, goods, services), cultural (educational qualifications), and social (interpersonal relations with others). An example is the aesthetic qualities of the body such as fitness, strength, stamina, and toughness. He argued this can have an *exchange* value in certain fields and as a consequence function as capital. In addition, these bodily attributes can become desirable to social agents. In this way the notion of physical capital is important for making sense of the various ways people modify or transform their bodies over time. It locates those bodily states that might be deemed desirable within the context of markets in which they have value and function as a currency. Crossley (2001, p. 109) noted that, “Physical capital is a fact

of everyday life and many social fields have some version of it.” Applying this concept to this study, the participants appeared to become more physically capable and energised for the challenge of transforming their life. This is reflected in an improved self-presentation and appearance which enabled them to constitute themselves as ‘reforming’ bodies; increasing their ability or potential to achieve higher levels of integration into ‘conventional’ society.

4.5 Summary

Within this chapter I offered a tentative attempt to explore the corporeal processes in transforming a criminal life and desisting from crime. In doing so, I made use of Shilling’s embodied social action and Frank’s narrative body perspective to conceptualise desistance as an *embodied and storied process*. This highlighted how habits can be found to be ineffectual and lead to crises which may result in *glimpses* or lead to enduring creative transformation. Within this process different bodies were identified such as a *dominating, invincible and uncontrolled* body within a phase of criminal habits and a *controlled and communicative* body within a creative transformation phase. Different themes were highlighted emerging from a focus on where the body became visible in people’s stories and what meaning this may have. Two aspects that seemed to be particularly significant embodiment processes were *embodied care* and *physical capital*.

This exploration does not aim to be complete and indeed there are two particular issues it does not address. Firstly, I have not considered power relations nor provided a gendered analysis. Secondly, there is a tendency for the body to disappear in the textual representations and the presence of the lived and material body becoming lost through the use of analytical lenses (Ford & Brown, 2006; Shilling, 2007). Embodiment is a contested notion and at times, as Shilling (2007) noted, it has been difficult to define and grapple with what is being examined. Yet, similar to Brown, Cromby, Harper, Johnson & Reavey (2011), I have found this approach useful for offering a powerful corrective to the tendency to peel experience away from its lived and embodied medium of expression.

What became evident is that participants are not controlled robotically and conduct pre-determined performances but, as proposed by Shilling (2007, p.11), in transforming their life they appear to undergo ‘complicated apprenticeships’ in which ‘success’ or ‘failure’ is resultant upon the capacities and limitations of each embodied

individual. In this sense I hope to have illustrated through an exploration of embodiment processes how bodies can be constraining as well as enabling in transforming and (re)constructing the self over time and in different sets of circumstances that are framed by the external environment (Shilling, 2003; Sparkes & Smith, 2011). Similar to Maruna (2001), the stories explored in this chapter indicated that people may become burned out and sick of criminal behaviour but lack the energy to effect change. Those who do, and continue to transform, are likely to, “charge themselves up emotionally, psychologically and physically” (p. 151) in order to desist from crime. Such a view is supported by Shilling’s (2008) thoughts on the human capacity for transcendence that extends the traditional distinction in this area between *being* and *having* a body. I similarly argue that the participants in this study were able, “to *transcend* their purely organic being by *attending to* their own bodies and the bodies of others.” (p. 163). This shows how the body is not irrelevant to the issues of meaningful social action or what it is to be a human embodied being who desists from crime. It is the body that provides such people with the means to go beyond the limits of their purely biological existence. Hence,

“It is by *living in, living with, attending to* and *caring for* one’s own body and the bodies of others, that people become embodied beings and with a *wide range* of capacities and potentialities.” (p.163).

By attending to the fleshy, bodily being this can provide people with a means of transcending their immediate bodily needs and daily experiences. This has implications for the issue of identity and although it may not determine the body-self it is important in the ongoing (re)construction of an adaptive narrative identity. This leads to the following chapter exploring the rehabilitative potential of physical activity as a potential route for people to attend to their bodily being and (re)construct the body-self.

CHAPTER FIVE: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

5.1 Introduction

08/10/2009

Today I had a strong sense of nostalgia being back in the prison gym. The gym is like an escape from the rest of the prison. A 'normal' part, a place of escape from the institution, and yourself, for a period of time. It helped me to cope working in a prison. I could be outside running around the field or having fun and enjoyment playing volleyball or doing step aerobics on my lunchtime. Some of the gym staff spoke about how this is one part of the regime that can mirror life outside. It does feel like one of the few places where you can believe you are not in prison. So much in prison seems to be about escaping from reality. Well it doesn't feel like prison in here until you hear the clank of the gate, the key turning or see the bars on the windows and you realise you are caged in. This is so not freedom but it is a bit of 'normality'.

This chapter explores the rehabilitative role of physical activity in the lives of people who have criminal convictions. In Chapter One I described the context to physical activity interventions provided to people either in prison or on probation at the time of this study. In the chapter I re-present the thematic narrative analysis that draws on the participants' and staff interviews and the stories told about physical activity. This was driven by the research focus, 'What role does physical activity play?' It explores how it may enable and constrain desistance from crime and life transformation. Eight predominant themes emerged from the analysis and are explored in-depth: *Constructing identity, feeling good, health consciousness, looking good, replacement addiction, relatedness, connection to everyday life, and holistic lifestyle change.*

5.2 Constructing identity

Physical activity provided a route for some of the participants to change how they, and others, saw them as a person. The activity was seen as something at which the person was good and helped to integrate and adapt to a pro-social life. A few of the male participants, for example, Andrew, Stuart, Jamie and Simon, saw themselves as 'sporty' and believed it would always have a role in their life in some form. Within a multidimensional perspective of identity one component includes leisure activities and for two participants in particular it provided a primary vehicle for 'making something' of one's life and to be a better person. Firstly, Rebecca who shared her hope for the possibility of a new identity by working at a horse stables:

Rebecca: I'm not saying the stables is the answer to all my problems but I think that stability that gives me the confidence to know that yeah you can do it Rebecca, you can be better than what are at the minute, 'Cause when I got up there that's when everything changed for me. Yeah. And I was happy and I was yeah. Just want to be back there really.

Jo: When did that start that you wanted to sort it out, can you remember?

Rebecca: When I started going up the stables.

Jo: [.....]

Rebecca: Yeah when I started to actually do something that I enjoyed and I was with normal people and that. That's when I thought, 'Yeah'. That's when the penny dropped, yeah, that's what I want. But I just, I dunno. It's me, it's my, I think it's got a lot to do with self-esteem and my thinking and how I see myself and all that. But they're going to try and get me to work on that but ... I dunno. I dunno why I do it, really don't.

Secondly, sport, rugby and fitness infused Jason and mine's discussions each time we met highlighting its importance in the reconstruction of his identity in the transition from prison to the community. Specifically, his shift in identity from a 'drug dealer/weight lifter' to 'rugby player/nice guy.' This is illustrated in his story below:

I was born and brought up in a rough area and my upbringing wasn't the best. Sport was a part of my life when I was younger. I was captain of the under 16s football team for three years and that was like being a mini celebrity. I had a trial for a football club but nothing happened. By the time I was 16 I was more interested in cider and getting involved in stupid things than sport. I left college at 17 and then I also left home. I realised I could earn more money working full time. I started weightlifting at that time. It was just something to do to get a bit of muscle and you realise there's a chance that the ladies like biceps. At the same time weight lifting changed me as a person. It turned me very arrogant. Sometimes you might see a bloke and he's got attitude, he's a growler. I can see how that goes because I've been like that. With weight lifting came confidence.

When I was 18 I was with a girl for a short time and after we split up she said she was pregnant. At first I denied it was mine but when my daughter was born that was a massive change in my life. I grew up instantly. We got back together but it didn't work out so from 19 I was working, doing weights and living with the lads. I went into plastering and was earning money and I developed a bit of a gambling addiction. I also got addicted to steroids to get bigger. But I hurt my back and I couldn't work. I totally ran out of money and it all went wrong from there. The worst years of my life were definitely when I started taking cocaine. I was 22. I'd do it at the weekend. I didn't have a problem and I never craved it. But I'd go out and spend £500 without thinking about it. It's a real bad drug to get involved in 'cause it's just crazy. I went from taking it to thinking I might as well sell it. It was an easy way to make money. I think that's where people need help sometimes. I couldn't rely on my family as they never had nothing. The money and lifestyle was good and you get involved with the wrong crowd. You almost get a celebrity status, being the biggest drug dealer out of your mates. It's just stupid and immature. I spiraled downhill and I was just a dickhead. I didn't need to work because I was earning stupid money, I got addicted to the money, it all escalated and it was hard to turn away. You get a reputation and it's hard to stop if you're making someone else money. You get false friends. I got into kickboxing with two pals and I stopped the steroids to get fitter. I wasn't any good at it but I liked it. Eventually I got caught and arrested at 24. I basically went to jail through my own fault.

I came into the local jail on remand and I knew a lot of people so it was alright. I got into the gym straight away. I've done all my jail gym naturally without taking steroids 'cause

it's dangerous in jail. I was told I'd get two years, then six. I got four and a half years. It was quite a long time and it hit home. I went to a Cat C prison and my solicitor told me if I keep my head down and get a review I could go to Cat D. In Cat C I learned to play rugby and that was a big part of me changing. I was going to the gym and the PEI's kept asking me to play and I said no as I've never been interested. When I was younger I played a season of American Football and I was crap at that. They kept saying, 'Come on just play.' So I turned up and one of the lads broke his neck and that put me right off. In the end I went to a training session and we did simple exercises. I just enjoyed it and it went from there. I was in Cat C for three months and played four games and then came to D Cat. It was good for rugby and town visits 'cause it's like you're almost home. It was good on my relationship with my partner. But when you're banged up you make false promises and offer everything. She held onto everything I promised and I let her down. We split up and that was a big thing. It opened up my eyes to a lot. I opened up to my daughter and to rugby.

The only thing that kept me going was the rugby and trying to get fit as you can in prison. The rugby stopped and the PEI arranged for me to have a trial at a rugby club outside. That was the start of me thinking maybe I could do something about this. I started training and trying to get my fitness up and I weighed just under 20 stone. I'm not good with pressure. I've done lots of power-lifting competitions in jail and every time I get really nervous. I did the trial and got accepted. For me it was a big confidence thing and something exciting to aim for going out. My family and friends never knew anything about it. When I told them they couldn't believe I was doing it but they said fair play to me. I saw it as a real good thing, it was all up to me and how I do it. I didn't want to let anyone down and just wanted to prove myself. I don't want to put my family and my daughter through prison again.

I got started at the club and I moved not long after to another one nearer home that plays a higher standard of rugby. My job means I can get to training and focus on it. Now I don't want to be special. I used to be like that. As a person I can come across as quite comical, like in school I would play the fool. Now I feel like I am reborn, although that's a bit too deep. Everything's full circle. I'm back into sports again, I've a new relationship, I don't really care for money, and I'm spending time with my daughter. I can't really think of my proudest moment in my life. I suppose for me the big achievement would be playing rugby for the first team as then you'd class yourself as a semi-professional rugby player. I'd say I'm wiser, it's about being myself as a person and I'm not really interested in keeping everybody happy like I used to. I used to be so worried about what other people think about me but now I don't really. I think at the end of the day I just want to be happy. I just want to be normal. I just want to live to a proper age, just play a bit of sport as a social thing and eventually get married and have kids sort of thing. Like a normal person lives. Back then I was interested in being a mini celebrity and it's just not worth it. Going to jail is a massive thing. I feel like I've been there and done my time and now I just want to get on. It made things clearer on what I want to do. I'm definitely a changed person. The way I speak to people and my whole outlook. I haven't come out with a bit of attitude or swagger. I just want to be a normal person now and I'm happy to sit in the background. Not to be forgotten or not recognised but to just not stand out from the crowd anymore. Unless I can stand out in the crowd through rugby playing, that's for a completely different reason, or for just being a general nice lad.

A member of the rugby club Jason plays for does a write up which includes a star person. One week in December 2010 Jason is the 'star man'. It described how a year ago he was playing for a club that, 'You don't know need to know and would not play for.' He shared the story of Jason's first interaction on the rugby pitch when he caught the ball from a line out and ran the wrong way. Within 23 games at his new club he is called up to the first team and plays his first ever game in National League 2. Jason is described as, 'A genuine nice guy, eager to learn and gives you everything.'

5.3 Feeling good

This was a dominant theme throughout many of the participants' stories of physical activity. This is consistent with the literature on the benefits of physical activity in creating positive feelings and enjoyment. Three sub-themes were identified: enjoyment and confidence, the release of negative energy, and achievement. Firstly, feelings of enjoyment gained from an activity were highlighted in Jamie's response to my question as to how the gym assisted in keeping focused on not reoffending:

Because I weren't fit before. And I don't know, when you get into the gym and you feel good after the gym, your endorphins are flowing and you feel happy, you feel confident. The more I was going gym the better I felt about myself and brings your confidence up. I think it gives, well it gave me self-esteem as well and I got in the football team there and that. I just really enjoyed it.

Christine shared her experience of what she enjoyed about running:

Christine: So I've started to do gym but not extreme 'cause I was aware of it. 'Cause I just feel brilliant running. There's something for me, it was a release, I'd run and I'd feel like, this [is] how much, I'd feel like I was taking off in the wind. It sounds crazy but it was such a high I'd be running that much that I'd feel that I'd taken off.

Jo: What's the reasons you do physical activity now? Like the running and the treadmill?

Christine: I enjoy it. I enjoy it and again I do it because I don't feel I get enough exercise in work. I feel lethargic. So I know that when I do a jog it's like 'Woh!' You just feel fresh and uplifted.

John also highlighted the sense of pleasure and enjoyment:

John: And I am pleased that I stuck through all my physical exercise throughout my years.

Jo: What's kept you going then with that?

John: I enjoy it.

And Jason while in prison:

That day at rugby [training session in prison] it was literally, it was just [.....] full contact, full blown that was it, tackle, roll the ball out like football league rules. And I remember just getting the ball and just running, just like seeing people trying to stop me and just really, really, really enjoyed it.

And Rebecca while working at the horse stables:

But I love working at the stables you know what I mean. I love it.

Dean spoke about how physical activity kept his 'brain firing' and helped him to feel better about himself. During activity he said he felt happy and afterwards described feeling content he'd had a good time. It was important to him to try to get a balance with his emotions as he felt he had cut so many emotions off with heroin misuse that to get them back was, 'A bit like being hit with a sledge hammer.' He shared that physical activity had enabled him to ignite his feelings in a safe way.

A second sub-theme was the release of negative energy and anxiety. Participants described how they were able to de-stress and release tension. Andrew spoke about how fishing helps him:

I think it's not just about catching fish it's about ... about, I don't know, ... let me think how to put it ... I think it's about letting go of any built up tension inside you. 'Cause when you're sitting by the side of the water you know it don't seem so bad. And it's a good place to think as well you know. You don't get disturbed often you know so it's a good place to think ...

Fishing also enabled Andrew to manage times he may have been tempted to misuse substances:

I think going fishing ... through the winter months and over Christmas and that helped me immensely because you know it gave me something else to focus on, you know. I didn't need to think about when this time three years ago, you know, when I was in jail I was using drugs, I was having a good time, this, that. I know I didn't need to drink and use drugs to have a good time. You know, so fishing helped immensely over the winter months. Umm. So that was good ... yeah.

When I spoke with Andrew's wife she commented that fishing had been really positive for him and she felt he is a lot calmer person. Mark and Jamie also expressed how physical activity was an important way to release tension:

It's making me feel good about myself. You know, it gets rid of a lot of my tension 'cause I can bottle a lot of things up, you know, I've been known to explode you know what I'm saying? So it is a release for me. (Mark)

But I do like it. Gives you a release as well, you know, when you feel stressed out and you go gym or whatever you just release it, you know, in a good way instead of being angry don't you? (Jamie)

Ryan five months after his release from prison was struggling after his paid work ended. He described how going out walking helped him to think better about the problems he was experiencing. Dean also felt that doing a gym course, fitness, going for a walk with his partner and getting fresh air assisted with his mood swings and coping with negative feelings:

If I'm really like anxious or I really don't know what to do with myself then I'll go to the gym, you know. I'll do a 30 minute sweat, cardio vascular, like a bit on the rower you know. Things like that and that helps me as well 'cause that gives me like a feel good factor about meself so those sort of things I would say like help a lot.

Eliza similarly shared how the gym helped her get to cope with imprisonment:

Eliza: Yeah I was the gym orderly. I got a job in the gym, I done all my fitness courses in there and yeah I loved it. That's what got me through.

Jo: Did it?

Eliza: Oh definitely, definitely. Gym, my daughter on child visits. Just, you know, that was it. That kept me sane.

Jo: Why the gym?

Eliza: Because it's what I liked doing. It's my feel good factor. And it gets rid of lots of negative energy that you got, lots of stress. It makes you feel so much better.

This was not the case for all participants, Jason and Stuart both described times when feeling stressed that they did not do sport:

Some people can do weights stressed. I can't. I can't do anything if I'm stressed. I'm a bit of a wreck when I'm stressed. (Jason)

When I'm doing good I do sport. And when I'm not doing I'm not doing sport. And probably lazy is part of it or can't be bothered attitude. (Stuart)

The final sub-theme is achievement and participants discussed the sense of mastery they were able to gain through physical activity and how this led to positive feelings of pride, self-respect and a sense of fulfillment. Christine recalled:

I started doing cardio, in fact I got my, umm, in fact that's the first qualification I got when I was in prison with the gym.

When discussing the use of the treadmill and jogging at home Christine spoke with a sense of achievement at not becoming addicted:

Yeah, so I'm really pleased with that this year I've achieved that, do you know what I mean, and it's okay. It's normal and it's right. So I'm really happy with that.

Mark spoke with sincere pride at getting a job as gym orderly:

I've known [PEI] and [PEI] for a long time. These have seen me when I was younger. Wild and [...] today that PEI he's known me for ten years. So like I said for me to be even working down in this gym that's how I know I've changed. That's how I know other people have seen it. No way I would've been given security clearance to work down here.

Andrew described to me that there are many different types of fishing that he would like to try so that in 15 years time he could say he has tried every kind. Later in our meeting he joked that with the amount of time he spends fishing he is becoming, 'More than a master.' Andrew also spoke about the achievement he gains from volunteering at the allotment:

The only thing about this is that, you know, you put the hard work in and you get things back at the end of, you know, with the produce which is worthwhile, you know. And it's nice going up every week and seeing it's there and watch what's growing and that, you know. It's something I look forward to.

Ryan shared how training in the gym made him feel good about himself through setting and achieving targets. He also recalled when he was in a young offender's institution they would run around waste ground and he won a medal for coming third which he was, 'quite chuffed about.' Finally, Tom who won a National Boxing title spoke about his achievement in getting so far in such a short time:

I didn't know anything and we got, you know what I mean, and look how far we got in three years or whatever. If I'd have started when I was young [...], who knows? But I did do it, do you know what I mean? I've done it. I've been there and I've done it.

Interviews with staff also highlighted the themes of enjoyment and confidence:

I've taken people out on fishing trips and you know something that quite a few have enjoyed actually. (Community Support Worker)

Something that gives them, builds their self-esteem about themselves. That's what I think. Could be wrong but that's what I think. (Probation Support Officer)

Reducing negative energy:

We all get stressed, we all have certain things that lie heavy on our shoulders and we turn round and sometimes you just need to have some way to facilitate getting rid of that. Now with them it might have been that they thought if they get spliffed up or if they take a drug that was their way of dealing with it. But you know as well as I do if you have that feeling after a run or something like that, the endorphins have kicked in. The stress just dissipates. You know. You've still got, you know, but you're managing it and what have you so that's why I think it's really important. And it makes them perhaps appreciate and deal with things that affect their lives different ways rather than the negative through the positive. (SPOEI)

And a sense of achievement:

And then when you tell them, you know, they've passed their level two theory exam. They're like over the moon. So you kind of, there's that side of it as well. (PEI)

Some of the participants spoke about how they were regaining a feel good factor they used to have from being active when they were younger. Both men and women described once they reached their teenage years crime and drugs were perceived to take over. Sam shared how he used to be in a football team at school and never thought that he would end up with, 'A life controlled by drugs.' For him physical activity, 'went out the window' between the ages of 17 and 24 as he described being more concerned with working, getting money, buying clothes, followed by drug addiction. Similarly, BMX bikes and motor cross were a part of Dean's younger life and he commented how he liked sports at school but:

... not so much when I got bit older 'cause then my dynamics changed a bit you know.

He reflected he was involved in a lot of sports up to the age of 14 and from then to 16 he was getting into trouble and taking drugs. Sports, again, 'Went out the window'. Dean felt his life was focused on trying to be, 'One of the boys' and, 'Making your mark'. He described, 'Doing sports and the right thing' and, 'progressing properly' to, 'switching quite quickly to getting into trouble.' Jamie similarly described that growing up sports was a big part of his life but when he got involved in drugs it, 'Kicked that out'. While in prison on his current sentence he said he got the chance to get back that, 'Lost enjoyment' and, 'thrived off it'. This was similar for Rebecca and Christine who both described regaining activities meant having enjoyment and living a better life.

Not everyone had positive experiences. Tom described he played football when he was younger but was not any good and did not go to football practice. He recounted that as a teenager he was chased in a racist incident and was run over by a car leaving him with a seriously injured leg limiting his ability to be active. He explained that growing up with neglect, abuse and poverty in the home meant that leisure activities were not supported or encouraged. Ryan, also from an impoverished background, described when he was young he'd play on skateboards that involved, 'Lying down on it and rolling down the hill as fast as you could', rather than, 'standing on it and trying to do things.' He also described he was not generally encouraged by his parents or 'pushed to do better.' Christine believed she had a talent for sports, particularly running, that went unnoticed when she was younger. She felt this may have offered her a potential way out of her life at that time which was characterised by poverty, abuse, addiction and criminality. This painfully highlights the disadvantage experienced by people coming from particularly impoverished and socially excluded upbringings in relation to participation in sport and leisure activities.

5.4 Health consciousness

One of the main aims of physical activity interventions is to increase physical health and fitness. This was demonstrated by participants' comments about the benefits of being healthier, fitter, and wanting to take better care of their body-self. A number of staff commented on this aspect in terms of, 'Building people up' to be fitter and healthier so they can, 'stand tall and be stronger.' For example:

With some of them yeah it helps because they start taking pride in themselves and they build themselves up, they feel better, they get fitter, they've got more energy, combine that with the cooking and the nutrition they're beginning to feel better about themselves, you know, and they are getting more energy through the fitness.

(Probation Officer)

But look at the benefits, you know, the people if they're coming to the gym, they're getting fit, they're fit to hold down a job.

(SOPEI)

Health consciousness linked closely to the previous themes of constructing identity and feeling good. Mark described being healthy gave him a sense of achievement:

It makes you feel good about yourself. Makes you feel healthy you know. I like the feeling of going on a visit and your family say how well you're looking and how healthy and clean. ... from the person I used to be, you know. It's an achievement for me, makes you feel good.

Dean highlighted the importance of this both in and out of prison:

That's a *12-step* thing that when I was doing the programme [...] going out to the gym was part of the thing. You had to do it. If you done the *12-step* you had to do it at least two or three times a week in the gym. So it started there really working out, I went all health conscious and give up smoking and everything. And I come out fit as a fiddle, 13 and a half stone, stopped smoking and everything and then started drinking again and started smoking again and sort of lost the thrive for the fitness. And then about a month later I sort of realised, you know, I miss that, you know. So I started attending the gym up at the [name] centre and then realised that they were doing a level one fitness instructor course up there so put application in for that, got that and then started doing that up there you know. So like weekly now I do like half a day theory and half a day practical in the gym you know volunteering, I've been doing that for about four months now.

Simon, Ryan and Jamie expressed concerns with health and the body in relation to taking better care of the body-self:

I mean I'm very health conscious now. I'm extremely health conscious. I think I mentioned before, you know, my Father suffered from a heart attack at a young age. We've got it in the family and all that. So it's genetic. So that was one of the major reasons. 'Cause before I went into prison the last time I wasn't into going to the gym or anything like that. ... So physically, yeah you start being more conscious about those health things, yeah.

(Simon)

I'm fit and healthy although I still smoke I'm more than capable of running great distances or playing rugby for 80 minutes, play football for 90 minutes you know, which is quite surprising for the damage I've done to my body over the years like. All the drugs. I mean I've overdosed twice so I'm quite lucky to be alive. 31 this year so I should start taking care of myself that little bit more you know. [.....] I quite enjoy the feeling of being like, it's quite rewarding. (Ryan)

Yeah. I've always liked to keep myself healthy. And ... but not necessarily eating the right things and ... looking after my body. But ... I think now I'm clean off drugs and that, I've got the extra, you know, tunnel vision towards it. And I wouldn't say it's an obsession I'd say it's what I enjoy doing. (Jamie)

Prison was recognised as playing a role in keeping people alive. When I asked Mark how long he had spent outside of prison he replied:

I would say over the past 20 years about five years, out of 20 yeah. I spent a lot of time locked away. But this has become more comfortable, where it's become the norm for me. That's a scary thought. Do you know what I mean? Where you can come to prison and be more happy because you start looking healthy, you're going to the gym and, you know, you're not out there hurting your family. My Mum always used to say she likes me in prison because she can sleep at night. She knows I'm safe.

Christine, Dean and John expressed similar views:

Well when I was in prison, I viewed the time when I was in prison it was saving me. Umm. 'Cause I was living a very destructing, destroying life out here. [.....] Prison it saves people. I mean the drug addict and I mean the chaotic drug addict. (Christine)

In some ways I think jails sort of kept me alive with like getting me off the drugs and all that lot and then like coming back into the community then. And then going back to jail you know. I don't know what I would be like if it wasn't for like the jail and the fitness part of prisons and that you know. (Dean)

Physical fitness wise I actually keep myself very fit in prison. [.....] We've got a lot of time on our hands so if we do choose to keep fit then you can do that in prison. You can treat it like a health farm and for the fact that I'm a drug addict on the outside a lot of the time, prison becomes a safety net. If there weren't prison I wouldn't be sat here talking to you now because I would have overdosed 20 years ago. And my solicitor once said to the police, well the police said to him, 'That bloody John out here committing all them crimes, doing our head in.' He said, 'If you left him out there he'd probably kill himself anyway.' He said, 'You keep sending him to prison and making him well again.' So prison, depending on how you treat prison it can make you healthy and it certainly does that 90 per cent of the time to me. Yeah. [short laugh] (John)

Over the course of our interviews John expressed how he was struggling with keeping himself fit and felt that coming out healthy this time was, 'Going to be a task.' John on previous sentences had gained a number of fitness qualifications and competed in body building competitions. He came across as very health conscious and, paradoxically, was aware of the damage he was doing to his body through illegal drug use:

I'm always very conscious of how my body works and what I should and should not be doing. So it's a bit daunting that I damage it when I know what's going on inside.

When I asked him the reason, given his health consciousness, he did not have a zero tolerance to drug use he explained the trouble is that he just, ‘Can’t do it’ although that is what he would like to do. The illegal drug use for him was a form of escapism. He was aware that having overdosed in the past he has been lucky and, ‘It was like having a second life’ that he should, ‘Grab with both hands.’ This shows the difficulty of wanting to make a change but finding it hard to do so. In our last interview John described he was back at the gym and being more health conscious as he felt, ‘Niggled’ that his, ‘body was going to pieces.’ He stated a healthy body leads to a healthy mind and his motivation was to prepare for release and competitive bodybuilding.

A commonly voiced concern about providing physical activity interventions to people with convictions is that it makes them ‘fitter to commit more crime’. John shared when he was at school he loved running and it was the only thing he was ever good at. He told me he would win the cross country as he could run faster than anyone else and commented, ‘Which also probably made a good criminal [laughs] when it came to running away from the police.’ And later, ‘I think committing crime is like sport sometimes. ‘Cause you might get stranded and have to run 20 or 30 miles.’ When I asked Ryan about fitness out of prison he described he does not do it apart from, ‘Chasing drug dealers, running from the police that was about it.’ In another interview he spoke about how it can be strange to see a drug addict running. The difficulties highlighted in this study however were predominantly about sustaining fitness and health benefits in everyday life. This issue is returned to in section 5.8.

5.5 Looking good

One motivation for participating in physical activity related to obtaining an aesthetically pleasing body. Ryan commented that one of his reasons for training in the gym was to look good to feel good whereas team games were about enjoyment. This was also evident in John’s story when I asked why he liked to train as a bodybuilder:

I don’t want to look down past my stomach and not be able to see my shoes. I don’t know, as a kid I was always skinny and I didn’t really like to be skinny it was something I was used to. And then once I managed to build a bit of muscle onto the skin and bones the definition was there because I held no body fat and I didn’t like body fat.

The drive to train to look good was referred to by some participants and staff as ‘ego training’. The goal was to achieve a certain look or become the strongest and the heaviest. Staff described the risk, mainly with men, that physical activity may enable

people to bulk up so they can bully others. There was a concern that people would cut corners to achieve a look through the use of steroids. One PEI described how a male prisoner in the gym had injected his leg with heroin to overcome the pain from weightlifting. Another PEI commented how gym training could be unhelpful in that, 'You just make bigger peacocks. They fluff their feathers even more.' The danger being that some people are just building their egos in their 'comfort zone' rather than trying other activities in which they could flourish. All the prison staff I spoke to were aware of needing to manage this in the culture of the prison gym. What becomes apparent is the importance of what people *value* and the *values instilled* by taking part in particular physical activities as demonstrated by Jack's comments:

I went to gym when I got clean. I loved it. You know 'cause I used to do it in prison and as soon as I got clean I got right into it. I'd wake up at seven, run up [name] gym and then back home and then walk round with a t-shirt on all day and all that stuff. But [his pastor], sensibly I think, he used to see me, and he used to be like, 'Jack, what about the man in there? What you doing about that?' [Points finger to chest] And I would be like, 'Well, wrgrghh.' And he'd be like, 'What about that man in there?' You know?

Gym's your answer. Well it probably isn't. It's probably one of them. You can go to the gym and still be a complete moron to be fair. And most of the ones are. 'Cause you know it makes them feel good but actually these people feel good about themselves anyway. Too good. Do you know what I mean? It's all about them as it is. [.....] Getting lovers of themselves, even better looking [laughs].

In contrast, Tom spoke about the positive philosophical values he gained from Thai boxing. This included values such as, 'You don't take it out on the street' and, 'you try and talk your way out of trouble first.'

5.6 Replacement addiction

Participants who had addictions to substances expressed how their addictive tendencies could be viewed positively and negatively in relation physical activity. Some staff commented on, 'A risk of obsession' and the need for 'balance' in physical activity if people had issues with addictive behaviour(s). Christine reflected on her use of the gym during a phase when she was in and out of prison:

Christine: Right, when I was going in and out of prison. I got addicted to the gym. And okay it's better than the drugs but it was an extremity addiction as well so, ... I was gym orderly. So it was extreme. And even when I was in my cell I was still jogging. So here [points to when in prison] obviously I've got this junk that's happened here [points to negative events earlier in life]. Stuff that I'm not even aware of. I'm not using drugs so maybe it was trying to come up so I've gone extreme in the gym so nothing was coming up. My adrenalins pumping all the time, do you know what I mean? Even in my cell I'd be jogging. I'm gym orderly, it's mad isn't it?

Jo: What was your relationship like with the gym staff? Did they kind of hook, catch on to you saying that actually you're doing it a lot or were they doing it a lot anyway?

Christine: There was one, there was one that said, 'Christine you have reached your peak.' [Laughs]. But I think maybe she may have had concerns but she never said. But she said, 'You've reached your peak.' She said that, she didn't say anything else [laughs]. She didn't say anything else.

Jo: What did you think? Can you remember what your response was to her?

Christine: Yeah I'm fit, do you know what I mean? But I didn't think, yeah, because there was nothing pointed out like there's a problem here. Maybe if it had been pointed out I may have looked at it. Okay, well miss gym today, I'll miss that and see what happens. But it wasn't it was just, 'You've reached your peak.' So I'm thinking 'Yeah' and I don't know what she meant by that really, but I'm thinking, 'Yeah' 'cause I know I'm fit.

John and Andrew spoke about their awareness of the risk of cross addiction from a substance to the gym or fishing but neither saw it as a completely bad thing either:

A lot of drug counsellors have said that I've used it the same as a drug, like an addiction. I've even gone loads of drugs or just gone gym too much. Mental. [.....] So people think I've done it too much. I've gone too much and I should slow down and people say that to me. Not so much now because I'm not doing it like that now. But when I am like that, yeah. But I can't see that being a bad thing really. No. (John)

I don't push myself too much you know 'cause I don't need to you know. 'Cause that's where I start making mistakes again. That's where things start becoming a habit you know. If you understand what I mean. I'm already on methadone, I'm trying to get myself off methadone, you know. I don't want to cross addict to the gym or something like that. You know what I mean? Which I'm doing that a little bit with the fishing but I can see that and it's not a bad thing. (Andrew)

Tom and Simon who viewed themselves as having 'addictive personalities' felt it was beneficial to their participation in physical activity. Tom believed his addictive tendencies had been instrumental in his achievements in Thai boxing:

I think like if I wasn't an addict maybe I wouldn't have got so far as what I have got. You know what I mean. 'Cause like three years or whatever just went from nothing to, you know, being in the top ten and staying in the top ten.

Tom described this tendency in terms of whatever he likes to do he has, 'Got to do it all the time.' Since retiring from competitive boxing he has taken up fishing that he similarly viewed as a positive application of his addictive tendencies. Simon spoke about his addiction to the gym and recognised addiction can be a negative word. In his view though it gave him energy and his 'obsessiveness' was a strength in his approach to both education and training at the gym:

So in a sense, I think that I mentioned it before, I believe I have an addictive personality so I take on something positive to be addicted to. And it's good to be addicted to the gym and training. That sort of thing, and to my education, that's a good thing to be addicted to.

This theme highlights the benefits of physical activity as well as the risk of it leading to 'unhealthy' behaviours and negative consequences. Szabo (2000) stated that overdoing physical activity may lead to injuries and to the neglect of other responsibilities in life. Although there is a lack of a sound definition within the literature, exercise addiction/dependence with negative consequences is considered rare in the exercising population. Glasser (1976) introduced the concept of *positive addiction* to make the point that some addictions can be positive. This is because they can strengthen and make people's lives more satisfying by increasing mental strength whereas negative addiction saps it. He identified benefits such as weight loss, giving up bad habits, increased alertness, energy, well-being, confidence, and tolerance, and less anger. It can also lead to a 'positive addiction state of mind' which is a trancelike, transcendental mental state that is extremely pleasurable, relaxing and cannot be reached easily in any other way except through the addictive activity. Running, yoga and meditation are used as primary examples, although other activities include knitting, gardening, fishing, and cycling. The 'positive addiction state of mind' has been likened to Maslow's 'peak experience' and 'runners high'. Glasser proposed six criteria to obtaining a positive addiction (p. 93).

- (1) It is something noncompetitive that you choose to do and you can devote an hour (approximately) a day to it.
- (2) It is possible for you to do it easily and it doesn't take a great deal of mental effort to do it well.
- (3) You can do it alone or rarely with others but it does not depend on others to do it.
- (4) You believe that it has some value (physical, mental, spiritual) for you.
- (5) You believe that if you persist at it you will improve, but this is completely subjective - you need to be the only one who measures that improvement.
- (6) The activity *must* have the quality that you can do it *without criticising yourself*.
If you can't accept yourself during this time the activity will not be addicting.

Later scholars have argued that all addicted behaviours are always negative and positive addiction should be viewed as synonymous with serious commitment to physical activity. Addiction to exercise and commitment to exercise are thus argued to be independent concepts. Commitment to exercise has been defined as, “A reflection of how dedicated or devoted a person is to his/her physical activity. It is a measure of the strength of adherence to an adopted physical activity regimen.” (Szabo, 2000, p. 133). Benefits include satisfaction, enjoyment and achievement. It is viewed as important but not a central part of a person’s life with no withdrawal effects or loss of control over the physical activity. Reflecting on Tom and Simon’s comments, including the tendency to regularly do an activity, self-discipline and the sense of enjoyment it is likely that either concept may apply. Perhaps the crucial point is that it does not lead to negative or ‘unhealthy’ consequences. As Tom jokingly but firmly stated when I asked him about whether there was a conflict between his attendance at NA and his boxing:

You don’t take your recovery into the ring.

5.7 Relatedness

As I spoke with people about how they benefited from physical activity the relationships they built with others was a recurring theme. This often involved being introduced to activities by staff working in the prison and probation services. Andrew commented when I asked him how he got into fishing:

It was prolifcs that introduced me to it by taking me out on activities and one of the activities was out on the fishing boats and that’s where it got me. The prolifcs bought me my first rod and reel and it’s just gone from there.

Sam said doing activities with the probation team was helpful by being able to go and do ‘normal stuff’ and introducing new things he had not done before. Dean played tennis with a Community Support Worker and found it useful to talk about issues concerning him separately to the formal supervision from the probation office. John began bodybuilding competitions through the encouragement of a PEI on a previous sentence. Jason was introduced to rugby through the PEI’s in one prison and at his last prison a PEI organised a trial at a rugby club so he could continue playing on release. The relationship element was illustrated by staff comments. For example:

The prisoners tend to come down and they will talk to the PE staff around the desk, either during a session or at the end of a session about various problems and stuff like that so some of the PE staff are like agony aunts. (SOPEI)

Ryan commented on the benefits of a rapport with prison gym staff:

The gym staff were brilliant to me up there. All of them, I never had any problems with any of the gym staff at all like. It's quite nice to have like, just some chats with some of them you know like. Not about crime, or anything else, just about rugby or [...] where they are going on holidays and did they enjoy themselves. Stuff that normal people talk about I suppose like.

This was echoed by Ben who felt he benefited from the opportunities he was given by the prison PE staff and their belief that he could be a better person:

You know I was in that jail for four and a half years. And ... [PEI] and [PEI] and [PEI] they believed in me yeah 'cause they could see the better person. You know I had a bad reputation when I first went in there. People didn't want to give me chances and I was on basic, [...] 16 months. And [PEI] give me an opportunity and ... when she give me the opportunity it made me open my eyes to say you know what? I like that feeling of making myself look good and making myself feel good about myself. And when they offered me the gym orderly job you know, even though I knew the path I was going down, ... it changed my life, it did, it changed my life. Because it's nice to know that someone believes in you when the other people think you're a waste of space. And that's what I say to say to people, everyone's entitled to a second chance. Everyone's entitled to change. But it just takes that one person to believe in them. And that's what the gym did. They believed in me.

For others what they appreciated was the feeling of sharing an experience, being accepted, camaraderie and providing motivation to do an activity. This was particularly the case with Jason, Ryan, and Stuart who enjoyed this element in team sports and described, 'Being a part of something' and, 'a sense of belonging.' Stuart reflected on this aspect in relation to playing football for much of his life:

Sport, football it's the feel good factor. Whether that be belonging, camaraderie ... that's always been, I don't know, for me it's the belonging and all that from where probably my childhood was lonely.

Stuart also described how football has given something he and his young son can communicate about and helped to build a bond between them. Andrew described how he and his wife go walking and sightseeing which they make time to do together. His wife also commented how when he fishes she will join him or take a book to read. These benefits appear to provide a form of social capital for the participants. Putnam (1995, 2000) argued that social capital can have a protective quality on health and lifestyle. He described two forms of social capital, firstly, bonding that denotes ties between people in similar situations. Secondly, bridging that encompasses more distant ties such as loose friendships and workmates. These are not either/or choices but rather more-or-less dimensions that may link to increased happiness and well-being. Both forms in this case appear to be relevant to participants and staff and of benefit when

everyone is working productively which may facilitate an adjustment of values and replace negative peers with positive ones. It has been argued that these two forms of social capital can work against each other. There were instances highlighted by participants where involvement in physical activity could be unhelpful. Stuart explained that when he was at school he liked to play rugby, 'Especially when they had the punch ups'. He shared a story of one football team he played in when he was older:

We had probably some of the dodgiest people in [town] at the time all playing under the same team.

He recounted that when they went for a beer after a match people would leave the pub. Stuart commented he now views it as intimidation but back then they were, 'Just doing their thing'. He mentioned that he played football with his drug dealer who would do 'business' through the team. Stuart said he could maintain his habit and make some money. Jason at his new rugby club described an incident involving a fight on the coach on the way back from a game. He did not get involved because of the risk of recall back to prison. This highlights how not all sports teams and activities lead to pro-social relationships and how some aggressive behaviour may be condoned in some contexts.

The final element to this theme concerns how participation in physical activity can open up new experiences and stories of how life could be better. Ryan shared he'd been speaking to people in the prison gym that he thought had lived, 'Pretty decent lives' and although they'd committed a crime he did not view them as, 'criminals' but, 'decent people that had made a mistake they were being punished for.' The importance of this is shown when I asked what happened for him to think differently about crime:

I can't remember the exact date but I can remember when I thought about it like and ... like I've always been around people pretty much the same as myself like. We all talk the same things, drugs, crime, what we've done, what we're planning on doing. And I got speaking to people who weren't involved in that you know. And realised hearing their stories and their experiences of life that I'd been wasting my life away for a long time. So I started looking at things differently and wanting more for myself, or wanting something for myself at least.

And in a later interview Ryan mentioned:

The gym tends to [employ] people of a certain type, you know, generally well behaved people and ... it was having the job there and I suppose I was lucky really 'cause obviously at that time there were people there that I got on with and they gave me an insight into their lives. Showed me something that I never really [...] for before. If that makes sense?

This experience was also shared by Rebecca at the horse stables:

People up there don't do drugs and aren't involved in crime and that so I was having conversations about other stuff so I was thinking about other stuff. And then from there I went up to college where I'd never had the confidence to do that before. They tried to get me to do it here years ago and I wouldn't go up there. But from being up there my thinking had changed and I thought, 'Yeah do it.' And I went and done a computer course and yeah and just ... thinking different about other people and seeing things in a different way than like just being selfish and thinking all about myself all the time.

Although Rebecca was struggling at this time she mentioned how the people at the stables had phoned her up and not given up on her. She stated they were the, 'Sort of friends' she wants.

5.8 Connection to everyday life

Many of the participants had taken part in physical activity as part of services provided within the prison or probation service. A key issue was the generalisation of benefits and gains to other parts of a persons' life. This was particularly the case on the transition from prison and release into the community. During the first interview in prison with Ryan he shared that gaining work would be most important but that playing rugby would also play a big part in his life when he got released. He believed he would get decent friends and that opportunities for work could come from it. He had never played for a rugby team outside but had played in the prison rugby team and felt able to join a club. We met a few weeks after he had been released and he said he got a bad knock in his last rugby game and decided to play football instead. He described doing something every day in the gym and then coming out to doing almost nothing was, 'Getting on top' of him. In our next interview three months later Ryan had been working and when I asked about physical activity he responded:

Ryan: I think it's early. I do miss it. Being able to play football with the boys and rugby and just weight training and stuff. I do miss that I think. I think the longer I'm out and not doing it ... I think there's a chance for me forgetting what it feels like so I'll have to try get involved in something sooner rather than later otherwise I won't bother at all.

Jo: Have you looked at football teams and things round here?

Ryan: I haven't really like. I haven't had the time because I've been working nights and weekends as well like.

Similarly when I asked Christine about using the fitness qualifications she obtained in prison and whether she thought she could have used them outside:

Christine: Right, they said you could use it outside but because outside was different for me, outside than inside do you know what I mean? It was all great and it was something I would have loved to have done. But because my outside world was different than the world in the prison do you know what I mean? Umm probably, yeah, I don't know, maybe if something was more linked up for me. I couldn't have just gone outside and set up for myself I couldn't have. I wouldn't know how to do that. So maybe if there was something connected to while I was inside that may have. To get that inside and not be connected to anything or anybody I was connected with or familiar or whatever it's not going to happen.

Jo: So when you came out you didn't go to the gym or do gym work outside?

Christine: I did nothing, no. I did exactly what I knew to do outside, it was a different world.

Christine later managed to integrate fitness into her daily life in a way that was simple and easy to do:

In fact I started jogging outside. Umm ... but there was not every time when I would want to go out. So I thought I would just get a treadmill, then you can just use it whenever, do you know what I mean and then it's just simple, it's no big thing, you've done what you gotta do and that's it, it's out of the way. Do you know what I mean? It's nothing big [laughs].

A range of barriers were identified to doing physical activity when it was not provided as part of a structured regime or intervention including:

- Finding time if busy with work and family demands
- Finding people to train with
- Lacking motivation
- Lack of opportunities in the area living, especially if rural and no transport
- Cost of doing activities
- Inability to get a job or not trying to get a job using qualifications
- Not as easy to access outside than inside prison
- Not doing physical activity when feeling stressed
- Not having an introduction into a club or organisation
- Dealing with ill-health
- Focus on crime and drugs.

There were participants that had successfully managed to integrate physical activity as part of their routine. The role of volunteering and making a personal effort played a key role. Jack described how early on when he stopped crime and drugs he filled his time up so that slowly everyday he was doing something constructive such as attending college and making use of free gym membership. Tom worked with young people, took part in

a football volunteer scheme, and did boxing training which filled his time with constructive activities. Andrew's wife said that recreational activities provided by the prolific offenders unit helped to build structure and manage time that Andrew, and herself, continued voluntarily. As described earlier in this chapter, Jason extensively integrated rugby into his life after leaving prison and was fortunate to have a job that gave him time to train. Prior to release, Ben was hoping to build a personal fitness business. When we spoke a month after being released he was doing labouring work and going to the gym in the evening, as well as swimming, fishing and walking. He felt it was nice to do, 'Different normal things' and used physical activity as a coping strategy. He raised the issue that the physical demands of his job during the day meant he found it harder to do fitness in the evening. He was still seeking to build a business.

A few participants had made use of qualifications and courses in sports and fitness gained in prison. Dean was volunteering at a gym and taking physical instructor courses. His goal was to gain qualifications to outweigh his criminal convictions. Simon was able to make use of the fitness qualifications he obtained in prison by accessing a volunteer position that led to a paid position on release from prison. Jamie had set up a small gym at the rehabilitation centre at which he volunteers. He felt this was good for improving his job prospects and, in addition to construction qualifications, may act as a stepping-stone to employment. Stuart organises and manages a housing association football team from 16 to 25 year olds and hopes this volunteer work will help him gain a job supporting younger people. The prison gym staff commented that people may struggle to gain employment, despite earning, 'good qualifications', due to competition from people without criminal convictions just out of college. One officer viewed that it may be more useful for creating supplementary income. Staff did share a few stories of people that had managed to work in the fitness industry but described them as having, 'Something special.'

As commented upon earlier, when I spoke with people about this study a common concern was that people could get bigger and stronger to commit crime on release. This is certainly likely to be a risk with some people. In this study, given the addiction issues of many of the participants, this was less of an issue than sustaining a healthy lifestyle on release. A staff member commented on his experience of seeing people return to prison:

To be quite honest I would say there ain't many go out of our gym, out the jail and come back as fit as when they leave. (SOPEI)

Stuart felt that without being involved in sport he would have had increased criminal activity due to boredom and not working:

Sports good. Football's good. Football probably carried me through quite a bit ... I would say if I didn't have football ... I don't know where I would've been actually. 'Cause instead of working, playing football and doing my chemicals I could've been out robbing, doing more chemicals out of boredom so give me an activity as well. And that bit of activity probably what encouraged me to go to work to be honest.

Mark who had returned to drugs and crime after being released from prison on most of his sentences explained why health was important to him in prison but not outside:

Mark: Its just go down the gym innit. You know. 'Cause before I'd be wanting to get out just to get back on the drugs, do what I was doing, but now it's not.

Jo: I was kind of interested in that kind of getting healthy to get back out and basically abuse your body

Mark: But back then you're in jail wanting to see how you look and getting other people, 'Oh you look well.' It would never last anyway. Before I would get out 16 stone looking big and healthy within a month, two months I'm down to 12 stone so it's mad, mad, yeah. [...] Just didn't care. Didn't care it was all about image, drugs, crime, you know, that's all it was.

5.9 Holistic lifestyle change

I was informed a few times while talking with people there is no magic cure or simple formula to people not reoffending, this is something I am aware of from my own work experience. Some staff shared the view that physical activity should not be viewed simplistically as a form of play and needs to be linked to rehabilitation with specific benefits such as qualifications or volunteering. Thus, physical activity may play a role but it is certainly not the only answer as Jack reminded me during an interview:

If you join a gym and then you get clean because you've joined a gym and you meet nice people in the gym and then you stop going to gym you're gonna probably be in trouble. Unless you've rebuilt your life a lot.

What became apparent was the role that physical activity plays within a holistic approach to transforming one's life. This was alluded to by participants in terms of obtaining 'balance' and identifying the benefits that physical activity brings, alongside other influences, to living crime-free. This was particularly evident in the accounts of people who had been offence-free for a longer period of time. Simon shared how he focused on developing different aspects of his life:

I get a lot more pleasure from going to the gym and doing training you know. That started really back on my last sentence. It was really just a choice that I made in terms of when I decided I was going to study and work my mind, and I was going to focus on the spiritual side of things with my faith, I decided in terms of my physical training as well. I just thought I'm going to put everything into all of them. And, yeah, that's how it's continued. You know, for me they're the important parts. In terms of I've continued with my studying, developing myself that way. In terms of my faith and developing myself in that way. And in terms of going to the gym and developing myself that way as well you see, most days. So, you know, it's a lifestyle I have taken from that whole focus and it's continued. It just like a routine I have now got myself doing and I have just continued to just do. Yeah.

In a later interview Simon reinforced the role it plays in his whole lifestyle change:

Healthy living, physical. That's very important to me. Umm ... it's an integral part of my life and umm ... then like I said before that whole mind, body, and spirit. So the physical body is very important.

Tom emphasised the importance of balance in his life and proposed a three-part model as to how he understands his transformation and the role of physical activity:

When you get clean and that it's all about trying to get a balance with your life, you know what I mean. Like I need the sport, I need the [NA] meetings, 'cause that's my mental health yeah and my emotional health yeah, the way I feel about myself, the way I can begin to deal with the wreckage of my past and start, you know what I mean, to like yourself and get my dignity back, get my respect back, you know what I mean. I needed college and voluntary work 'cause I needed something to do to make me feel worthwhile but then I needed sport. First of all it was football then it was Thai because I need the physical. You know what I mean. I need my heart pumping, I need that, it's all a triangle, if I just go to meetings, it all becomes about head stuff. Do you know what I mean? Head, head, head, and you start analysing yourself all the time. I need to be running along the beach, you know, I need to be doing my rounds on the bag and the pad work and with the same class you know what I mean?

In a later interview Tom additionally referred to the importance of other people:

And the other stuff, yeah, is then your sponsor, your friends, your family come in. 'Cause you can't do it on your own. You've got to let people in. 'Cause otherwise you create a new life but you're not actually sharing that life with anyone. You're still selfish, do you know what I mean? You're still self-seeking, it's all about you and you're not giving anything to anybody the same as an addict don't give nothing to nobody. It doesn't work.

Christine spoke about the need for healthy balance when I asked her how she sees the role fitness has in her life:

I see it as very positive. I see it as balance, do you know what I mean? I see it's a healthy balance to my spiritual, my body and my mind. Do you know what I mean? I'm working, got my spiritual side and I'm looking after my body.

And when I asked as to the reason she continues to do physical activity:

It's bringing in a balance between the physical, the spiritual and the body, healthy eating, just an all-round balance.

5.10 Summary

This chapter explored the role of physical activity in rehabilitation and the lived experience of people transforming a criminal life. This highlighted eight key themes that were demonstrated through a creative non-fiction and interview quotes. Across each of the themes aspects of physical activity experienced as enabling and constraining were examined. Importantly the stories of those that had desisted from crime and drug addiction for longer highlighted the active striving for balance in life. Across all the participants there was awareness of how physical activity played a stronger role at some points in their life and less at others. Similar to previous studies, sport and physical activity showed its potential as a vehicle to promote a healthy and better life and how it could sustain a criminal one. For those participants that gained benefit they were able to link it to a motivation to live a better life and translate this into their day-to-day living. This highlights the importance of understanding what motivates a person to participate and the values they hold, or are encouraged to hold, about their chosen physical activity. The next chapter explores in further depth the importance of values and what matters to people in the lived experience of transforming their lives.

CHAPTER SIX: SPIRITUALITY

6.1 Introduction

‘The fishing’s a religion, it’s not a sport anymore.’
(Andrew’s wife, May, 2010)

In the previous two chapters I touched upon the importance of shifts in what people *care* and *value* about life in the transformation process. When I began this study spirituality was a concept I was aware of but initially thought unlikely to be relevant. What became unavoidably evident through the process of listening to people’s stories was the role of meaning, sense of purpose and religious faith. Within the literature links between spirituality and narrative have been identified. Randall (2009), for example, argued that spirituality is a narrative process insofar that it has to do with making meaning and is symbiotic with narrative as stories are structures for meaning. He noted the act of telling stories is integral to our sense of self and a quest for personal meaning at deeper levels. They are also an act of transcending the personal and entering realm of the sacred. He argued that spirituality is something we experience *through* the stories by which we understand our lives. I do not attempt to disentangle the ambiguities connecting spirituality and religion. Rather my analysis identified two themes, *meaning and purpose* and *religious conversion*, that complement prior work exploring spirituality in the desistance process and physical activity. My aim is to convey the importance of *what matters* to people in transforming a criminal life and increasing well-being.

6.2 Meaning and purpose

In this section I consider themes that emerged from the holistic content analysis of the participants’ stories and, to a lesser extent, the thematic analysis of staff interviews. Frankl (2004) contended an important challenge facing a person is to discover some form of meaning, reason and purpose even in the bleakest of life histories (Maruna, 2001). He coined the term ‘tragic optimism’ which is an optimism in the face of tragedy and the turning suffering of into human achievement and accomplishment. This includes an opportunity to change oneself for the better and to take responsible action. He argued that striving to find meaning in one’s life is a primary motivational force in human beings (rather than gaining pleasure or avoiding pain). That is, people need ‘something’ for the sake of which to live.

Frankl's position is further supported by the philosophical argument of Frankfurt (1988) who proposed that in addition to inquiry about what to believe (epistemology) and how to behave (ethics) there is a third branch of inquiry with questions that pertain to what to care about. Rather than asking what is morally right it is concerned with *what is important to us*. This coincides with the notion of 'something' with reference to which the person guides their self in what they do with their life. This is not the same as liking or wanting something. A person who cares about something is invested in it. Frankfurt noted there are wide variations in how strongly and persistently people care about things. This is not a passive process but one that enhances both autonomy and strength of will. It also does not mean that anything goes as it is still possible to distinguish between things that are worth caring about (to differing degrees) and things that are not. In this section I explore how meaning and sense of purpose, what people *care about* and *value*, plays a role in the transformation process through the following themes: *spirituality and physical activity; ethos; a better life; and higher purpose*.

6.2.1 Spirituality and physical activity

08/10/2010

A sunny and warm Friday. After a long day travelling to meet with a couple of participants I drove late afternoon to the coast. I've checked the forecast and the surf is good. As I park I see people returning to the car park from the sea with smiles on their faces. A good sign. I unload my body board, squeeze into my wetsuit and walk to the sea. I feel a release. A long week is over and the openness is refreshing, inviting and blows away my 'intellectual cobwebs.' I've been indoors and in my head all week. The sea is warm and the sun is setting turning the sky a burnt orange. The sets of waves are perfect and although a novice I just enjoy the feel of the water. I don't care if I'm any good or not I just embrace the experience. As I connect with nature I sense a reconnection and balancing within myself. I smile when I return to the car park and phone people to share the experience. I arrive home tired and contented. Watersports, walking, running and camping are some of the ways I connect with nature, the world, other people and increase the sense of balance and well-being in my life.

As I explored the rehabilitative role of physical activity there became apparent an additional theme which reflected a link between well-being and physical activity. The journal extract above shows my own developing sense of connection and understanding of spirituality, well-being and outdoor activity. Participants spoke about regularly going for walks outdoors as something they could share with their partner and family (Andrew and Dean); help them to think better about problems (Ryan) and assist with mood swings and developing self-understanding of feelings and happiness (Dean). Physical activity not only seemed to release negative energy and anxiety it assisted an increase in well-being and striving for a holistic lifestyle change in terms of balance in mind, body and spirit.

Andrew in particular described how he found fishing and sitting by the water helped him to think and feel better:

I just found it peaceful and relaxing ... basically I had no worries when I was sitting by the water you know. Everything just seemed to disappear and you just put life in perspective for me really. I used to sit and just look around at me and [...] and think to myself, 'You know what? I want what they've got.' You know. And now I've got it. I've got it.

When he was in prison Andrew said he tried to keep fit and played football however fishing felt different to these activities and was more of an 'escape':

I think it's ... it's being able to sit by the water you know and not have no worries in the world. Only whether you're going to catch a fish or not [slight laugh] and if that's the only worries you got you're a lucky person. That's the point really. Yeah.

Andrew's wife also recognised this connection to the natural environment as noted in her quote at the beginning of the chapter, his fishing had become more like a religion. She made the point that it did not seem to worry him if he caught anything or not as, 'He enjoys just sitting there, looking out at the sea I think [short laugh].' She shared, 'It doesn't bother me 'cause I know he's out there and he's enjoying himself.' In the previous chapter Dean commented how getting fresh air and family activities helps him and explained further how physical activity increases his understanding of happiness:

And now it helps me understand what makes me feel good, rather than thinking to myself, 'Heroin makes me feel good.' And then I think to myself, 'Wait a minute running makes me feel good so that's a natural [...] so how do I really feel when I take heroin? Am I happy?' You know. And I'll think about things a lot more than you know and say, 'Wait a minute. I assume I'm happy when I've took heroin but what am I doing? What's going on? You know? I'm sat in a chair, I'm not moving, I'm staring at a telly not talking. That's not the manner of a happy person.' You know, so in effect my brain thinks I'm happy but I ain't 'cause I'm not doing nothing. So then the question's why am I doing it? Because heroin's not making me happy why am I doing it?

This understanding for Dean complemented knowledge he had gained from undertaking programmes and courses about his mental outlook:

I think it all played a part you know. It's not just about sports, there's like a mental part of it. It's about getting them both together and realising in thinking why you are doing it, for me, you know. Why I'm doing it and what happens when I've been doing it.

The connection of the sea and spiritual beliefs was mentioned unprompted by Tom during our first meeting:

I believe in God but I'm not a Christian and that. I believe in the devil because I don't think the two don't, it's ying and yang isn't it. Know what I mean. Negative, positive, know what I mean yeah? So I don't think one survives without the other. But I don't put myself in a box and say you know I'm Christian, or Muslim or this or that. I believe in something. There's something a lot higher than you and me, whatever, do you know what I mean? You only have to look at the sea for that. Why's that there? I don't know. But I do believe in something.

When I asked Tom why he needed the physical in his life he described that was a hard question but knows that he likes it and enjoys it. Particularly in relation to boxing it was the repetition of techniques and competitiveness. The importance of the values of Thai boxing was briefly noted in Chapter Five. When I asked if there is a spiritual element and philosophy to boxing Tom responded:

There is. You don't take it out on the street, and you just use it to defend yourself. You know. [Trainer] always says, 'Someone calls you an idiot they're calling you an idiot, know what I mean. If they're putting their hands on you they're calling you an idiot then you can deal with that.' Try and talk your way of it and then you have to just tell them you're trained. And then if they still want a go, pursue it then, you know, you just deal with them. You don't just deal with them and then say, 'Well you shouldn't have touched me.'

Tom spoke of the value of respect as he went into the ring to competitively fight:

There is respect. You go in, you bow. I always go in I bow to the crowd, you know, the four sides yeah. And then I bow to the ref and then I'll bow to the person and his people's corner, his trainer and that. Bom. And then I go and I just put my head on the corner post and I just leave it there. And then we just go to the centre of the ring, touch belts, do you know what I mean, tell us the rules and we'll get on with it.

After retiring from fighting Tom decided he needed something different and took up fishing because it was something he'd always wanted to do. The final time we met I asked further about his connection to the sea. Tom recounted how he has always loved the sea which stemmed from a day trip once a year to the seaside with his Nan until he was aged nine or ten years. This stood out for him as the sea had always given him good memories and was linked to a feeling of well-being.

As I met with people and transcribed the interviews I noted in my research journal how people would smile and physically look and sound lighter when they spoke about the role of physical activity or connection with nature. They're 'spirits' seemed to noticeably lift. I observed that they seemed to have been reminded of something that that seemed beneficial and enjoyable. Researchers have previously found links between physical activity, the natural environment and therapeutic (or healing) benefits in coping with bereavement, reducing depression, dealing with stress and enhancing well-being (Brewer, 2009; Hynds, 2010; Irvine & Warber, 2002; Pretty, 2007; Roszack, Gomes &

Kanner, 1995; Zautra, Arewasikporn & Davis, 2010). The notion of *transformative values* was proposed by Norton (1991, cited in Saunders, 2003) where certain experiences of nature and physical activity can provide opportunities for both forming and criticising our values.

There is no settled definition of spirituality and Elliot (2003) discusses the changing view of spirituality. At one time it may have been expected to include ascetic elements and progression as defined by religious institutions. Currently some wish to define as essentially personal and concerned with one's values, the 'wholeness of life' and one's meaning or purpose. This change in definition has been seen in a variety of fields including mental health, nursing, and education as a significant source of values, identity and citizenship. More recently it has been applied to sport and the idea of the person as an embodied and social being with a human spirit that encompasses hopes, aspirations, choices, actions and secular religious meaning (Humberstone, 2011; Jennings, Brown & Sparkes, 2010; Parry, Robinson, Watson & Nesti, 2007; Preece & Hess, 2006). This focuses on the embodied, lived experience of beliefs and values that inform and provide the backdrop to peoples' lives. Spirituality therefore relates closely to a holistic view of health and well-being although researchers agree this association is complex and there are both positive and negative spiritualities (Parry et al. 2007).

6.2.2 Ethos

In 2010 I watched the film *Forever Strong* that is about a successful American High School rugby team. It is based on true events and the stories of former and current players woven into one playing season. It is a story about lessons in life as well as success on the rugby pitch. This was interesting given what Jack shared of his experience of his teenage son's involvement with a local rugby team:

My boy did rugby and I used to have a word with the rugby club, 'I'm a bit disappointed that you're not interested in how he is at home.' I said, 'I'm letting him do this against what I want to do because he's so naughty that I want to say, 'Right you're not going rugby'. 'Cause he says he is and it's up to him. I said, 'I let him come here just because I'm hoping it will put discipline into his life. But if you lot don't care that he's just rugby tackled his Mum and pulled a knife out on her and stuff and you're just going to encourage him to do it on the field and not be interested in his, then it don't really do it for me.' And they reckon they are but they wasn't. They just weren't good rugby players. They kind of basically say it's nothing to do with us what he does at home but I don't really agree with that. I think that's a big mistake. I think it's a big shame actually 'cause they had so much influence and they could have done so much. Who cares that he can run faster than everyone else on the pitch if he's beating his Mum up? He should be told to get off the pitch, we're not interested in you. We're interested in an all-round guy. And you're beating you're Mum up and scoring tries for us don't really line up. And they could have talked about that so good. And they didn't. So in the end he stopped going.

Parry et al. (2007) proposed that the notion of ethos of any ‘corporate’ activity expresses values that tell us something about what a group or community find important. The sense of ethics and integrity in how to live your life and how to play sport is typified in the film. The club’s website promotes Kia Kaha, a Maori phrase meaning ‘be strong’ and the club coach, Larry Gelwix, described a strict code of conduct and behaviour. A broad team rule is that you do not do anything that would embarrass yourself, your family, your team or your faith. If a player violates any of the team’s rules they are suspended. A meeting is held with the player, his parents, and the coach to discuss a possible return. The aim is the support and teaching of values on and off the rugby pitch and the goal is to help young men grow up to be responsible people.

I was reminded of this film when I met with Stuart. In Chapter Four he described playing on a ‘dodgy’ football team when he was younger. He now manages a housing association football team. I asked him how he builds a team with pro-social values and avoids repeating the experience he had. Stuart spoke about how he explains the standards of behaviour he expects and his aim is to encourage respect. He said there are some ‘colourful characters’ on the team but on the whole they abide by what he asks and he receives apologies when they have ‘done wrong.’ He stated that what people do away from the football though is, ‘None of his business.’ He described wanting to encourage the good that has come out of football for him such as the banter and camaraderie. Stuart summarised in a nutshell that he was, ‘Trying to build a club culture and not a gang culture.’ He said it was slow progress but believes it is on the right path. The above discussion shows the key role organisations, clubs, coaches and leaders of activities play in building an ethos that may help to shape and aid transformation of participants’ values. The challenge, already noted in Chapter Five, is connecting to an individual’s broader life. With this in mind I consider the broader themes of a better life and higher purpose.

6.2.3 A better life

I explored with participants what mattered during times in their life when they were committing crime and a variety of values were mentioned including:

- Money, materialism, greed
- Doing what want to do
- Excitement, thrills, buzz
- No value to life

- Power, respect, status, notoriety
- Glamour and self-worth
- Being feared, peer influence, lack of regard for the impact of actions
- Anti-authority
- Sense of entitlement
- Blaming others or circumstances
- Easy way to live or lack of choice in how to live
- Hating life/people and seeing self as a victim.

Christine, Rebecca, Andrew, Sam, Jamie, Jack, John, and Ryan described that in the past they enjoyed drug taking and crime viewing life as a joke, a laugh, and a party, often at other peoples' expense. Not everyone liked crime however and others viewed it as a way to 'survive', a means to an end to obtain money, drugs, or status. Within the transformation process a reassessing of values took place that was more than a logical weighing up of the pros and cons. Participants described a realisation that their life wasn't actually fun, they were unhappy, and did not have much to show for their life describing it as a waste, a mess and 'pretty shit'. This left a range of potentialities as to how to live life. For some it may mean carrying on the same way, giving up or struggling to make changes. For others it means successfully changing some values associated with crime but not all. For others, meaning and purpose may be found in striving for a better, crime and drug-free life. In Chapter Four participants spoke about how they began to care more about living and no longer wanted to feel physically or emotionally 'dead'. There was a general feeling of wanting a better life. Ryan simply put it as:

I just want a decent life like. I want to live life.

As did Mark:

'I want more out life' and 'Just care about life, living, I wanna go out there and live that's all. Just want to live now.'

Some participants, for example, Ben, Dean, Jamie, and Stuart felt there must be a positive reason they were still alive given the accidents, violence, self-harming and risk taking they had experienced. This indicated finding *a value in life itself*. That is, as Dean neatly put it:

Life has meaning and means something.

There was shift in what people *wanted from life* and nearly everybody referred to the desire for a 'normal life'. This involved a scaling down or a scaling up of ambitions and included working for money, a place to live, providing food, quality time with family and friends, study, faith, being honest and not taking drugs or committing crime. Mark described it as:

I don't want much out of life, you know like, I'd have a nice little job, a little flat something like that. Just live, I want to feel fresh air that's how I feel. See my sons. I never cared about all that stuff before. I've always lived my life day by day.

Rebecca, Sam and John also described wanting a better life and having some vision of what this would look like. They wanted to be happier but were particularly struggling to achieve this in their lives when I met with them. They also had greater difficulty thinking about what they really valued in life. Sam and Rebecca described struggling with motivation and confidence that they could do it. All of them said at times they stopped crime and drug taking but struggled to either stick at it or progress. Reasons for this included getting bored, looking for short-cuts, lack of confidence, not enough reasons to progress, and not sustaining the 'effort' required to achieve a better life.

One aspect that all the participants referred to was a shift in how they viewed money and materialism. Tom spoke about how culture and the media promote if you do not have it all by the age of 30, 'You're a loser'. Maruna (2001) in his study emphasised the role of hyper-consumption in Western society and the seeking of experiential thrills by people active in crime. This is still evident in current society and is perhaps further compounded by the current economic downturn. Popular culture and advertising still celebrates the value of hyper-consumption alongside which exists a perception of an unfair widening gap between 'those who have' and the 'have nots'. As Dittimar (2007) observed material goods may have a positive impact however they may also have a dark side and toxicity for a person's identity and well-being. Within this study what I observed was a shift from seeing pleasure from money, thrills, material possessions and reputation to *appreciation* and *gratitude* for simple things in life that brought happiness as noted I in my journal:

16/07/2010

I recall when I last met with Dean he was sitting on the fire escape having a cigarette in the sunshine. He mentioned feeling a bit depressed at the start but later spoke about being happier with things such as getting into bed with clean sheets, having his own flat, going for walks and doing family activities with his partner and her daughter. He seemed to have more appreciation for the simple things in life that make you happy rather than money and 'having things'.

Christine spoke about appreciating the ‘little things’ and Ryan was thankful for the opportunities he’d had in relation to work and getting into college. That’s not to say that people still didn’t value possessions or money rather it was the negative consequences of valuing it too much or not enough. Jamie described how he still likes possessions but is no longer as bothered by material things. He said he now manages his money and if he does not need it he does not buy it or alternatively saves for it.

Linked closely to valuing and wanting a normal life was a shift in what was referred to as ‘*mindset*’, ‘*attitude*’ or ‘*outlook*’. Christine described how she came from a circle where drugs, abuse and crime were ‘normal.’ She reflected that, ‘This was mad because it’s not meant to be normal.’ Andrew similarly said he thought committing crime was being straight as, ‘That was my life you know. That was normal to me.’ Simon shared:

I’ve been through certain things where my perspective of life was completely warped. You know when I look back it was like I was actually not thinking right [short laugh]. If I compare that mental well-being thing, I would say my mental well-being is a lot better now. My perspective of life is a lot more sensible than it was [laughs].

Simon, Jack and Tom all argued that you can have a good job, an education, a family but if you have still got ‘an offending mindset’ then the temptation will still be there to commit crime. As eloquently illustrated in the film *Analyze This*, Billy Crystal plays a psychotherapist counselling a gangster played by Robert De Nero, at one point Crystal questions if he is just enabling De Nero to be a more well-adjusted criminal. Hence, it is not just about a shift in values that is important it is to what ‘end’ the values are put towards. Ryan and Simon spoke about the values of focus and determination. They both described using these in their criminal life and using them to transform by applying them for a positive impact rather than a negative one.

6.2.4 Higher purpose

A sense of purpose can be described as ‘*the something*’ that gives a value to life and matters in the desire to change and ongoing transformation. Tom shared how when he stopped committing crime and taking drugs, ‘You got no purpose.’ He strongly believed in finding something to do that is fulfilling and gives a feeling of purpose. The following were described by participants as providing a greater purpose:

Family

Children and family members were considered important for many of the participants. Christine shared that all she ever wanted to be was a Mum but had found that very hard. Looking back on her life the only good thing she felt she had achieved was having her children and she stated that she knew if she did not change her younger children would become, 'Thieves and drug addicts':

Today my children matter. Alright before they didn't. But today my children are important to me, they are valuable.

Jason found opening up to his relationship with his young daughter gave his life more purpose. He also does not wish to let his family or daughter down by returning to prison. Andrew stated that he has found his meaning in his life in his relationship, 'I got a wife who I need to look after' and looking after his wife's family. Tom wanted to be a family person. Stuart firmly located his son as his reason for valuing life:

I'm here for a reason after them three [suicide] attempts didn't come off so I'm here for a reason. He's my reason.

Work and education

Employment and/or access to further education provided a sense of purpose to Ryan, Tom, Eliza, Simon, Rebecca and Jamie. Simon spoke about how he would rather accumulate knowledge than money as, 'Money can come and go but not education.' Ryan described his purpose in life as doing what is best for him and that one of the best things he did after release from prison was to start a college course. After he ended a period of employment he described missing the sense of self-worth he gained from working. Rebecca felt she had a purpose when she was working at the horse stables. Tom shared that working with young people gave him a sense of purpose and identity that was fulfilling and gave him dignity and self-respect.

Being different

Jason no longer wanted to stand out unless it was for doing well at rugby and being viewed as 'a nice lad' as described in his story in Chapter Five. Ben also shared:

I want to be different. I was different before in a negative way so it's about me replacing that now and doing it in a positive way.

Giving back and leaving a legacy

For Simon, Tom, Christine, Jack, and Eliza giving back and leaving a legacy provided a sense of purpose by putting back into the community, being a positive role model and making a positive contribution. This relates to a redemption narrative (McAdams, 2006; Maruna, 2001) and overcoming a lot of wrongs in one's life by doing some good. Eliza speaks at events about her experience of resettlement from prison as she feels it could be, 'Useful to help other people' and that if she could show she was doing okay this would mean someone else could too. Simon spoke in-depth about leaving a legacy:

It's about being able to ... um ... what's the word like giving but it's? Contribute. Being able to contribute, yeah. ... It's about a lot of different things. It's about being able to contribute at different levels. You're talking about society, talking about your family, talking about ... being able to affect the environment around you in a positive way. Giving rather than taking.

I think as well a key factor which we missed out there is about making a difference. Which is about the contribution but it's all about making a difference. I always feel that I want my life to mean something. You know? I don't know what the writing on the gravestone would be, you know when they say the gravestone ...? I don't know what it would say but it would be something that says that I have made a difference you know. And that for me is important. And that's why things like making lots of money and things like that are no longer important. No one cares how many houses you got, or how much whatever you have, it's what you did, you know. It's umm how many ... umm ... people were actually ... influenced in a positive way. How many, it's a contribution thing, what difference did you make in someone else's life.

But for me there's a something about a legacy as well. So making a difference, you know, what evidence is left that you've transformed people's lives, their lives have been transformed. Did you leave a legacy so that others you know, so that's, yeah, the thing for me.

Faith/passion

Christine, Jack, and Simon referred to having a passion, meaning and sense of purpose they all experienced from conversion to the Christian faith and ongoing practice of religion in their daily lives. Jack described that God had given him a new drive, motivation and passion. For Simon his purpose is doing what God has created him to do. Christine, as well as Tom earlier in the chapter, referred to the role of God as their higher power in their transformation process drawing from their participation in the *12-step programme* approach to recovery from addiction.

Multiple purposes

For those that had been crime free for longer there appeared to be different elements combining to provide meaning and sense of purpose. Christine described earlier the importance of children. Her passion is for working with people with addiction and stuck

in a life of crime. Her ultimate goal is to set up a halfway house for women who have been in prison and may not be ready for rehabilitation:

For me now, right, I see my purpose in life. I've got a purpose. Do you know what I mean? Before I didn't have a purpose. It was just so destroying, the crime and stuff. Do you know what I mean? I had no value. My purpose is of value and now that I see that my past has not been wasted because I can use it now to support people up ahead of me.

I've got a purpose and like I said that is the halfway house, I believe that this is all part of it. You know what I mean? And like giving back to society and seeing changes in somebody else's life is just so rewarding. It's priceless. You can't put money on it.

Christine shared her belief that if she can help the next person to get to where she needs to, then her life is not a waste as it is being used. Her reward is that she is being challenged, stretched, and moving forward. She viewed being paid as a bonus in her job as it is something she would try to do anyway.

When I asked staff the signs that someone was doing well in transforming their criminal life many referred to how people see the trappings of a criminal lifestyle and reach a decision or realisation it is the 'wrong' lifestyle for them. A person's view of 'normality' changed with a shift in 'outlook', 'mindset' and 'values'. Staff spoke of how people work towards 'something' that keeps them crime free and have a belief they can positive make changes and have the will to do so. This shift was regarded as unique to each individual and hard to pinpoint as an outsider looking on. The drive for change was considered to need to come from the person with staff playing a facilitative role. A consistent view was that a person required a 'strong mindset' to leave a background of 'prolific offending' and make something better for his or her self. This challenge was considered potentially 'too big and scary' for some. Staff commented that change can be sudden or dramatic but a gradual climb is more common. What staff rarely mentioned, if at all, was the role of religion and faith in the change process.

6.3 Religious conversion

Within this section the focus is on the lives of Jack, Simon and Christine who regarded faith and religious conversion as fundamental in providing their lives with meaning and purpose and keeping them crime free for over five years. I firstly consider their narratives of religious conversion and, secondly, the theme of *hope* as a particular quality or virtue.

6.3.1 Road to Damascus: Jack's story

It's weird. I still haven't nailed it. I still can't say this is how it was, now this happened to me, and now I'm here. It's a massive thing with my Christian faith in the middle. People use us to give testimony and it's all about how I was a drug addict and now I'm not. I was a criminal and now I'm not. It's more to it than that for me. Everyone applauds it and claps and cheers and you think, 'I never did anything anyway'. I don't yet understand totally. I was always trying to give up. And couldn't. It wasn't as if one day I just decided to change and then become a Christian. I'd always had enough. For me it was a massive ... weird ... encounter.

Seven years ago I was living in an old car at the end of a leisure centre with another geezer. We started going to a Christian drop in centre. It's no big deal you didn't know they were Christians except I knew one of the guys in there. It was right in the middle of town which was really good. It was completely free, no religious stuff, you could just drop in, play pool, and have something to eat. I never really went to these places a lot and I was one of the last people to start going. It was a good place and I worked out you could rip people off and get some drugs. I wasn't there very long and I didn't go there a lot. Nothing had changed really in my life. It wasn't that I'd hit rock bottom. I'd always been flipping rock bottom for years. There wasn't people in there doing well, our lot was all still bang at it and wasn't moving forward in anyway.

There was a bloke that worked as the project manager who ended up being my pastor and took me in. I remember playing pool and my pastor used to tell us his testimony. We used to be like, 'Yeah, whatever'. 'Cause he was a nice bloke and a million miles away from where he would've been so you couldn't see it. But he was a drug dealer in a rough city. To deal there I wouldn't have stood a chance. I would've been stabbed, attacked and dead within five minutes. He showed us his testimony in a journal once from years before and I was like, 'Wow man'. It was all a bit of a weird time. I'm a drug addict living on the streets, heroin addict, crackhead, dealer, bum, thief, whatever, and he starts telling me this stuff and I didn't believe any of it. God and Jesus and that, I was like 'Yeah, whatever'. All a big fairy tale. I'd never heard the proper gospel before anyway. Just gay vicars, bent popes, pedophiles, money, churches, power and all this rubbish, I wasn't educated, I wouldn't of known about religion. It's probably a good thing actually. I'd met Christians in prison and I used to think, 'Yeah, well he's done you a lot of good 'in he.' So it's just all a joke.

I went back in there one day and a volunteer recently reminded me I leant on a thing and said, 'Oi is there any truth in this Jesus stuff?' But I used a different word than that. And the pastor said, 'Why don't you read the bible and find out?' And I was like 'Umm' and that day someone had just dropped back a bible and he said, 'We got one here.' And I sat and read John. It's not the usual thing that I'd be doing when I was on gear. I remember reading it 'cause I was had my eyes down and everyone thought I was gouching. People was coming in going, 'Is Jack reading that?' and I'd look up and they'd go, 'Oh yeah'. I read it. I can't remember it. It's a good book to read now I'm a Christian, a gospel kind of message of what it's all about. And I can't even remember that day. But a few days, a week and I come back in there and I went up to the pastor and I said, 'Let's pray. Let's do it'. And I said a prayer that lasted probably a minute. I said, 'God if you're real change my life'. And that was it. I stopped that day. Completely changed my life. That hour. That minute I think.

I'd had needles in my pocket, blood running down my legs, two big holes in my groin where I'd injected every day. I'd been using heroin for ten years every single day before that. I couldn't imagine anyone going a day without it. I couldn't understand people that just used once a week. I used all day, every day. I never had a telly, carpet, house, flats, girlfriends, kids. I didn't acknowledge any of that stuff it was just smack, crack, drugs, breaking the law, drink, getting off me head, bang up people's pins full of blood. Anything to get my hit. I used to overdose all the time. Never bothered me. I'd come round in hospitals telling me I was dead and I'd be like, 'Yeah it's fine, it's cool'. I go back out, buy exactly the same amount and bang it back up. If I died, I died. I did that all the time. Didn't interest me. And then I said this prayer and bang it just completely all went away. I stopped that day. I ceased to use heroin, crack, methadone everything. I didn't have to try. I just stopped. Everything. Except smoking. I stopped that the day I got baptised. But after the prayer I'd actually gone from banging up

heroin all day, a crack dealer, breaking the law all day, burgle all day, lived rough, didn't care about anybody, fighting with the police all the time, I took crack, speed, I always banged everything up I could get. That day I completely stopped and I've never broke the law since and that was seven years ago. I didn't need drugs. I was on fire man. It was instant. I couldn't even spit on the floor and I was stood in church completely dressed normal, not swearing, not smoking, not drinking, my whole attitude changed. I was a volunteer when all I'd wanted was wealth and just to die enjoying myself to, bang, the next day talking about serving and giving our life to others. And that's from day one. I'd met God and I gave testimonies and I said it's like I fell in love again. It was just massive.

I say that and then I get this little thing in my head. Two and a half years ago, which is jumping over, I struggled after four and a half years. A lot went on. If you consider my moment of madness which I'm disappointed with because it changes things when you talk. Years of never smoking fags to suddenly choosing to leave my wife, my children and my job and hang about with drug addicts completely out the blue and for no reason. It wasn't nothing like the first stuff and it was certainly a weird thing. It didn't last long, only a few months, and I come back through it. I didn't lose anything. That was over two and a half years ago so I've proved that I've come back. You'd think it takes away from your Christian testimony but it actually doesn't. It enhances it in a weird way because I come back as powerfully as before. So to come back twice is actually quite mad. Even though I'd prefer not to have even gone there. And since then in my Christian stuff, in the last seven months of getting my head round it, my whole life is devoted to my wife and children.

It is on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus where Saul of Tarsus, the orthodox Jew and Christian persecutor, is instantly transformed into St. Paul the Christian missionary. White (2004) argued within this story can be found the core elements of an abrupt transformational change experience: a germinating personal crisis, a breakdown and breakthrough experience, and a radically and positively altered identity and life course. Jack's conversion to the Christian religion explored from the perspective of narrative can be seen as an example of quantum change (Miller 2004; Miller & C'de Baca 2001), dramatic change (Athens, 1995) or spiritual transformational change after suffering or crisis (Taylor, 2011; White, 2004).

A sudden and enduring identity transformation is qualitatively different from learning models of behaviour change. The latter is regarded as more common with a gradual, educational, cumulative, step-by-step change process. This approach is used in structured offending behaviour group work programmes and described in change models such as Prochaska & Diclemente's (1982) stages of change model used in substance misuse and offending behaviour interventions. Religious traditions have long acknowledged the human potential for transformation via the process of conversion. However the topic of sudden change has rarely been addressed in contemporary psychology. Miller (2004) noted there is not even a term for it although it is often described as *epiphanies* (Denzin, 1989). What is seldom considered is how and when such experiences yield abrupt enduring change. Jack's conversion reflects what Miller & C'de Baca's (2001) termed a mystical type of quantum change. This is dramatic, out

of the ordinary and entails the noetic sense of being acted upon by something outside and greater than oneself.

Consistent with previous studies exploring desistance and religion change seems to have occurred at the level of narrative identity. Jack's identity shifted from 'drug addict and criminal' to being 'normal' and giving his life to others. A shift in values is an integral part of the conversion reflected in how Jack defined his past and current self. Similar to Maruna, Wilson & Curran's (2006) study of prison conversions Jack is able to integrate shameful life events into a coherent whole and renew his sense of personal biography. The conversion experience demarcates a point of transition from deviance to a more conventional life and provides a narrative that enables him to create a new social identity to replace the label of 'criminal' and 'addict.' This provides a sense of meaning, purpose and empowerment facilitating development of a new and more favourable identity to replace the one associated with criminal behaviour.

Maruna et al. (2006) noted that the general public, criminal justice practitioners and academics often meet religious conversions with considerable cynicism. Within the general study of religion there has been a focus on the sincerity of the conversion and whether or not it is genuine. Allport (1950, cited in Bolkas, 2000) argued the degree of religious commitment can differ greatly and distinguished between the intrinsically religious person who *lives* religion (more devout, caring and honest) and the extrinsically religious person who *uses* religion (self-serving, immature and narrow in scope). Hood, Hill & Spilka (2009) described that after conversion, participation and commitment can vary and deconversion (sudden or gradual) is a possibility. Jack described in his story that after four-and-a-half years he doubted the role of God in his change that led to a return his 'old self', though not as extreme, for a short time. This fits the learning behaviour change model's notion of 'lapses' and 'relapses'. When I asked Jack how he returned to a pro-social Christian identity he spoke of the influence of religious leaders and a realisation that he had a 'real faith' that meant it was not as simple as stopping believing as he had been radically transformed.

The Christian religious community provides people with the Damascus story and cultivates it as a narrative resource to make sense of sudden and dramatic change. There is no equivalent from a secular perspective. Jack described to me that he has found it difficult in his job in a drugs agency as others can react to his conversion story and treat it, 'like this isn't really true'. This reflects the current dominance of gradual change narratives and the influence of evidence-based practice and policy. This is something Jack reported he has found quite hard to manage in his job. Essential to

Jack's meaning in life is a belief in God and crucial is his identity as a Christian. It is this which he described as fundamentally making life for him worth 'getting clean for.'

Hood et al. (2009) argued that all conversions are mediated through people, institutions, communities and groups and this is evident in Jack's narrative. The conversion process is relational. It occurs within a social context and a religious framework where the altered self is described, acts and is recognised by others. The pastor in Jack's story is particularly influential and religion provides a structure for living pro-socially. Faith affiliation can give structure and a coherent way to approach all aspects of life which is particularly beneficial for people coming from chaotic lives and unstable childhoods (Bird, 2010). In later meetings Jack described how reading the Bible was like a good Father to him giving him guidance. Religion may therefore act as a form of informal social control providing people with the opportunity to have contact with individuals and institutions that represent 'mainstream society'. As Giordano et al. (2008) observed it appears to provide one of the few sources of 'pro-social capital' readily available to those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

6.3.2 Prison saves: Simon's story

Similar to Jack, Simon's story emphasises the dramatic shift in change in identity and life-course as well as the role of others in the conversion process. In addition the embodied nature of the conversion is brought to the fore highlighting the physical and emotional aspects of the experience. This illustrates the profound nature of the transformation that takes place at the level of personal identity.

Before I was a Christian I was very anti-Christian. For years, since my mid-twenties, I've been searching Islam, Buddhism, Egyptology and all that sort of stuff. I was searching for meaning to life, what is the purpose of life. There was a spiritual thing about the rave scene. People used to take drugs, get out of your head and raving like it's a spiritual thing but that wasn't. I think it started with frustration. I got to a stage where I was just thinking nothing seemed to be going right at the time. My business went wrong and this guy was ripping me off and I'm just thinking, 'What is this life about? It's rubbish. What are we here for? There's got be more to it than this.' And I really believed that I found God in myself at that time. I also got involved in witchcraft stuff because of when I was involved in crime. Very often when you are involved in a lot of these drug deals it can be quite dangerous. People have got weapons and all of that. I thought maybe if I use this it could give me an edge.

So when I went to prison the last time I think I'd reached my lowest. I was in my cell and the Chaplain came along saying there was bible study. I was always the type of person that if a Christian was coming to tell me about their faith I would really go and give them a hard time. I wouldn't avoid them I'd just ask them all the questions I know they couldn't answer and it would always make me feel good when I could see they couldn't. When they said Chapel bible study I thought, 'Okay, get out of my cell have a bit of fun with these Christians and bible study.' I went and gave them a really hard time. Afterwards a couple of inmates came and talked to me about some of the stuff I was talking about in bible study, the witchcraft and all that sort of stuff. I said, 'So you guys know about this stuff?' they said, 'Yeah' and I said, 'You guys are Christians?' and they said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'How can you be Christian and know about

this?' Then they started to explain a bit. They just told me to read some verses from the gospel of John and discuss it in the yard in the morning when we have exercise.

I read those scriptures that night and the next morning I had lots of questions. I met up with them in the yard and I asked them all the questions that I had. They seemed to have some answers and they were telling me what other scriptures to read to get certain answers. So that evening I was reading through the bible again in my cell. And the only way I can describe what happened was like an instant realisation of who it was that I was worshipping. The whole time I really believed that I was serving God and that Christians were deceived. That they'd been led astray. But I got an instant realisation that I was worshipping Satan himself when I was reading the bible. And then at the same instant the realisation of the extent to which I'd gone, I got an opposite sensation and revelation. The realisation of the grace and the mercy of God. And it was like that feeling of regardless of how far I had gone there was forgiveness and there was grace and there was mercy. Regardless. It was those two feelings just washing over me. Two opposite feelings. The extent to where I had gone and the extent of the grace and forgiveness there is at the same time. It was like those two feelings rushed from my head to my toe and I was overwhelmed and it brought me to tears in my prison cell. It's at that time I gave my life to Christ and just said, 'Just take this life. I've tried everything, nothing has worked, go, just take my life and just do with it as you will'. I didn't actually choose it. That just happened. It was a feeling that was just intense. I don't know how to describe it. I could only describe it in terms of taking drugs. It was like a rush I got from my head and it just went all the way down. It's an overwhelming rush with a meaning. A rush with a meaning that actually said, 'This is the grace that's available regardless of what you have done'. So that's the only way I can describe it.

The next day I called to see the Chaplain and I said, 'Look this is what happened, I want to become a Christian'. I told him what happened to me in the cell and I started to attend Church from there. At that point I also tried to do a deal with God because I hadn't been actually sentenced yet to say, 'God I give my life to you now get rid of this case.' God doesn't do those sort of deals. I got sentenced shortly after that to thirteen years and so I spent that time in prison as a Christian. I felt I'd come too far by then. It happened at a time when I felt like life wasn't worth living and I believe I would've probably committed suicide if I hadn't given my life to Christ. Since then I've just witnessed so many different things happening. Even in prison, even in the most difficult situations. Sometimes things don't work out well for me and when they don't I just think, 'Wow, I wonder what God's got planned then?' It's normally better than the thing that you didn't get. ... Strange. I completely changed. There's always bits you need to improve as you go on but in certain situations I've so much more patience now.

Simon's search for a sense of meaning and purpose occurred a number of years before his conversion experience. This led to spiritual beliefs that were supportive of criminal activity and drug taking. This emphasises Parry et al.'s (2007) earlier point that spirituality can have a negative as well as positive impact. It was not until Simon experienced his Christian conversion that this facilitated a 'complete change' towards a pro-social narrative identity. Simon expressed in his story how the experience completely changed him as a person. Specifically his capability to be patient, not rush things, and wait for what God has worked out for him in his life. Alongside this was recognition of on-going improvement as a person. Bolkas (2000) argued that conversion begins the process of change and a meaningful commitment to faith and pro-social behaviour. After this a process of '*working it through*' is required in order for this to be enduring.

6.3.3 Still standing: Christine's story

I remember one day, going back a few years before I went into the rehab, going to my Mum's house to get some money for some crack and I remember forgiving her. I really think that was a big part of my recovery. I forgave her. I said 'Mum, I forgive you and I'm sorry the way I've treated you'. 'Cause I wasn't that great. There was a sobbing, it was all in about sixty seconds this, but me and my Mum there was such a warmth, there was a closeness. I didn't understand it at the time but I really was so grateful. I thank God that I said that 'cause she died three weeks after that. I really believe the key was forgiveness. That was something that I cherish, that I was able to get close to her. And that's happened to me a lot in my recovery. 'Cause the same happened with my older children that I didn't bring up. I got to meet my son and we got know each other for about eight months. He got to meet me now that I'm clean. And I said sorry to him and then he died. But while he was dying in the hospital, it was quite amazing, his Dad was in that hospital, and I remember I said sorry to him and he died a year later. He got shot 'cause he was still in that lifestyle. I know it sounds really mad but for me forgiveness is a massive, massive thing.

I will bring my faith into it. 'Cause what happened to me, I came out of prison and I see this guy I knew to be a thief and a drug addict and he told me, 'Jesus loves you.' I thought he was having a laugh 'cause I didn't know who the heck Jesus was. I had only heard of Christmas and Easter and I thought, 'What you talking about? You're a thief, you're a drug addict.' But he looked so well and I was so curious, 'What is this man doing?' I thought he must be robbing the church. So I've eventually gone along to his church to watch him. I wasn't interested in the church at all I wanted to watch what this man was doing. By this time I'd been in prostitution and I didn't wanna continue and I didn't wanna come back in and out of prison. So I thought, 'Let me get on what this guy is doing' and he wasn't doing anything. But that's what got me into church. So I continued going back to this church 'cause I didn't understand. What attracted me though was the pastors and that they were once drug addicts and thieves and their lives had changed. But I couldn't understand that their lives had changed and they were now free from their drug addiction and crime. I thought they was robbing the church 'cause that's the only way. I couldn't get my head around it, how does anybody live unless they're criminals?

I remember one day a lady in there asked me if I wanted to give my life to Jesus and I had tried everything else to stop using drugs. So I asked Jesus to come into my life. I didn't fully understand what it was at all. I left the church and I was still stealing, still taking drugs and I phoned her up really angry, I said 'What? You really mugged me off, you said ask Jesus into your life and everything's going to be alright.' And she spoke a scripture and said, 'Christine the old has gone you're a new creation'. I didn't understand what she was talking about. But now I know I'd ask him to come and do work on the inside. But all I know is that what she said went in. And once I was gonna use drugs and that came to my head and I spoke it and, it's crazy, I felt myself rise above the withdrawing. I thought 'Woh this stuff is powerful. I want more of this.' And I started to seek who this Jesus is. I didn't understand it but all I knew is that it was real. I knew that this is what I needed to get me out of this mess, my life. But to put it out in words at that time I couldn't have 'cause it would be like people would think I'm mad. Certainly years later I could talk about it. But at the time I couldn't tell anybody around me, they would think I was nuts. They would be asking me what drugs I've been using.

After going to Church I've gone into this rehab but half way through it I was like, 'Christine, this is not going to keep you, you need to go into a Christian rehab and found out what all this is about'. And that was the toughest thing I ever did. And then I found my Christian faith and there was so much love that went into that void and something happened that started to change me. So I was happy. That's when I found genuine happiness when I was forty. 'Cause when I found real happiness that's when I see some real hope that yeah I can change. And that's when I started to learn what different feelings were, learning to identify when I was angry, when I was sad. But I think that's when I started living when I was forty. All the rest of the years before that I was just existing and surviving. But something's taken place inside that can't be challenged in the mind, that can't be taken. It's something that's happened that even if the most devastating thing was to happen to me I can be upset, I can be angry, and I can say 'Alright God I'm not talking to you' or whatever. But you know what? I could not deny that Jesus is not real. 'Cause I know it is true. It is something deep inside. That something, so

personal, it's unexplainable. It's happened over time but it happened over a short length of time that I knew it was real. But it was the best thing I did 'cause I found my faith and that's what's done it for me. That's why I'm still standing. It is my faith. My faith is key because that helps everything else. It helps me to start taking responsibility, it helps me with purpose and value, it helps me to bring into balance where I go extreme, it helps forgiveness and acceptance. It's change on the inside.

Christine's conversion experience is described as both sudden but also a gradual process of transformation. She marries the narratives of a *12-step programme* approach to recovery with Christian faith enabling her to view herself as a 'real' and 'honest' person. Similar to Jack and Simon the embodied nature of the conversion, the role of others and a shift in identity is emphasised. Within Christine's story the concept of forgiveness has enabled her to let go and move on from shameful past experiences, negative emotions and difficult relationships in her life. *Forgiveness* is highly encouraged by most world religions. Critical in Christine's story is both a capacity to forgive and be forgiven and she regards this is the most important virtue she has gained. The importance of emotions is highlighted and confirms that the transformation of the person is not just cognitive and/or behavioural. Faith provided Christine with a fundamental meaning that gives her life purpose and value. It enabled her to take ownership in her life. This is described as occurring 'on the inside deep within' rather than driven by outside circumstances. Ongoing change involves a gradual process. In a later meeting she shared, 'It's a process and it takes time. Like a belief system, a habit, a behaviour takes time to change.' This supports the view that once conversion has been experienced further working through is required to consolidate and ensure it endures.

Jack, Christine and Simon have all described giving a number of testimonies in and out of the Church setting about their conversion experience. They all work with people who have drug addictions or commit crime. White (2004) argued that often with sudden change there is a need to 'testify' and offer 'witness' about one's experience and new understandings. This brings the risk of 'celebrity status' and 'burning out' if people are used too early for public speaking and ministry whilst they still have unresolved personal problems (Bolkas, 2000). However, White further argued that giving testimony provides a way to relive, sustain and celebrate the experience, reaffirm behavioural commitments, and provide a vehicle to reach out to others. It also offers a counter-story to the dominant gradual change narrative. Jack's, Christine's and Simon's stories have become *a moral tale* (Kerley & Copes, 2009) that enables them use their past to help guide others in the right direction. Their narratives give hope for the possibility of transformation.

6.3.4 Hope

A prominent theme that arose from interviews with staff was hope (and hopelessness). Many spoke of their aspiration for the people they work with to lead a better life and fulfill their potential and flourish and not just avoid crime and prison. At times hopelessness about change was expressed especially if a person came from certain geographical area, childhood upbringing, lengthy criminal history, or viewed as simply too old to change. One staff member spoke of having had 'too much faith' believing someone had changed and hearing later they were back in prison. Staff expressed an awareness of change as slow and fragile. There was a feeling of cautiousness, and at times cynicism, about people's expressed motivation to no longer commit crime or use drugs. Setbacks and lapses were expected. Burnett & Maruna (2004) in their study considered hope in desistance and commented on how fatalism and a sense of despondency among people in prison and staff can breed. When I asked Simon if there was a central theme to his story, one that he felt would capture his life he responded:

Umm ... I mean one word that sort of comes to mind especially when I'm speaking with some of those guys in prison is the word hope. 'Cause of so much of what I've been through very often it seemed hopeless. It seemed that, you know, there's no way sort of out of this situation. Especially when I was in prison the last time it seemed like a hopeless situation.

Simon also spoke of the hope provided to him by others:

I mean there was the person that gave me that hope that was an ex-offender who was in prison who came in to talk to us about what he's doing now. That was a major turning point. A point of hope for me. My Dad even though he wasn't around I think because of his sort of academic past and background, he kind of gave me that hope from a distance you know [smiles]. That something to aim towards you know, so he was always an inspiration in that sense as well.

This gave him inspiration to live crime free and some hope that there are still opportunities for 'ex-offenders' and not to give up on changing. Christine also spoke how her story provides hope for others in her work in prison:

I'm quite popular in there 'cause like women I know from the street and that, and they know that I've changed. They can see it. Do you know what I mean? So, you know, so it just brings hope for them.

Jack described when I asked him for a central theme to his story:

I always say hopelessness was the main thing running through my life. And it did. I remember yeah sitting in doorways we never knew anyone that got clean and I'd sometimes go to sleep, maybe crying and stuff 'cause this just isn't nice all the time you know. And it was hopeless 'cause you're a heroin addict. But I wasn't a heroin addict right in the beginning. So I was just a prat. A prat might be a good word in quite big letters [slight laugh]. Do you know what I mean 'cause you know we all got reasons why we done it but some of us like, life's a bit dodgy innit?

The importance of hope was shown when I met with Ryan five months after he was released from prison. Having ended a period of employment a month or so earlier he had experienced a period of struggling to continue to progress. At the end of our meeting I said, 'Keep going, you can do it'. He smiled and said, 'Let's hope so.' The next and final time I met with him he had found temporary work and had a more positive, hopeful, outlook. Hope appears to provide a form of '*spiritual fuel*' (Nesti in Parry et al., 2007) whether it is within the person and/or being provided by others. It has long been recognised as vital element in healing. It has been referred to as optimism, the placebo effect, self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and positive expectancies (Yahne & Miller, 1999). Measures of hope have been found to correlate with a broad range of positive outcomes including happiness, less stress, recovery from addiction, recovery from physical injury and less burnout at work (Snyder, 1994).

Snyder (1994) described hope as having two components the *will* and the *way*. The first is more spiritual and relates to being inspired and having a will to survive, recover or learn. This does not necessarily equate to the promise of a cure rather it functions as a way of feeling, thinking, behaving and relating to oneself and world. Secondly, the *way* captures how hope is often attached to something or someone. A part of understanding spirituality, and transformation, is to know where and what one places one's hopes in. This is a critical part of *12-step programmes* where hope comes from relying on a higher power. Yahne & Miller (1999) proposed that hope can also be seen as a wish for a particular outcome, an ability to see beyond present circumstances and manifests in action. This can be particularly powerful in a communal form and hopeful action is a way of renewing hope and inspiring change. Previous studies have identified hope as an important aspect to desistance from crime in the short and long-term (Burnett & Maruna, 2004; Farrall & Calverley, 2006). It can operate as an emotional resource early in the process in terms of an initial aspiration to successfully avoid future offending. Over time it becomes a continuing desire, or will, not to commit crime. Farrall & Calverley (2006) argued that for hope to be meaningful the desire needs to appear as attainable at some level. Hope is therefore more than just wishful thinking.

6.4 Summary

The potential for physical activities to contribute to increased well-being was important for some participants in this study. More broadly, each participant's sense of meaning and (higher) purpose was defined differently in the transformation process. The function was somewhat similar. It provided people with a value to life and a stake in continuing with a pro-social lifestyle and identity. Participants' values were also shaped by culture, context and the storylines available in society. Randall (2009) noted that spiritual experience is filtered through a complex set of storylines through which our sense of self is shaped. These storylines are tied in turn, for better or worse, to the master narratives of whatever doctrines or philosophies have shaped our vision of the world in general. This provides an ideological setting through which individual reality is interpreted. The cultural toolkit and guidelines provided by the *12-step programme* and Christian religion were evident in some participant stories of transformation. Thus, there is a need to consider the ethos of activities, organisations and people working with people with criminal convictions that may provide opportunities for people to reflect on and transform their values.

Similar to other qualitative studies (Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001) finding meaning and purpose was important to the transformation process particularly in providing a reason for a part of their life they felt had been a waste. Maruna (2001) linked this to a redemptive narrative for those that become a 'wounded healer' or 'professional ex'. This study complements others in finding that '*something*' has to matter not only to start the process of change but to continue transformation. This includes hope that a better life can be lived and a belief that change is attainable. As Jack reflected the danger for him is that every day there are still two roads available where he can 'stuff life' or 'choose life'. Here he is either a criminal and addict or he's not. Meaning and values are therefore critical in the development of, or dramatic shift to, an adaptive narrative identity and a positive spirituality that supports pro-social living.

A crucial factor was spiritual growth with religious conversion acting as a 'hook' for change. There is still a need to learn much more about the relevance of religion and spirituality to desistance. Systematic reviews suggest that there is some empirical support for the notion that religious involvement is a relevant protective and pro-social factor for both men and women. Meta-analyses however are inconclusive on the impact of faith-based or faith-informed studies on recidivism (Johnson, 2011;

Johnson & Jang, 2012; The Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2006). Although a larger body of more general research on religion and well-being indicated positive benefits associated with lower levels of hyper-tension, heart disease, increased longevity, reducing high-risk health related behaviours, and improved mental health. Bird (2010) noted that faith and spiritual belief are ever present in society and therefore have relevance to people convicted of crimes. What Jack, Christine, and Simon's stories of conversion provide is a counter-narrative to the dominant gradual change narratives of behaviour change. As Miller and C'de Baca (2001) observed in regard to 'quantum change', what is truly hopeful about these accounts is that it occurs and reminds us of how very little we know of all that is possible.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CLAIMING AN ADAPTIVE IDENTITY

7.1 Introduction

“Narrative not only brings order and meaning to our everyday life but also, reflexively, provides structure to our very sense of selfhood. We tell stories about our lives to ourselves and to others. As such, we create a narrative identity.” (Murray, 2008, p. 115)

The previous Chapter identified meaning and values as critical in the development of an adaptive narrative identity to support pro-social living. This chapter shifts attention to an exploration of how identity is being constructed, claimed and ultimately performed by participants. This is drawn from my research question asking how the person is constructed in the telling and claims an adaptive narrative identity (Frank, 2010; Sparkes, 2005; Spector-Mersel, 2011). I present an analysis of the *hows* of participants’ narratives that involved building a typology of narrative forms. A form or ‘type’ can be considered to be the most general storyline that can be recognised with an underlying plot and particular tensions (Frank, 1995). The four types represent different points on a continuum of human functioning that emerged from my analysis: ‘*destruct*’, ‘*survive*’, ‘*cope*’ and ‘*flourish*’. These are ‘ideal types’ of narratives and not of people and I aim to enable a reflective grasp of practices, motivations and ideals. I place greater emphasis on the latter two types to focus on how people perform enduring identity transformation through the work of stories. I firstly outline each type followed by an account or life story summary of one or two participants who are representative of the narrative form. Finally, I consider each type in relation to narrative theory and research to help make sense of the (re)construction of identity. The types are represented through the use of creative non-fictions where my aim is to predominantly show rather than tell. This is to bring to the forefront the humanness and complexity of lived experience and, hopefully, to engage and instruct readers (Sparkes, 2002).

7.2 Destruct

This narrative type emerged from participants’ descriptions when they were seriously involved in a criminal and drug-taking life. Many told me that if they were still heavily involved they would not have spoken to me at all. Figure 2 show’s Rebecca’s story summary that sits at the margins of this type and ‘survive’. Rebecca had been progressing well while on a probation order and when we met she had recently returned to committing crime and substance misuse.

THEMES

- * know self in crime and addiction and not know self straight and clean
- * Scary to change and leave comfort zone
- * Relationships with others and who mix with
- * Ready to sort it out and need to get motivated
- * Want to work with horses, stables and felt not judged and proper friends
- * Need to work on self and find out who are

Story

2010

FUTURE

BE NORMAL
 NORMAL JOB - STABLES
 TAKE SON OUT
 OWN HOUSE / OUTSIDE
 FIELD WITH HORSE
 DO WORK ON SELF
 OWN STABILITY
 FIND OUT WHO I AM.

SCARY TO BE STRAIGHT
 READY + NEED MOTIVATION
 HARD TO LET GO
 DON'T KNOW WHO I AM CLEAN
 CONFIDENCE GONE
 HATE PERSON BECOME STUCK
 WILL GET THERE WANT TO SORT IT OUT
 DAD GOOD
 PRESSURE
 MESS UP
 ANGRY AT SELF
 MIX OFFERS
 CRIME GOT BORED AND MONETLY WORE OFF

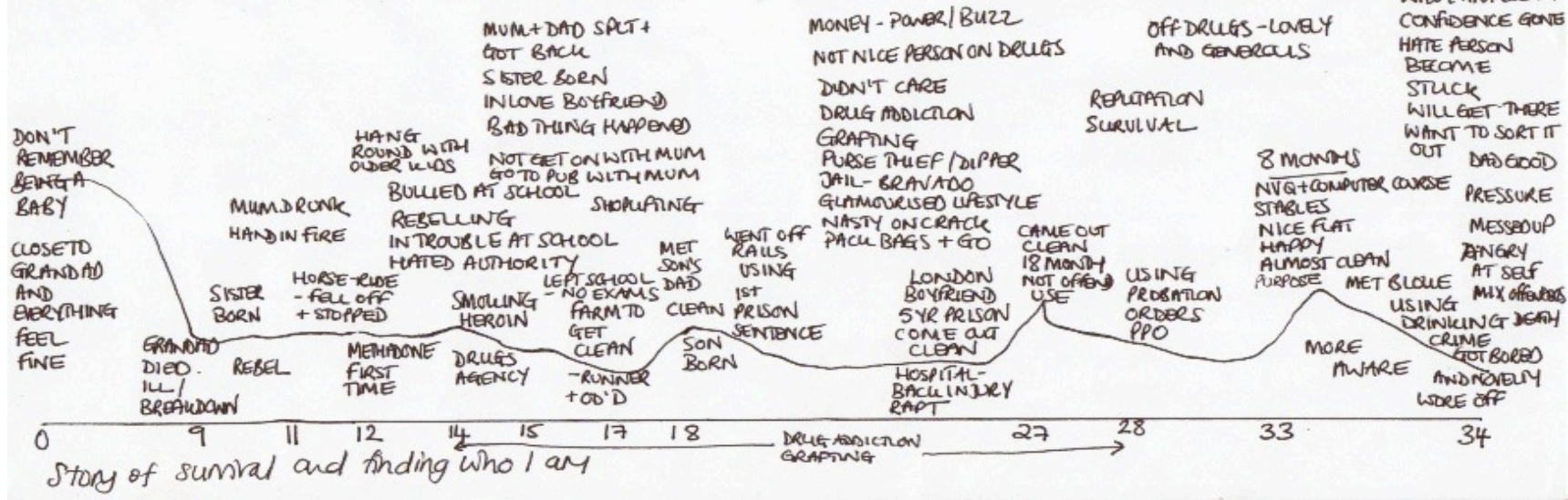


Figure 2: Finding who I am: Rebecca's story

The key plot line is a life path that leads to the destroying of one's own life or harm to others. The story's capacities indicate a life that is either enjoyed and believed to be good living or may not be liked but considered a way of being and functioning. People identify with the label of 'criminal' or 'addict' and this can provide respect, status and power. There is a focus on one's own needs/wants and there is a lack of care for others and sometimes the self. Good living is described as wealth, dressing nice, fun, a place to live and having material goods. The body is used to enable this way of living and it feels familiar, normal and comfortable. Crime and drug taking can be viewed as inevitable and change is either not desired or considered impossible or extremely hard to achieve. There is a lack of hope and pessimism that life will get any better, that other people can understand their position and a belief they are 'the only one' in this predicament. Alternatively, this lifestyle can be thought to be better than how 'normal' people live in 'mainstream' society. Often silent in these stories is the violence or hurt to self and others. Criminal actions are rationalised as a 'means to end' or for gaining enjoyment, control or power from instilling fear in others. Within this type there may be identity crises and during our meetings Rebecca spoke incredibly articulately of feeling stuck in her current way of living:

I'm a bit stuck and I don't know how to get myself out of it. I just want to get back to where I was six months ago. I really hate the person I've become now. I've been offending, mixing with other offenders and back into that way of thinking. But something's got to happen or else I'm gonna die I think if I don't. I need to sort it out. I loved working at the horse stables but I've been away so long it's hard to go back up there. Things aren't brilliant but I feel better and more positive than I was. Things are going to get better. I just don't know how to get myself away from it. I threw it all away for a bloke. He was a user, a drinker, violence and still got that chaotic lifestyle and that's what I've started to do again. I dunno why I can't drag myself away. It's like I feel I'm missing out on something. Dunno what 'cause it's all shit. Years ago I glamourised the lifestyle I lived. I thought it was all good but now I hate it. But I've done it for so long it's hard to let go. This is familiar. It's what I know. It's scary to not be on the drink and drugs and to be straight and normal. If something goes wrong what do I do? Drugs, drink and that lifestyle is a safety net 'cause it's easier to deal with than what's really happening.

I have to try and I found out who I really am as a person 'cause when I'm clean I don't know who I am. In jail you're still a criminal and when I am on drugs I know who I am. Even though I don't like it I can deal with it. But to be out of prison, be clean and be like everybody else, it's scary to think of being like that. But when I'm straight I don't know who I am and I feel more vulnerable than when I'm using. It's raw and weird, and you get really emotional and I don't feel comfortable in my own skin. I don't know who I am. I don't know how to act or be with other people and deal with normal everyday things. It's hard to cope and try and fit in. With my reputation it's going to take a lot for people to know I've actually changed and some never will. I'm a purse thief, I'm a shoplifter and a drug addict. I suppose people think I'm evil. But I have to survive. Not that makes it right. I don't want my life to keep being like this. I think, 'Is my life just going to be like this forever now then?' Just one big fuck up. You get something then you mess it up. I can't maintain anything. It's me. My head. My thinking. I hate being like this. I never used to. I think it's all about finding out who I am.

The work of the 'destruct' story is to keep people going with the same identity and lifestyle. Rebecca can story herself even if she does not like it. There is a lack of agency and an avoidance of issues rather than dealing with them. The lifestyle may have been enjoyed, glamourised and associated with excitement and a reputation with criminal peers. Criminal justice agencies may be very involved with the person and viewed as adding pressure, unhelpful or inconvenient. There is a loss of faith and trust of others and detachment from the 'conventional' world. A desire to be 'normal' may exist alongside a lack of knowledge of where to start in claiming an adaptive identity. A future possible non-criminal identity can remain undefined and unknown. A crime life is the norm and mainstream people in society may be seen as different and boring. There is a risk of death of self or another person. The 'destruct' narrative type has similarities with Frank's (1995) *chaos* narrative where events do not make sense, the person is not in control and describes a life that cannot get better. It is also similar to a *condemnation* narrative (Maruna, 2001) where selves are seen as victims of deterministic forces, view little possibility of change for the better and an impoverished sense of self-efficacy. There is a sense of narrative foreclosure with the belief that the ending of the story is already known and fate is prescribed by forces beyond one's control. This stance reduces the possibility of self-renewal and creates difficulties for any process of 'reopening' so that identities can be rewritten or re-imagined (Freeman, 1993). The cultural storyline reified is that 'criminals' and 'addicts' rarely if ever change and are irredeemable (Maruna, 2001; Opsal, 2011). Narrative *wreckage* may be present which is a feeling and experience of disintegration that can become generalised in a person's life to such an extent that their whole life project becomes problematic. This is evident in Rebecca's story where an existential identity crisis is experienced where 'nothing makes sense' (Crossley, 2000b). Frank (1995) used the metaphor of narrative wreckage to characterise such processes where taken for granted implicit connections between events, people, plans, aims, values, beliefs, are shattered and with it the sense of who we are and why we are here. The only objective is to 'get through the day' and time does not mean anything. This can lead to a radical sense of disorientation and the breakdown of a coherent story.

7.3 Survive

Figure 3 shows Dean's story summary. He was nearing the end of his probation license and felt supported by the Prolific Offenders Unit. He had not committed any crimes and he was trying to overcome addiction to heroin and wished to thrive in life.

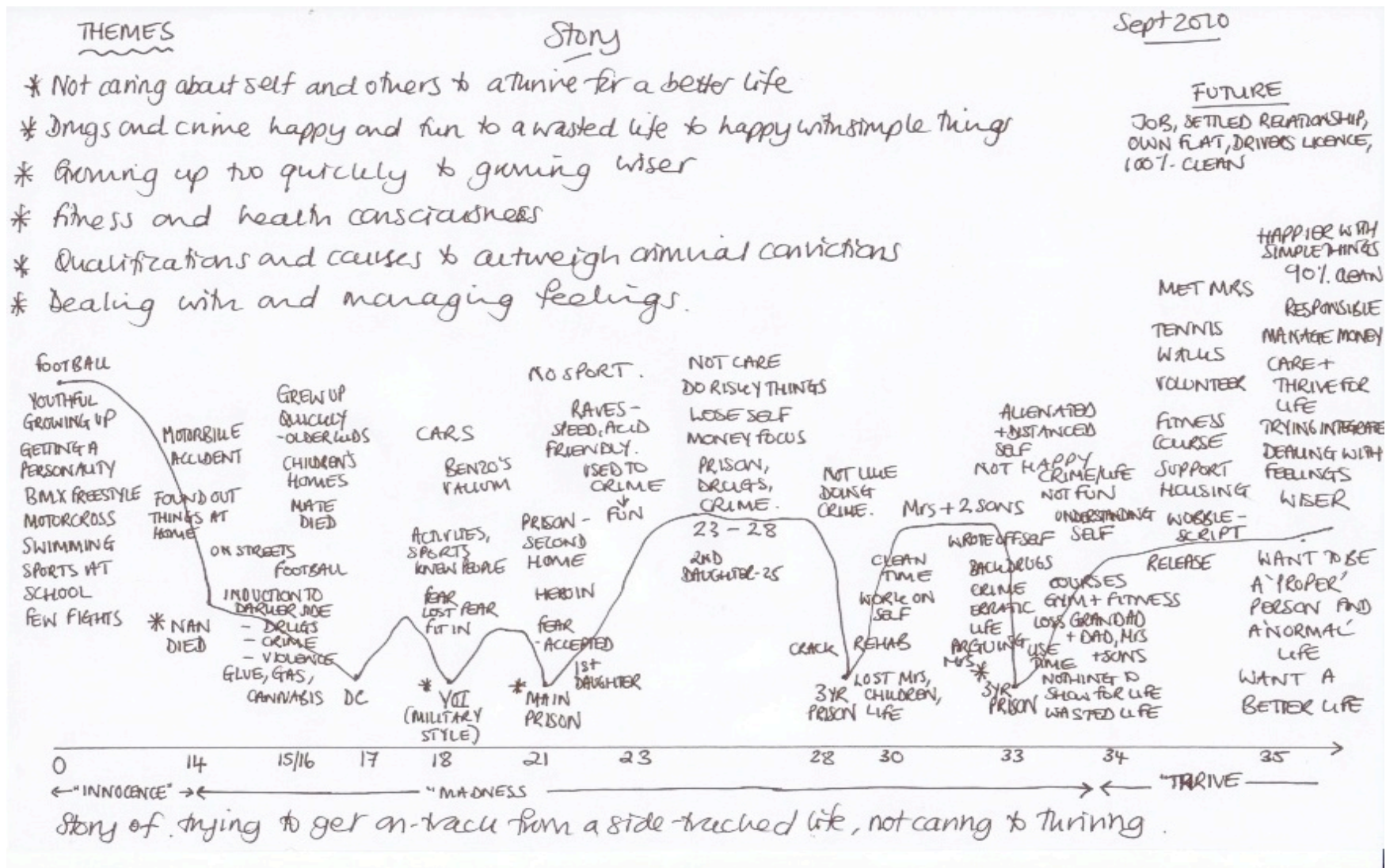


Figure 3: Trying to get on track and thrive: Dean's story

This sentence I lost a lot, my new Mrs, my two children, my old connections, my Dad and Granddad died. But I sort of gained a lot. This time I've not come out to nothing and I've had a lot of assistance which has been different to other times. Before I'd been offending straight away within a few days of being out. I'm a prolific offender. I'm a person that commits offences quite often. But I've never liked committing crimes. It's a means to an end. I might be justifying it by saying that but that's how I feel about it. The Prolific Unit sat me down when I was in prison and said they could help me with activities and to progress. I decided to accept their help and they have really pushed and helped me a lot. I've definitely wised up. I've learnt to take things slower. Take my time with decisions. As soon as I got out of prison I was clean and then I had a little wobble and Probation asked what was going on. Rather than knocking me down they pushed me a bit more to get myself together. So I done it again. I'm on subtext now, I play tennis with the Community Support Worker, I haven't got a habit, touch wood, which don't usually happen. I passed my level one fitness instructor course and I've got a file of accomplishments and certificates from the past two years. I've put in a lot of work and completed a lot of different things this time. I've got a new Mrs and a new flat. It's not been a quick overhaul and I don't know how I've done it. I like to think I hit the point where I've done too many sentences and I've caused too much devastation to the point where I don't want to do it anymore. I never know what's going to happen in the future so I try and just live in the minute and the day. Recently I've felt deflated and done in. I've been trying to move fast and fit back in and so now it's time to settle and do things gradually.

Heroin is still a problem. My head still goes and when things go wrong I tend to run to it so I'm still trying to find a better way of dealing with that. The good thing is when I've had a use up I haven't gone foot to floor on it. I don't do it all the time whereas before it was just continuous until I got put back in prison. I'm still ten per cent connected to the madness. I know I am in my heart. There's still a part of me that isn't sure and worries things might go wrong so I try and keep one foot in and one foot out. So I can jump back in like I've never been away. Just a security thing. I realise drugs gives the illusion that I was better but the next day you wake up and everything's still the same. For me to progress fully into the community I need to knock that ten per cent on the head and just step away from them all completely.

I'm not chucking it on society but the hardest part for me is rejection from it. I got a twenty-year criminal record and spent half my life in prison and probably done more drugs than they got in a chemist. This is the second time I've tried to sort my head out and for someone with my record it's just impossible to get any further. I reach that point where I get totally clean, everything's going right and then I try and do the next step which is to become a part of society with work. But who wants a twenty-year offender in their work place? It just don't happen. They won't take the risk. That got me last time I was clean. The rejection and realisation that everything I done in my past was catching up with me now. So I let it go and said, 'If I can't progress then this is what it is. This is my life.' And I went back to what I always done which was commit crime, do drugs, sell drugs 'cause I thought that was what I was meant to do. I realise now that I got to try something different and if I chuck in the towel now I am doing it too soon. I know if I give up outright I'll never sort my head out. Things will never change 'cause I'll write myself off. And that's not good for me and that's not good for society because I won't change and there will be whole load more destruction. So that hits me hard and I am trying. To get as far as I have is an accomplishment in itself already. The thrive's still there for more out of this life. It's just I've gone a bit wayward for a few years thinking this is fun. And then when it stopped being fun thinking to myself, 'This is the best I'm getting'. Now it's knocking that on the head and thinking to myself, 'I'm not giving up. I want more for myself than this.' If I can get a job that will be my life breaker 'cause it gets me off the streets. It gets me away from all my old associates and gives me my own money, my own responsibility. I can associate with people who are all just living. It can do so much. If I got a job that would enable me to lose the character of the criminal and build up the new person that's trying to be responsible and do the right thing. I know it might sound sad to most people but after the chaotic lifestyle like I've lived that's what I want now. Recently I've felt deflated 'cause I moved so fast trying to fit in. So maybe it's time to settle down and do things gradually. I'm still learning about my behaviours and the way I feel. But the thrive and care that I've got to wanting to be normal or do normal things is a lot more than not caring anymore now. I do want more, I do want better.

The key plot line of this narrative type is surviving and getting by in life day-to-day and trying to effect positive changes in one's self. Life may be viewed as more sensible than in the past and there is an ongoing battle and fight to transform and claim an adaptive identity. There is a sense of being in limbo between an old criminal self and working towards a valued pro-social identity that is still being defined. There is a fragility and precariousness to the developing pro-social identity. The story provides a sense of suspense as to whether there will be positive progression or a return to a 'criminal' identity and lifestyle. There is an element of connection to the old identity and a revised identity as a pro-social, 'normal' person is not yet established although may have taken root. This is a process of 'becoming'. There may be recognition of progression in life from where one was before as well as an awareness of progression that still needs to be made. The 'criminal' identity may no longer lead to happiness and although not reached the happiness one would wish to obtain it is an improvement. Plans and goals may exist to aid progression and setbacks and obstacles will be experienced. There may be a battle to resist illusions of positivity associated with one's old life and identity. Sense making is ongoing to build a coherent story as to who one was and who one is and wants to be, the goal is to restore or establish a non-criminal self as the preferred end-point of the story. Silenced are certain stories that may bring difficult emotions.

Psychological issues include trying to take responsibility for life, not feeling sorry for oneself, and sustaining commitment and motivation. There is a need to balance sustaining gains with doing too much too soon and risk 'burning out'. There is a sense of hope for the future although at times this may seem like wishful thinking when on the margins of a 'destruct' narrative. Attempts are made to avoid a criminal and drug circle but an alternative one has yet to be built. The likely peer group is others who are in recovery or trying to change. Employment may be difficult to obtain but voluntary work and gaining qualifications or training may assist progression and formation of a pro-social identity. There may be a lack of activity day-to-day. Support from constructive others, agencies and the criminal justice system is critical and seen to be helpful although a level of distrust may still exist. Rituals by organisations that recognise achievements and progression can be viewed as beneficial. There may be a feeling of not fitting in with either the 'old circle' or 'mainstream' society. Others may or may not believe in the sincerity of the attempt to transform one's identity and life. Consequently supportive others are critical in offering belief and hope when obstacles are experienced to counter the dominant cultural narrative that transformation is impossible or will not last.

7.4 Cope

Eliza's and Andrew's stories are presented followed by a consideration of this narrative form.

7.4.1 Resilience and struggle: Eliza's story

Eliza has served one prison sentence and although she did not describe herself as having a 'criminal identity' she associated herself with the identity of 'ex-offender'. Her story provided a valuable perspective on resettlement especially for women. During our meetings she was waiting to hear the outcome of job applications and at our last meeting was delighted to inform me she had accepted a permanent contract.

My employment is how I got to where I am today and that is directly linked with my prison sentence. In prison I was selected to go on a new course to work on day release for a new organisation that was set up to help ex-offenders into self-employment. When I was released I got a full time job with them. A couple of years later I went back to work for the prison service. I got quite a bit of support. There were some that really didn't like it and as far they was concerned I was still a prisoner and I would always be an offender. It was all rather unheard of. I found it harder coming out of prison than I did going in and I found it very hard going in. I felt very isolated. I expected to come out and be ecstatic and have this new found free life and it all be perfect and actually it wasn't like that at all. Coming out was the start of a spiral downwards. Everything fell apart. I got very close to wanting to go back at times. Because of all that I started going back to the prison to talk to women about coming out of prison because I didn't want them to go through what I did and to be prepared for things not being the same. I was one of the lucky ones as I came out to my home and a family. And then my marriage broke down and my relationship with my daughter became very strained. I spent months in depression, trying to work things out, and I lost all my social skills. It's just overwhelming. I had many problems resettling and the pain of not knowing who I was anymore and where I fit into society. I was lucky I secured a job on release working with ex-offenders. This job prevented me from completely falling apart. I felt a huge responsibility for the job I had. I was being trusted and if I mucked it up then I'd be mucking it up for somebody else and I would've let a lot of people down. If it had been just me I would've possibly completely lost it. But that was my focus and I hung onto my sanity. I always feel a pressure to be better than good. It's like you have to compensate all the time for past behaviours. It still feels like that today and I'm sure it always will. It feels that I have to go that extra mile. You can put so much pressure on yourself and burn out quite easily.

There's still repercussions that affect my life now and possibly always will. I think you maybe get a little bit better at dealing with it. If you don't you end up losing the plot or doing something very silly. There have been times I've been really close but for the grace of God I haven't. It's the fact you always carry that label of your past. Your sentence is never spent. Looking back in retrospect I can see things clearer that have happened and I sometimes get quite bitter about that I shouldn't have allowed myself to be in that position. I was still clinging to an illusion of this perfect marriage. I still struggle with that now.

I don't think about the future. Since I've come out of prison I've found it very difficult to look towards anything. Since my Dad died I find it even more difficult to look towards anything positive. I don't look too far ahead of me. I'm kind of a little scared of the future so I don't want to think about it too much. I've had quite a lot of trauma in the last few years so it's hard for me to try and imagine anything particularly good. It's something I question myself on. I do a lot of looking in the past which I don't think is particularly healthy. I doubt myself quite a lot. I'm not as confident as I come across and I'm very hard on myself. I don't see the good that other people might see so I almost don't believe it. I've gone through stages where I've not

really liked myself and I say quite often I'm not comfortable in my own skin. I do think I have learnt that I am strong and I have been resilient in my life. Writing for me is really cathartic and the most healing thing. Comforting. I'm not very good at arguing. After I can sit down and write a letter and get everything out in a good way of how I feel.

I'm sure I used to be a much happier person. It did get to a point where I was really negative and I've tried really hard since to take things more in my stride and be more positive. I feel a bit better but it doesn't actually change anything. I can still feel frustrated and I feel kind of like happiness is just that far away but I can't quite get to it yet. I've had to constantly strive to keep work and it's nice to have something more long term. The life I've had since coming out of prison I need to put that back into perspective and just to tie it all up and go into a new phase I guess. So I'm kind of feeling that really I'm due for a new phase to start.

7.4.2 Wanting a life: Andrew's story

Andrew completed his probation license from his last sentence just over a year ago when we met. He is still voluntarily involved with the Prolific Offender Unit and on a methadone script and has not committed crime or taken drugs for a year. Andrew recently got married to his partner.

I was 16 when I first went to jail and I'm 35 now. I learnt from an early age that I needed to be able to look after and survive by myself. I've never been out of jail for more than six months at a time. I've done seven or eight prison sentences and out of 17 years I've done 13, 14 years in jail. If you'd ask me a few years ago I probably wouldn't see you or said I'm going to spend the rest of my life in and out of jail. Today it hurts me to say it but I didn't care about anybody. I wasn't a good person when I was in what I call 'the madness'. If somebody had something I wanted I took and I've got myself into some serious trouble. I was an arrogant, violent, manipulating bully. If it wasn't nailed down I'd take it. Simple. Not a nice thing to say but it's the truth. I was a horrible person. Stole off my family and everything. And it was seriously wrong. I never thought about my victims I was causing or the hurt and pain to any of the families.

But something's changed. The last three years of my life have really turned around. I've finished my license, I've come off the prolificals list and I'm drug free on a methadone script which I've never done before. I've come a long way. Now I'm polite and I can actually say I'm an honest person. Sometimes I'm too honest and will speak my mind and sometimes it hurts people and that's what I need to work on a little bit. My people skills. So I'm okay. When I was in 'the madness', committing crime and using drugs, I used to look at people and say they're normal people and I class myself as a normal person now. The prolificals staff were a big factor in my change. My partner's a big influence. She gave me a stable home and all the support I could ever want. So it's not bad. Life's good. I've done a lot of hard work too. It's what I put in I think. It's me who's kept myself out of jail, it's me who got me on the script, stuck to my probation appointments. I had help but it's me that done all that so I need to take credit for some of it. I got to a stage where I couldn't do it anymore. I just felt physically and emotionally dead. I was institutionalised. In jail I felt safe. I got to a stage when I was recalled back to prison where I thought, 'I don't want that life'. I'm not going to have that life. I wanted to live life and if I carried on using I'd eventually die. Emotionally I was already dead. It could've got a lot worse I suppose but I never.

I've always been alone and I got to the point where I didn't want to be. I wanted to love someone and I wanted someone to love me. Which is easy. It's just putting time and effort into a relationship which I've done. Before I was a people pleaser and wanted to be accepted now if anything people have to prove to be accepted in my life. People have said to me I've changed and I just shrug my shoulders and say, 'You know what? That makes me a better person than don't it?' That's a massive change in my thinking. If a problem arises I deal with it whereas before I used to use drugs on it. I think doing courses with the drugs agency helped give me confidence and encouraged me to face and talk about things, deal with things, got rid of all my

demons, so I'm okay. When I wake up in the morning now I can wake up with a smile on my face 'cause I know I haven't got to jump out of bed. I don't have that thought pattern anymore. I don't need to commit crime and I know I don't need drugs to function, to live my life.

I've got no worries at the moment. I go fishing a lot and that's the main vice which is something I've never ever done before. I did a bit as a kid with my Dad. It was the Prolific Unit that introduced me to it taking me out on activities. They bought me my first rod and reel and it's just gone from there. Before when I used to spend hundreds of pounds a week on drugs and now I'm happy if I can just spend £20 a week on my fishing stuff. So I'm happy with that. I know that money's not everything when you can't buy happiness. Money can't buy love, a lot of people say it does but it doesn't.

Now I'm willing to listen to what people have got to say to me. I understand that everybody has their own point of view and that my point of view is not always going to be right. I have become more open minded. I'm not a closed book no more. If someone talks negative to me I just shut them out and walk away. I haven't got time for people like that no more. I think if I were still to have acquaintances in my old circle I wouldn't be where I am today. I still see some of them but I don't have anything to do with them. I'm not nasty towards people who are still in the madness because I know what it's like to be there. I feel sorry for them just like people felt sorry for me when I was in the madness. But I never used to listen to them. I'm not going to go out and preach to them. If they want to get help then they'll be able to get help. That's all there is to it. I haven't got a massive friend circle now. It's mainly me and my wife.

We'd eventually like to own our own house. We've got no children so we'd like that. If it happens it happens, if it don't it don't. It's not a big thing. I'd like to own my own business but I know it might take another 20 years. Patience. My next main thing is to get off my methadone which I'm reducing myself very slowly. I think next year I'd like to be back at work. I still do volunteering up the allotment and still stick to my fishing. I haven't had the best lifestyle so I've just got to make the best of what I've got and live life to the full. And that's all I can do. I don't try to plan months ahead. I plan a week ahead. I'm getting re-used to being back outside properly. Goals are good as long as you don't try and get that goal too fast and take too big steps. I've done enough risk taking in my life and all it did was send me to jail so I tend not to try to take risks. I've learnt by my mistakes. I'm okay, life's good. I can't complain. I got no problems. I feel at the moment I'm where I need to be in my life.

The key plot of this narrative type is that a shift has occurred and the past self is seen as different to the current self. Things are going the right direction and life is better in many ways but there are still struggles. There is a sense of hope that things will improve and progress as well as an element of getting by. There is a process of learning from mistakes of the past and greater stability and structure in day-to-day living. Within this form stagnation and the end or beginning of a new phase in life is felt. A constructive way is found to live with the identity of someone who has committed crimes and been in prison. There is a shift to defining oneself as 'a normal person' or 'ex-offender'. For some this may be accompanied by a need to share one's experiences with others or obtaining a job role working to help others avoid crime or drugs.

Some aspects of life are viewed as good, others as okay and others requiring improvement. Frustrations and problems may need to be dealt with that is recognised and not avoided. There is an ongoing motivation and commitment to not returning to a 'criminal self' or prison. There is a recognition of the risk of a 'pull' or attraction to one's previous identity. There is a focus on getting through the present week by week

with perhaps some longer-term goals in mind. Daily life has greater stability and structure in relation to activities and includes relationships which support a pro-social identity. Activities tend to be constructive and productive. There is less involvement, if any, with Criminal Justice Agencies and a person representing this type is likely to be regarded as a ‘success story’. The label of ‘ex-offender’ informs one’s identity and there may be an ongoing need to prove to others that one has genuinely transformed. There is little involvement with others who are involved in criminal lifestyle and one’s social circle may be quite small. Some may define themselves as being in recovery. Within this form *narrative repair* (Crossley, 2000b) assists an identity transformation through the ‘re-authoring’ of a person’s life story. This may have been supported through criminal justice interventions, therapy or drug rehabilitation. There is greater coherence as to how there has been a shift from a ‘criminal’ or ‘offender’ to a ‘normal’ person or ‘ex-offender’. There remain struggles to overcome and progression to be achieved in working towards a preferred happier and flourishing endpoint.

7.5 Flourish

Tom and Christine’s stories are presented followed by a consideration of this narrative form.

7.5.1 Growing up and achievement: Tom’s story

Tom has been drug and crime free for over five years. When we met he had retired from competitive boxing and taken up fishing. He continues to work with at risk and high-need young people. Tom was experiencing feelings of stagnation in his life although on the whole felt he was flourishing.

I just had enough of my life. I believed at the time I was going to die and everything else was dying and I didn’t have nothing. I didn’t have no home, no possessions, nothing. I didn’t have any value to my life. I came from a place of neglect. Just horrible stuff at home. It’s the same every day, month in, month out. That’s what breaks you. It’s just crap. You’re sat in isolation removed from society. I had to be removed. But I just couldn’t ever stop in my own space in the community. Every single person I knew was just like me. I didn’t feel part of society. I’m a clever person, not as in academic, but I can survive and I had survived. I felt like I was dying and I didn’t want to be like that. I’d had enough. I just wanted a way out. I made a decision and I put my resources, my faith, into that. I started in prison. I got help from an agency that works with black and ethnic minority groups around drug use. I got released and went into a dry house and a care manager from social services got funding for treatment. I done the treatment, I went to NA meetings, started voluntary work, boxing training and it’s all just progressed from there. It’s seven years since I fix up any drugs or anything and I don’t smoke. I haven’t been in trouble for eight years. I’ve held down a job for six years. I’ve got two lovely children and I’ve got another two children who are coming back into my life. My life is just how I always wanted my life to be but never was. I always wanted a nice settled life. I wanted to be a family person, I

wanted to have a job, I wanted to have somewhere to live and be safe and secure. When I was in chaotic active using, addiction, the life and cycle of crime, in and out of prison, homeless, surrounded by prostitutes, other criminals and addicts. Just crazy people. I always had that ideology, that dream in the back of my head that I don't really want to do this. I wanted to be normal, whatever normal was. So now I do everything that I've always wanted to do. I go fishing, I live by the sea, I've got a steady job, got a nice girlfriend, we live in a decent house. I'm living the dream I always wanted to. The life I've always wanted to live. And that's it. I'm happy with that. I don't need to prove anything to anybody. I don't even bother talking about my old life 'cause people just can't even get it. From a prolific offender, mad, crazy person running in shops, over counters, just grabbing people, mad crap, and it is crap. It's just horrible, sick, shit. The crack cocaine makes you seem invincible. The heroin makes you totally alright with what you're doing. There's no relevance now. It's nothing to be proud of compared to helping people turn their lives around 'cause their own lives are crap and being effective at that. So my life's completely changed around and that's why I don't bother talking about my old life 'cause people just don't get it.

You can change your life. I think young people are constantly hounded by the media. You got to have it all by 30 and if you don't then you're a loser. There's no real consequences. Every video on MTV it's like some bloody Hollywood mini movie. Life ain't like that. You can wake up one day and not got no toilet roll. That's life. You can change it. There is help out there and you have to get support because you can't really do it on your own. The thing that's got you into trouble is your thinking, attitude, outlook on things and that's influenced by your peer group. That's your identity to be a criminal. You can be shady, dodgy, whatever you want to call it, and that's your identity. When you stop doing that you're just left in a big massive hole. You got no purpose. Your whole life was about using and getting the means and the ways to get more. And that's all your life involves. When you stop you've got no identity. Where do you start? It's like a mountain and you're at the bottom thinking, 'How do I get up there?'

It's not easy to stay clean, to stop your old life, ways and thinking. What I don't like about my new life is everything is so damned hard money wise. Everyone wants you to change your life and you change but then no one wants to help you. You can make more money selling trainers or knocked off tobacco. I don't do none of that. I don't put one foot in the past, my old life, and one foot in the future. I keep them completely separate and the door shut. 'Cause that way it doesn't get all confusing. I'm not a dodgy character, I'm upfront and straight. There's no in-between. I can't be a dodgy maybe. I'm one or the other. I've lived that old life and I don't want to live it so I live the new life. That's the only way to describe it. It's like having two people in the same body. This other deviant character, uncaring, self-centred, selfish person and this other one straight, honest, upfront, wants to help other people. So I don't confuse them or mix them up. The door is shut on the past. You always have your experiences coming up with what you've done. You have the ifs, buts and maybes but I just don't live my life on the ifs, buts and maybes. I've made sense of it all. If it didn't happen I wouldn't be the person I am today. I don't know why I had to go through all that 'cause I could've saved myself 15 years of crap.

I think you need to find something you like to do. I don't just mean going out and dancing. You need to find some sort of fulfillment and for me it's working with young people. You need to get support because you can't do it on your own. You've got to let people in otherwise you're still selfish and not giving anything to anybody. You create a new life but you're not actually sharing that life with anyone. When you get clean there is no pay off. Normal living doesn't really have a payoff. You're being nice 'cause you want to be nice. You don't have to do it, you just want to do it. I just want to put something back and be a positive role model. My life is packed with all good stuff. Family, work, fishing, and a bit of boxing training. That good stuff is completely alien to my past life and the people in it. I'm a completely different person. Before I was a prolific offender, intravenous user, homeless, living in crack houses and squats, no one didn't want me around 'cause I would just rob them. In jail no one would visit. Today I don't have any of it. I get up, I cook breakfast, I take responsibility, and I work. I'm a responsible, accountable, productive member of society. Just be normal in every sense of the word and free of my past. The boxing title, I didn't have no idea that would happen but it all makes sense. We've all grown up now. Since I made the decision to stop all this had to be learnt. It's just clearing the old and exposing yourself to the new.

7.5.2 Conversion and growth: Christine's story

The story of Christine's religious conversion experience was shared in Chapter Six. Below her story continues describing in further depth her identity transformation.

I believe I got to where I am today through my whole life experiences. I believe these enabled me to be who I am today and to give me the passion to do what I want to do today and that's working with drug addicts and people that are stuck in that life of crime. To change that cycle or belief system is a very slow, painful process. People don't just behave like that, there's stuff behind it all to why they do that. Sometimes they're not even aware what it is because it's been buried. So they don't even know why they behave a certain way until it gets exposed to them. That's what I find in my own life. 'Cause all I ever wanted to be was a Mum and all I ever wanted was a Mum. Even today I have to watch myself and I really have to make myself communicate with my children 'cause I know that's so important. I had it back to front thinking that money's important and providing for them is important when it is but not as important as communication. Even though I had all the materialistic things I just wasn't happy. So I knew there was something else. I lost my two older children and yet I still went into another relationship and tried desperately to make it normal by having another two children. And then I could see the same cycle being repeated and I realised I can't let this happen. I had to do something. The penny kind of dropped. It's not change on the outside, the change had to take place in me. Which was very scary.

I went to Church and after a lady from there spoke to scripture and said, 'Christine the old has gone and you're a new creation' and all I know is that it went in and I started to seek Jesus. The last rehab I went into I wanted it and I made that decision it didn't matter where I did it I was going to do it anyway. I'd come to that decision 'cause I didn't want to die. I'd deteriorated rapidly. I felt very dead. I didn't have no emotions and didn't know why I did the things I did. I didn't even accept I'd been abused. All this stuff was buried. I'd come from being a thief and ended up being a prostitute. Something that I didn't want to do. 'Cause all the years I didn't want to be like my Mum even though I loved her. But I could see myself being exactly the same as her. But then through these years stuff started waking up from my sub-consciousness and come into my consciousness. I started to get support and say, 'Wow this is happening to me.' I started to wake up and then I was able to learn to work through it. In the Christian Rehab I got to know Jesus and that was my support. Today my personality is the same I can still be a bit mad and my life seems extreme and my character's changing all the time. I'm far from perfect but all I know is that when I notice things that are not right in me I have got a friend that I can talk to from Church. Somebody who doesn't judge me so I don't have to hide it or keep it in closed. 'Cause the Church is far from perfect and sometimes people go on like they're perfect. But all I know is he's a loving' God. Patient. Somebody I can be honest with.

I'm learning to be working as a professional and I'm learning to be around straight people. I'm learning that I'm accepted for whom I am today, so that's helping me to learn to accept me. It's like, 'Christine, you're not a thief no more, you're not a drug addict no more, you're a new person now. You're liked and you're accepted.' And that's because I'm working in this job role and I'm seeing people like me and see in me sometimes stuff I don't see in myself. 'Cause I can sometimes see horrible things in me but that's a belief system that's still being renewed. But I think, 'Okay, there's got to be truth in this. Just keep walking.' But the more I stay put and keep moving forward, the old belief system is getting less and less. It's kind of dying. I'm able to see the truth and a lie. What is a belief system, a lie, and what is the truth. There's a separation that takes place. I felt so insecure moving to a straight circle and being around straight and middle-class people. I didn't know how to communicate with people so I've had to learn. I started to learn it's got nothing to do with them, it's something to do with how I'm perceiving myself. So it's all been a learning process. 'Cause they see something in me that I didn't see and I'd be like, 'Okay so it must be true I need to accept the good things in me.' So it's been part of my recovery. There were times in work I didn't feel like I was that person. So it's like the expression where you put on a jacket and you got to grow into it. But it's very scary. But then as I've gone along I've started to see people like me just for me. I don't have to pretend. I know. I just be real. If I don't know I just say I don't know. Then what I've learnt is

that a lot of people who look like they know don't know either. So I started to grow. But it was very difficult. I think all the stigma and that you got to work through it yourself. 'Cause when you're able to do that whatever outside throws at you it don't matter. 'Cause you've worked through it and you're open and able to talk about it. It can't have me no more 'cause it's not a secret. It's not hidden if that makes sense. I'm free from it 'cause it's not a secret no more I can talk about it and it's not who I am it's what I was.

It's like my kids going to college in September. That's never happened in my family. My kids talk about college and their future and I've got a 16-year-old doing voluntary work. That's because I've changed and it's filtered down onto my children. I used to worry about them and a bit afraid 'cause when I was on the street I'd be in all the street gangs and I felt safe. They're not from the street now 'cause I've changed. I used to wonder how they will be able to survive on the street. My kids tell me they know all the gangs but they choose not to be a part of it. I think, 'Look at that. They're alright.' So I feel really fortunate. Now I've got no desire to use drugs. I know that through my 20 years of using drugs I can't even have one. One would take me right back. It's like I'd unleash a monster in me 'cause I wasn't nice. I was a horrible person. It was all about me and what I wanted. 'Cause that old me believed they all owed me. I thank God that I am clean today. For me now, I see my purpose in life. I've got a purpose. Before I didn't have no purpose. It was just so destroying the crime and stuff. I had no value. My purpose is of value and now that I see, in a mad kind of way, that my past has not been wasted because I can use it to support the people up ahead of me. It's being used today. This is now the growth phase. I've set up the Charity and all that is in motion. That is my ultimate half-way houses for women. 'Cause I know what it's like to come out of them gates and not know. I knew how to live in prison, children's home or foster care. I was in and out of the system from growing up. That was easy. But to live out here in this world without being a thief and a drug addict? Forget it. I thought it was impossible. I couldn't sign on. I didn't know how to communicate with people unless I was going to rob them. I believe you need small supported housing where there's key workers. Where you can work on six women and you're not losing them. You can work with them and get them to the next stage and then re-housed. I'm looking at volunteers so no money can come in and distort it as my past life was money. So it stays clean. That's what I want to do, that's something that I feel that I am here for, that I feel I have to achieve and I think, 'Wow'.

Today I can still be impulsive. I've still got character defects but I'm aware of my defects so I don't have to continue with them. Today I've got a choice. Today I feel more secure, more stable and much more level headed. I'm not saying I am level-headed 'cause I do have my ups and downs. Today I can be more honest about me. The ugly side of my character, my nature and I can seek it out. I'm not afraid of it no more. Today I feel more secure in who I am because I believe I've gained more understanding about my past and I know it can't harm me no more. It can't harm me because it's not who I am today so there's been a clear separation from that. Today I've got a vision, I've got goals. Today when I have my off days I know that tomorrow will be better. I see hope. I don't think, 'Oh this is the end.' Today I'm happy with the changes that have taken place in my life and that'll sort of trickle down onto my children's life. Today I'm more responsible than I've ever been. Today I'm starting to embrace my age. I'm trying to look after what I have. I like myself much more and I know it'll just get better. Today I still struggle with paperwork in work. I may try to run away from it but it doesn't go away. I always go back to it. I don't give up that easy now. Above all, even though I have my ups and downs, life is good today.

The key plotline of this narrative type is an identity transformation where although some parts of the self may be the same the person is 'renewed' and striving for a better world for self and others. The desire to give back, responsibly contribute to society and leave a legacy is prominent. The previous criminal and drug-taking life is no longer viewed as a waste as it is used to make a positive contribution. This narrative suggests a better life is being embraced and there is less striving for 'whatever normal is' as

'normal' is being lived. There is a picture of a positive future and a sense of higher purpose and meaning to life. Hope is present and there is an awareness of the risk of complacency of going back to an 'old self'. There are still struggles in life and an awareness of areas of weakness and ongoing development. This is not about becoming or being a perfect person.

The 'flourish' story makes coherent sense as to how the person overcome a 'criminal' or 'addict' identity and is participating in an ongoing transformation and commitment to better living and personal growth. Identity has been transformed extensively. There is a clear separation of the old person and a new crime-free identity. There is still a sense of suspense that the person could choose to return to an 'old' identity. The story works by showing transformation is possible and countering the dominant cultural narrative that enduring change is unlikely. It provides hope in what would otherwise seem a hopeless situation.

A re-storying of identity appears to have taken place and coherent sense has been made of who they once were and who they are today which includes continuity and change. Within this process is evidence of the strategy of *narrative breakage*. Identity has been recast through a 'break' between who they once were and who they are today. Tom expressed it as having two selves within one body that are connected but disconnected at the same time. This indicates a reconstruction (Maruna & Roy, 2007) rather than a knifing off or amputation (Laub & Sampson, 2003) process in actively claiming an adaptive pro-social narrative identity. This strategy may thus enable continuation of a pro-social adaptive identity and keep the revised identity 'safe'. The account of transformation may have become 'rehearsed' and further embedded as one's transformation story is given in testimony or shared. This may be particularly the case with religious conversion. Through the telling there is a possibility of greater acceptance of self and (re)gaining of dignity and self-respect.

A stake in society has been sought and obtained. Support to change is considered essential and ongoing constructive assistance is still required though the person will most likely need to be pro-active to seek and obtain. They are part of a smaller but constructive circle of people who are not involved in a criminal lifestyle. There are attachments to organisations such as religious institutions, physical activity groups, volunteer groups, and sports teams and clubs. Stigma and discrimination is experienced as reflecting who they once were and not who they are today. This is facilitated by the distance in terms of time and greatness of the identity shift between the old self and the new self. For some there is an embracing of the 'ex-offender/addict'

label. This may aid gaining employment which makes use of those past experiences including working with criminal justice agencies, addiction services, youth work, charities and volunteering. There is a sense that the Criminal Justice System may have improved since their experience of it but there is scope to substantially improve it further and there is no magic cure.

The 'flourish' story has resonance with recovery and conversion narratives. It has similarities with a *quest* narrative where illness transforms the sufferer and extends his or her experiential range and transformation into a new self (Frank, 1995). It also reflects elements of a *redemption* narrative (McAdams, 2006; Maruna, 2001) where negative past experiences are re-interpreted as providing a pathway or conduit to forging a new identity and more authentic and better ways of living. This emphasises the discovery of a 'true self' and a sense of empowerment and control over one's life. It incorporates a desire to be productive and give something back to the community, family and other offenders. A key issue faced in this narrative is what happens when desired selves and goals or life purposes are reached or frustrated, when external circumstances intrude and stagnation or crisis looms. Further flourishing or a shift to cope, survive or destruct?

7.6 Summary

In this chapter I have chosen to predominantly show rather than tell stories to represent the four ideal types, *destruct*, *survive*, *cope* and *flourish* that emerged from my analysis. As Carless & Sparkes (2008) note in relation to mental health there is often a focus on deficits and problems. An implication of this is that positive perspectives and stories of those who have personally lived an experience are rarely heard. I hope to have provided some accessible insights into the complexity and messiness of change. This is not a final typology and it stays open. It was derived from interviews at the time I met with participants and not all participants 'fit' into one type. What these types of stories describe is an active claiming and performing of identity and show how life narratives are more than 'just stories'. They are vehicles for making sense of life and describing how identities are transformed (Blaxter, 2004a, 2004b). Within this process people make use of the narrative resources available to them from culture in constructing their stories. If the narrative menu available to individuals is limited then so is their potential for change. Hence, the need to develop counter-narratives to those that dominate in specific situations for certain groups of people; and the requirement to add them to the narrative menu as possible ways of living a life in different ways.

CHAPTER EIGHT: AGEING WISDOM

8.1 Introduction

‘There’s more to life when you get older’
(Mark, October 2010)

One of the most robust findings in the criminological literature is that for most people criminal behaviour peaks in their teenage years and then starts to decline (McNeill, Farrall, Lightowler & Maruna, 2012). As Smith (2007) noted offending over the life-course is a story of both continuity and change and age remains one of the best predictors of dramatic change in criminal behaviour. However there continues to be insufficient attention to explaining how it may mediate in the transformation process and unpacking its meaning (Smith, 2007; McNeill et al., 2012). Ageing can be defined as the processes in humans that occur with the passing of time. Chronological age concerns the number of years a person has existed whereas functional age is the age at which a person functions. Biological age has been defined as the absence of disease (primary ageing) or physiological and mental decline caused by poor health (secondary ageing). Following Shover (1985), I am concerned with an interpretative approach to ageing rather than identifying biological processes. My goal is to explore the meaning of age in the transformation process. My analysis focused primarily on *what* was spoken of ageing by staff and participants stories and, secondly, *how* participants accomplish age. The following five themes emerged that are explored in-depth: *age feel*, *time*, *physicality*, *outlook on self and life*, and *growing up and becoming wiser*. These themes intertwine and the chapter closes with a consideration of the concept of wisdom in the transformation process over the life-course.

8.2 Age feel

Within this section I explore how age relates to the process of wanting to change one’s life through the two sub-themes of *a critical age* based on staff interviews and *too old* based on participants narratives of their lived experience.

8.2.1 A critical age

Three age-related narrative forms emerged from analysis of staff accounts. Firstly, *any age*, where at any point in their life someone has, ‘had enough’ and decides to make changes. The timing, age, context and circumstances of this are unique and personal to

each individual. It is often this point, particularly when it leads to enduring change, that one Probation Officer, and Tom, said they wish, 'could be bottled' and given to others. Within this story ceasing to commit crime depended on the individual, their experience, beliefs and values. That is, each person living a criminal lifestyle may, or may not, come to 'any certain age' where they want to change their life:

I know it's an old adage; they seem to reach a certain age. And it could be any age, could be 20, could be 30, could be 60. (PEI)

I don't know if it's an age thing. I really don't. I think it's more to do with your beliefs and your values. (Probation Support Officer)

An SOPEI responded:

Jo: Do you think there are kind of key ages that things shift or change, have you seen that ... in the time that you've worked?

I: No. Not that I can put, no not really that I could turn round and say that there's a certain age and it all changes, no.

Secondly, *old enough*, is a story where people are older, most likely in their late twenties or thirties, and also feel they've, 'had enough' of crime, drug addiction and prison. They start to make changes because they, 'want their life back' and to, 'make something more' of their life.

Quite often they've had enough I would say probably, in my experience, in their 30s. And then you got the younger ones coming through that, well, that are a little bit wilder than the generation in front of them. And then the older ones look at it and say. 'I can't handle it anymore', the noise, and that's, to me, the period of time when they actually admit that they've had enough, that's when we should really be trying to help them out. Not the blanket approach. (SOPEI)

I think until they get about 33 and upwards then they start thinking about their prison sentences, their time ... and they're probably shocked that ... for the last 12, 15 years of their life they've been in and out of prison and they've only probably had in 15 years spent, 18 months outside. Then it's like, 'What have I done?' You know. And then you have a chat with them and you say, 'Oh like you're nearly 38 now. You got six years to do. What are you doing?' And they're like really taken back by that. And then they start to think, 'You know I'll be nearly 50.' It's a bit more of a shock to them. So I think the older they get the more likely ... the better chance they have of staying out. (PEI)

I think once they hit about 30 that's when they'll start to make the changes. And you'll get some that don't ever make those changes but I think the ones, I just had someone that finished last week and he was really successful and he's 38. And it's now or never for him if he doesn't stop now then that's it. So I do think that age plays a big part in it. (Probation Officer)

Younger adults are considered less likely to change as their lives are 'manic' and they may still see crime as fun and exciting and want to impress their peers. Some staff expressed they found it more difficult to work with younger adults due to being,

‘chaotic’, ‘out of control’ and, ‘They don’t want to stop and address anything.’ Predominantly male, their functioning age was thought to be of a 15-year-old rather than their actual age between 18 and 24. A Probation Officer commented that living life at hundred miles per hour it would not be until they reached their mid-twenties and began to slow down that engagement in the change process could start.

Finally in the third story, *young enough*, older adults, over forty, are considered entrenched in a criminal life and the least likely to change. They may die from drug or crime-related risks, receive a long prison sentence or at best commit less serious crime.

As you get older you tend to become more aware ... but then if you’re repeatedly given a hard time, or repeatedly dealt a bad deck of cards then as you got older I suppose you become bitter and resentful and that’ll affect what you want to do and whether you want to change or what’s the point in changing. So I think it’s more about experience and that individual than anything. (PEI)

But the older ones ... they’re already resigned that they’re never going to change. They’ve done it for so long the offending, even if they’ve been homeless and sofa surfing, this is what they do they go to a friends’ house and lie on a sofa for a couple of nights and then somebody else’s. They’re so resigned to doing that they can’t change anymore. (Probation Support Officer)

These public narrative types seem to perform a paradoxical function. On the one hand two forms may act to foreclose the possibility of restorying one’s life because you are either ‘too young’ or ‘too old’. However, the narrative ‘any age’ opens the possibilities for transformation as it is based on experiences and realisations. Chronological age is less relevant than the age at which a person appears to be functioning and whether this meets the markers of what Western society expects from responsible ‘adulthood’.

8.2.2 Too old

Feeling too old for a criminal lifestyle was identified as a dissuading factor for continuing to commit crime. This sub-theme links closely with the *physicality* and *time* themes. Interestingly, Rebecca and John, both active in a criminal lifestyle, responded that they did not feel ‘that old’. Rebecca felt at her age she should be acting older than she is including being able to cook and look after her son. John responded:

John: Believe it or not I feel 18, 22. But then I think I ask a lot of people this question and I think they all do. I know I sat down and said, ‘Oh my legs’ because I’ve been to the gym and my legs hurt. But people say to me, ‘Don’t your joints hurt?’ And I’ve got no joint pain. My sister keeps saying to me, ‘John you’ve got to pack it in you’re in you’re in your winter years.’

Jo: What do you think?

John: And I feel like a spring chicken. And if they let me out of that gate now and said run back to [city] and I could go free. It might take me four days but I would run and walk all the way to there. And I would get there in one piece as well.

Jo: So have you noticed any changes from being when we spoke before, we looked at your younger years and then 18 to 26, being in and out of prison, so do you feel the same now as you did then?

John: Physically I feel as fit as I did then.

Jo: Yeah?

John: Mentally ... I feel pretty much the same as well.

Dean also described he felt younger than his actual age when I asked him old he felt:

Dean: [slight laugh] I feel like sometimes as if I'm, I don't know, 22, 23 again, you know. Still got that like thrive where I lose myself sometimes and I sort of got to catch myself you know and think, 'Wait a minute you know you're like 35 years old now.' I do that quite a few times I would get that sort of thought. ... I suppose 'cause of all the lost years I've had from sentences and drugs and that. Where I've either been in a six by four or I've been out my head. I assume my brain's sort of shut down parts of my life you know and then when I got out again I sort of reboot itself from that period. So I think I lost years and I think my mental age is a bit younger than what it should be really, you know, where it's still trying to catch up to where I am. If that makes sense.

Jo: So where you are in terms of your actual age?

Dean: Yeah. I think yeah, it's trying to catch up to [smiles].

The experience of imprisonment and institutionalisation for Ben, Ryan, Rebecca, Mark, Sam and Dean was reflected in comments that they felt there were functioning lower than their actual age. This was particularly related to personal agency and 'doing things' for themselves. Mark who was in prison when we met referred to the problems of having been in various institutions for much of his life and, 'Having his arse wiped for him'. Stuart, similar to Eliza, went into prison for the first time in his thirties. All the other participants received their first prison sentence as a teenager or early twenties. Stuart believed if he had gone into prison when he was young he would have been, 'Jack the lad', 'brazen and cocky' and 'it would've been easier' instead at 34 he said his mental state was not very strong. He believed he was able to take the positive from prison rather than the negative as he got to, 'look inside' himself.

The implications of age and status in living a crime life were highlighted by Ben who said that if he leaves prison now and went back to using drugs he, 'Could not start at the bottom of the ladder again' due to his age and the way the community has changed. He said he would, 'have to step up the scale' that may mean killing someone which he does not want to do. The notion of crime being for young people was notable

when I asked participants when they were younger if they could recall what they thought of older people who were in prison:

Mark: I just used to say I'm never going to be like that, no way am I. No way am I going to be in prison that old ...

Jo: Does it feel like a young person's game?

Mark: Yeah of course. Yeah it is. When you get older, like I said, you just want to kick back. My son speaks to me like I'm speaking now. It's mad. Like, where's that gone? 15 years of my life and I've been in and out of jail, it's a long time. It's just a long time. It's a lifetime really if you think about it.

Mark stated although he liked a, 'hectic sort of life' he was, 'getting older now. I'm not far off from my pipe and slippers.' Thus, chronological age was presented as an acceptable rationale for desisting from crime:

So I'm not getting any younger. Grey hairs are kicking in and dunno, I'll be a Granddad in a couple of years probably. It's time to kick back. I just want to relax do you understand what I mean? That's how I feel, yeah.

When I met with Sam he had just completed his probation order and was managing to avoid crime although he was still struggling with health issues and heroin addiction. Consistently throughout our interviews he explained he was too old for crime and drug addiction. He described he'd reached a stage where he'd had enough of sitting in police cells, going to court and prison, and, 'being told what to do'. This arose spontaneously when we first met and I asked him about any recent prison sentences:

Yeah, the last one was probably about a ... year and a half ago I suppose. I just thought to myself ... too old. Too old for this, being in prison again and seeing all the younger people. Just, you know, obviously gives you time to detox again ... and then you start thinking. 'Cause while you're on the drugs you just carry on, just don't stop, and think about nothing. Everything revolves around getting, using every day so that was obviously why at the time, time just flies by without noticing. ... Yeah so last prison sentence I just thought, 'Oh I've got to stop. Enough's enough.' Felt too old for it and I had enough of just going to prison basically.

Sam felt he had stopped and 'woke up' describing it was like he had been in a trance for the past 15 years. Similarly to Mark, Sam responded when I asked him how he viewed older prisoners when he was in prison when he was younger:

Sam: I can remember thinking to myself 'I don't want to be in here at that age.' Definitely, you know, but that's probably about it. Didn't really think much, nah. I can remember just thinking to myself, 'For one I don't want to be coming back here.' Which I did for a little while, end up going back for a couple of small stretches. And then found myself being in prison and everyone being a lot younger and me thinking to myself, 'Bloody hell I was doing this 20 year ago.'

Jo: So it's more as you got older that you

Sam: Started thinking you know, 'Too old for this like.' [.....] I don't want to be doing this still.

The theme of being 'too old' was more evident with participants who were earlier in the desistance process and trying to transform their lives than those who had been crime-free for longer. The perception of age may therefore play a role in initiating a 'crisis' of habits and prompting the need for a creative transformation (Shilling, 2008).

8.3 Time

Many, if not all, participants, male and female, struggled to recall their past particularly their childhoods. Ryan said he tended not to try and recall, as it was not a happy time. Christine and Rebecca struggled to recall the specific ages at which they experienced events. When people were living a criminal life and taking illegal drugs this was commonly described as one block of time of, 'Crime, drugs, and prison' even if within this time there were periods of trying to change. A Probation Officer commented that she'd experienced people she supervised who could not recall birthdays and would, 'Lose chunks of time'. From participants accounts two sub-themes emerged concerning time that are explored below.

8.3.1 Missing out

Eliza sums up below in our conversation many of the age themes in this chapter. Key is a feeling of loss, immortality, and missing out on time through imprisonment:

Jo: How old do you feel you are?

Eliza: It's really hard to say because you don't suddenly feel of an age. Gradually you might change, you know, for me I've probably become more settled, I'm probably a bit calmer. ... But I don't feel a great deal different. I don't feel old, although I'm aware of my age. And I'm more aware of ... I suppose ... I'm more aware of mortality, I'm more aware of illness, I'm more aware that age is creeping up. I've got more aware of the shortness of time like ... yeah, yeah I'm more aware of that. That's quite scary sometimes and I think a lot of that has got to do with losing my Dad because I did feel a radical change after I lost my Dad. And I did feel instantly aware of all those, yeah.

Jo: Immediately, pretty much after?

Eliza: Yeah, yeah and I guess that's when it all kind of hit me and I started reflecting upon me, my age, my future, or may be lack of it or, or, do you know what I mean. In terms of how much is left of ... yeah. So I guess that's the best way to

Jo: Say it.

Eliza: Yeah.

Jo: Do you think being inside [prison] had an influence for you?

Eliza: On?

Jo: Age and your sense of time?

Eliza: That's an interesting question 'cause it's like kind of time stands still when you're in there. You don't age at all when you're in there. And I think that goes for a lot of, I've noticed that with a lot of, yeah, everybody. And a lot of people that spend a long time in prison don't seem to either have matured or developed. And a lot of people look exactly the same. It's like going into some sort of time-free zone, I don't know what it is. But yeah. You don't feel like, it's like time stands still, yeah it's like time stands still. I suppose now more than I ever have done I've started to look back on it as a waste of life. I do feel a loss. Because, yeah I do, I feel like I've missed out and jumped and again that's only something I've really reflected on in the last year.

Jo: About the time that you spent.

Eliza: Yeah.

Jo: That period.

Eliza: Yeah. So I do kind of feel a bit cheated. And a bit like yeah I've lost out and I've missed something.

Eliza spoke about how when she went into jail her 'pre-jail life' had no relevance to 'jail life'. Likewise when she was released her 'jail life' had no relevance to 'post-jail life'. John similarly talked about having had 'lots of lives' each time he went to prison and was released it was like 'a new life'. Periods of time in one's life were perceived to have been missed out and been 'wasted'. Sam spoke sadly about this:

I still feel like ... I don't know ... that I'm sort of back in my twenties where I've been controlled by the drugs for all them years. ... Missed out on a lot of, I don't know, normal life I suppose. So yeah I don't feel that age 'cause I haven't really properly grown up do you know what I mean? ... 'cause all I've done is just spent time in and out of prison ... and just taking drugs and ... being in and out or being under the influence of ... heroin.

Dean calculated he had spent 12 of the past 20 years in prison and had, 'nothing to show for it' and 'wasted' 12 years in prison. This was part of his drive for wanting a better life. Rebecca shared in her last meeting:

I'm 34, I don't want to end up like some of the people I see. You know, old women still on the gear and that. I don't want that. I just want to sort myself out.

Future time was considered important in terms of growing and 'making something' of one's life as articulated by Jamie:

Jo: Do you feel age relates to the changes you're making at the moment in any way?

Jamie: I think with age I've grown out of all the madness. I'd had enough. And ... they used to say in prison, you know when you're, well obviously you don't know when you're in prison, but when you're in prison you see like ... you see people like 38, 40 and you think, 'I'll never be in jail when I'm that old.' And ... I suppose I'm just scared of being old and in prison 'cause

Jo: What would that mean?

Jamie: Means you got nothing in life have you? ... Means you haven't made it really. Made nothing of your life. ... I ain't going to be like that.

Christine described her awareness of time running out to make changes in her life and her children:

Jo: And do you feel things have changed for you with age in your story?

Christine: ... Yeah. ... Yeah ...

Jo: What sort of ways?

Christine: Well ... I would say ... like drugs and heroin at the teenage years ... and that chaotic life from 19 to ... 34, 19, twenties, yeah chaoticness, I knew that my life was to be a Mum, that it was running out. I knew that I had to do something by the time I'm 40. I didn't put that 40 in my head but inside I knew. That something in me knowing that ... if I don't do something it's the consequences of that for me and for the other two children. Nothing would've changed 'cause they would've been thieves, they would've been drug addicts. ... Anything could've happened to them.

Mark spontaneously commented during our meeting that he feels he is missing out on life. He spoke about how he felt he'd had a long life for such a short age but had, 'Wasted a lot of time' in the past by living his life day-to-day and only caring for himself and not others. Jason highlighted the importance of time in relation to sport and staying crime free when we met five months after his release from prison on license. He shared that he did not want to get into trouble as returning to prison would, 'Do my head in now.' He said if he 'lost' another two years his rugby career would be over as he felt that he could not really start playing again at 28. An important role model for him was another rugby player at his club who started when he was 27 and after seven years is performing at the top of his game.

Crossley (2000b) noted that when life is seen to be over, or foreclosed, time can be perceived as empty. This may lead to a lack of commitment to future possibilities or projects due to a fear of disappointment. This in turn may lead to a loss of meaning in one's life. Sam explained in some ways he feels it is 'too late to care' about his life. Alternatively, the sense that one's life has not been truly lived and 'wasted years' can invigorate a search for one's meaning and purpose and efforts to repair one's life.

8.3.2 Timing

John told me that he thought by the time he was 30 he would be a millionaire. At 30 he said he was penniless and in prison so moved the date to 35, then 40. He explained he had, 'Given up on doing that' and money no longer means anything to him. John described he does not 'sit and dwell' on where he is or what he has, or has not, achieved. He commented he probably should as he might not still be sat in prison. Indeed he noted that opportunities for him to do something not related to crime at the age of 48 had worn 'a bit thin' compared to earlier in his life. Mark, also in prison, expressed clearly how 'now is the time' for him to change:

Now it's about me wanting it. You know I'm 34, just time to hang up my boots that's how I see it. You know what I mean? It's never got me nowhere. I wouldn't say I've got pocket loads of money out there and a big house. I've got absolutely nothing

Later in the same interview he shared, 'It's stupid. Just wish I'd done this a long time ago. That's the way I look at it' and 'I'm tired of it. I am tired of all this bollocks. I wish I could just go back and shake myself 20 years ago.' Staff commented that they observed a 'right time' for people to change. This included a notion that for some individuals it is a case of 'now or never'. Dean told me he believes if he does not change this time he never will. The idea of a 'right time' to transform one's life is difficult to define, describe, quantify or qualify. However it seems to be a notion that is embedded in people's talk about transforming. One interpretation is that it may act as narrative strategy to indicate the seriousness of commitment to change and a future pro-social 'possible self' (Markus & Nurius, 1986) who is making more of life. The other option is more crime, drugs, prison, and potentially death. Thus, ending up the 'feared self' of an older person unable to transform their life and remaining enmeshed in a criminal identity and life.

8.4 Physicality

The body was reflected in the stories of ageing of participants and staff. This supports my contention that transforming one's life involves embodiment processes. Phoenix & Sparkes (2007, 2009) argued that age links to the body and to accomplish or perform age people draw on the physical resources of the body. At the same time their actions and choices shape the corporeal resources available to them. Thus, the body is relevant to the identity and the life that an individual attempts to promote and attain. Age is made meaningful through interactions that are framed in the context of social structures and institutions. Broader cultural stories of ageing, including the current dominant

narrative in Western society of decline in the ageing process, are likely to be drawn on and inform the transformation process. In addition, Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes (2007) proposed that the relationship between time, identity and narrative is also embodied. Staff commented on embodied changes that were age related, mostly relating to people who were in a criminal life:

If they're sort of getting into their 40s there are people here that are in their 50s and they're still manic. I don't know what that says about them but yeah you quite often get the ones that will be coming in probably until the day they die because that's just the way they are, it's what they do. And ... quite often you'll see them and I always think that they always look about ten years older than they really are. (SOPEI)

You actually see it in their eyes, they're tired of prison. It's not fun no more. I always say you get some young lads in and they think they're the cock of the roost. And I always say, 'You've got years of prison in you son.' And you can see it in their faces. It don't mean nothing to them. They got years. I said, 'Until the coin drops, and it may never, you got years with us son', I said, 'You got years. Decades.' Because they think it's just a game. Now that feeling, when they got that feeling they're disruptive and again time ticks on but it doesn't seem to affect them. They may do two years, go out for a year, come back for five, do three, four years of that, go out, come back for eight, do IPP blah, blah, blah. And then all of a sudden, and it could be any age like. You see with the eyes they've lost that cockiness. They're tired. Tired eyes. (PEI)

Tom described how he was, 'Dying on his feet' prior to making his decision to change. The body is also implicated in how he reflected on his current actual age:

Tom: The war's over. I've lived half my life now I think, you know. Do you know what I mean? Like I'm 35, 36 this year. Means if I live to 70 I would have considered myself to have a good innings. Yeah. So I'm at halfway already. If I live more than 70, great.

Jo: Do you feel your age then? Or how do you feel?

Tom: I do. I feel, lately I've been feeling like these knocks and, my body feels ... done in. Do you know what I mean? This shoulder feels done in. This shoulder's hurting where the cold's seeping in where it's been dislocated. You know. Sometimes I feel like I'm a bloody old man just moaning and moaning and moaning.

Jamie linked awareness of his age and becoming an 'older prisoner' with his body:

Jo: And when did you become aware of looking at older people? Can you remember?

Jamie: I'd say ... when I was doing my last sentence, my five-year sentence. ... Definite. I remember hurting my ankle playing football and I remember the Doctor saying, 'You're getting old now. You're getting old you're body takes longer to recover.' And [slight laugh] it's not nice is it? But it happens to everyone dunnit? So ... it's life innit?

Although some participants drew on the broader narrative of decline there was also a strikingly positive view of ageing. This was regardless of whether the person was crime-free or not. John in relation to bodybuilding believed he would get better as he got older:

The most important time I want to be doing that is at the age of 55 to 60 and a lot of people would say no you've left it too late but it's not. If you're in really good shape then you do really look good and you do look something. And it is good to be like that at that age.

Jack mentioned that he has got fatter, older, and heavier with age and when I asked him about his hobbies he said he does sometimes carve driftwood and humorously commented:

You know I'm 43 anyway. What can you do at 43? Surfing kind of hurts, skateboarding really hurts. If I ride on the scooter with the kids I quite hurt as well. But I'm always messing about so I'm not exactly a boring old fart that just doesn't enjoy himself.

Age was also linked to the notion of health consciousness identified earlier in Chapter Five. Ryan spoke about turning 31 and needing to start taking more care of his body-self. In later interviews he talked about appreciating what he has got in life with his health and being happy as he wasn't, 'Getting any younger'. What was particularly notable was Christine's positive approach to embracing ageing:

Do you know what? It's funny, I was talking about that with my friend, no with my sister yesterday and I was saying ... that I'm starting to embrace my age. Right. 'Cause it's sort of like that when I come into recovery and when I've come off drugs, right, still wanting to be what you're not. Still trying to keep yourself. There's nothing wrong with kind of keep yourself young but for me it was trying to pretend I was something that I wasn't. Right. So, ... I'm embracing my age today [short laugh] and, and I'm trying to look after what I've got now [laughs]. Trying to look after what I have.

Similar to findings by Phoenix and Sparkes, ageist stereotypes and ideologies were replicated in some participants' accounts that noted a decline in the ageing body. However at the same time, and as Christine provides evidence, there is a counter-story that is to 'embrace age' by taking care of one's body-self. This is associated with making the most of life and what you have in the present and the future. This is an invigorating and active process that combats feelings of loss and a wasted life. Thus, further supporting the idea that the body 'fires up' to live crime-free and accomplish an adaptive pro-social identity.

8.5 Outlook on self and life

Ageing was associated with a shift in outlook on one's life and identity as 'an older person' or, as Dean described, 'An older head'. Reflected in perhaps all of the participants' stories, with the exception of Eliza, when recalling their younger selves people spoke about how they viewed life as 'a joke' and 'a laugh'. For both men and women there was a concern with image and reputation. Crime and drugs were often viewed as a way to gain respect and status in their community and with their peers. For example, Sam responded when I asked him when he first went to prison:

Sam: First time I went to prison I was probably 20, 22, 'cause when you're, yeah when you're 21 you go into

Jo: Young Offenders isn't it?

Sam: Yeah up to 21 and then you go into like a man's prison like you know. ... Yeah I probably I think I went in when I was about 22 and where I was still pretty young I thought it was all jack the lad and it's like part of the things about prison and all, do you know what I mean? But then sort of it weren't till about ten years later that, you know, sort of realised to myself that it ain't cool do you know what I mean? It ain't good to be going to prison and doing this. After I done the same thing over and over and made the same mistakes over, over and over about five or six times you know. ... Yeah but at first it's all a big laugh.

Simon spoke of the kudos he gained as a young person in prison with older prisoners because of the offences he had committed. Mark, Jason and Dean described the importance of image to their identity when they were teenagers and in relation to crime. Rebecca and Christine both said they glamourised a criminal lifestyle when they were younger and sought a reputation as a 'good criminal'. A Probation Support Officer commented that people might feel they have 'had enough' and reach an age where they have 'got to change'. But this may mean they are just too tired, getting old and want 'rid of the lifestyle' but still involved in 'low-level' crime such as accepting stolen goods. To elaborate one's narrative and make more of life involved a shift in beliefs and values to develop a pro-social body-self.

8.5.1 Slowing/settling down

I asked staff about differences in their experience of older and younger people that had committed crimes. Older people were described generally as more settled and quieter and get on with 'doing what they need to do'. Younger people were portrayed generally as more cocky, cheeky and hyper and believe they have still got plenty of time to make

something of their life. Staff at times would relate such changes to their own experience of ageing:

I think with age you tend to ... look at things differently. You don't rush into things, you do sit back and take note a bit more as you get older. I think you slow down yourself. I think just your body slows down, your mind slows down, your way of life just slows down if that makes sense. (PEI)

Participants also spoke about a 'slowing down' and 'calming down' in association with getting older. This reflected a general narrative of age-related change rather than one specific to crime. This, as noted earlier, may act by opening up an opportunity to consider transforming one's life. When Mark spoke about his decision to change as age-related I inquired further what this meant to him:

When you get older I think you calm down a lot, you seem to want to kick back a lot, you know. You start realising you're wasting your life and stuff. There's more to life when you get older I think. I think that's how to explain it, you know? You chill out more don't you? Instead of watching EastEnders you want to watch something on meerkats or something like that. I don't know, that's how I put a thing on it [smiles].

John who is still active in crime also mentioned a change in outlook. When I asked him earlier if he feels the same age he said that physically and mentally he does. He continued that mentally there had been, 'A bit of a shift'. He said he, 'feels more drained' and, 'looks at things differently now'. He gave an example of being more aware of politics and reflecting that in a hundred years time people may think the way people are treated in prison now is barbaric. He shared, 'I've just sort of got older and I think a bit deeper' and on reflecting on his behaviour from the ages of 40 to 47:

Slowed down. Everything has slowed down by then. Even my crime slowed down. I wouldn't go out and break into stately homes when I was this age. I would at that age [points to when younger].

Jason related in our first meeting, just before release from prison, how life in the community has changed:

It's all different out there now, do you know what I mean, two years is a long time. A lot of things have happened. ... They're all settled down now, that's the best way, they've all got girlfriends, settled down and calm. Which is good really. That's what I want when I get out just got to settle down and just stay away from it all.

The notion of slowing down was linked to identity changes. Eliza described herself now as calm, a lot quieter and not as spontaneous. She felt her life was 'really settled' into a routine that is comfortable. I asked if a split she described earlier in her life between a 'responsible side' and a 'spontaneous side' was age related:

Eliza: Yeah ... yeah. I think I'm sort of going through that stage at the moment where I'm kind of, trying to work out how sort of how old I really am. Because like if I say it out loud it just doesn't seem to belong to me. But I'm feeling more grown up than I ever have done but I don't know how comfortable I am with it at the moment. Yeah. Find it quite scary.

Jo: Yeah?

Eliza: Yeah. And I don't know how much that has got to do with also losing my Dad. That has really sort of took the wind out of my sails and I've struggled with that for some time. The whole mortality thing and the ageing process and relating, you know, the ageing process to myself and what that means. I'm founding all that a bit of a struggle at the moment.

And when I asked Eliza how old she feels at the moment:

I don't know that's really hard to say. Because ... my twenties up to say a couple of years ago I just felt of a young age I couldn't put an age on it I didn't feel any different at that time. And now I think I'm supposed to feel different because I've realised that actually age has caught up with me. And I am, you know, I'm sort of in the bracket as well, I should almost be a Grandmother soon and that to me is like really quite scary. Doesn't seem to fit me and I don't feel like I belong in that bracket yet. So I don't really know quite where I belong at the moment.

Throughout this study I've been reminded of Mick one of the oldest group members I worked with on the therapeutic community. He was in his mid-fifties and been in and out of prison a number of times. His criminal convictions had been lessening both in frequency and seriousness with age. I went to a Public Protection meeting as there were concerns about his risk level and release plans. I was asked for my opinion on his risk and the progress he was making on the therapeutic community. My view was that he was experiencing a 'retirement' from crime rather than a 'reformation'. As I'm discussing age with participants and staff there seems to be an active, agentic, purposeful leaving a crime life and claiming a pro-social identity. There is also a more passive, circumstantial, 'giving-up' of a crime life. Perhaps this reflects a reduced physical and mental capability to live a criminal lifestyle and do prison sentences. Perhaps in transformation the body-self 'fires up' and it can also 'wind down' too. I am left wondering how age is, if at all, related to enduring transformation?

8.5.2 Risk

This theme was evident from participants' accounts of age in their lived experience of transforming their lives. As people get older the costs of crime outweigh the gains. This in itself is not considered to be sufficient. There is also a need to have a goal or target to which one is aspiring. This was particularly pertinent for Simon:

I think it's just knowing how much that there is to lose and just having that focus. Just knowing that as long as I keep on this path and I do not stray from this, things should be okay. And it's just not worth the risk, if you see what I mean. I think there's also an age factor in there as well. You know you get to an age where you just think, 'It's just not worth it.' I couldn't do another one of those prison sentences again [laughs] you know what I mean? So there's also that factor as well in the back of the mind. Not something you consciously think about but I'm sure that's a factor as well.

And later in the interview I asked him to expand further:

Jo: Can you say a bit more about the age factor 'cause you were saying it gets that bit where you don't want to do another prison sentence.

Simon: Yeah.

Jo: Can you say a bit more about what you mean by that?

Simon: Umm ... I mean when I was younger and I was involved in the stuff that I was involved in, I always knew that there was a danger of ending back in prison and I could end up doing a long prison sentence. And in my mind it's kind of prepared because if you're involved in this [...] that could happen. And you weigh it up and you just think, 'What's the worst thing?' Okay the worst is this, I'll end up doing this and I'll be out by then'. [Short laugh] I don't know if people do that but I always did that [short laugh].

Jo: Calculated it. Yeah.

Simon: I would calculate it and say this is the kind of risk I'm taking, you know. So, when I weigh up the risk now especially with my family and responsibilities and it's not even just that, it's the responsibilities. Even in the church and then people that I'm working with and mentoring and to see me fall [short laugh] you know. So there's a lot of responsibility in that sense. And yes going back to the age thing there's less chance of recovery [short laugh] at this age now if I was to go and do a 13 year sentence now. What would I do after that? [Short laugh] You know what I mean?

Simon further reflected:

And one of the things for me is not just so much the deterrent factor of you might go to prison for a length of time but having a goal, having a target, having something in the distance which you're aiming towards. That if you do take that risk and jeopardise that, this is my opinion, people are more likely to reoffend if they haven't got that because they're not jeopardising anything for them if they go to prison.

Jason also related ageing to a shift in image, outlook and risk of reoffending:

Jo: I was going to ask you about age and do you feel that you've changed with age?

Jason: Oh fuck me, yeah, yeah. They say you leave jail right the same age that you come in. I come in at 23 ... and now I'm 26 ... No I come in at 24 come out 26 yeah. That ain't much of a difference but like yeah definitely. This last two years has probably put ten years on me mentally if that makes sense. I've been around so many different characters of people and stuff. I was such a div before I went away do you know what I mean. I just try and get involved in everything and my priorities were all over the shop. Prior to going away impressing my mates was top.

Jo: Impressing your?

Jason: Mates.

Jo: Mates.

Jason: Yeah. Definitely. That was top 100 per cent. And then it was other things, stuff like that. My family and my daughter was down. Impressing mates, earning money and then just being a prick really. And now everything's like just gone upwards do you know what I mean? That's switched round. I'm not interested in impressing my mates.

I asked Jason how that had switched and he explained it was, 'Just going to jail' so I inquired further:

Jo: How did that happen? Some people would go and they'd say it's a school for crime and that they come out worse.

Jason: Yeah some would say come out with contacts and stuff like that.

Jo: Yeah so how come that hasn't?

Jason: Just haven't let myself get into that do you know what I mean? I tell you what scares me. One of my biggest fears is spending forever in jail. That's a big fear that is.

In addition:

Yeah definitely a fear of just not seeing the family, my daughter and stuff like that. Yeah that's scary. So that could be a turning point too.

Both Jason and Simon's age-related experiences provide an insight into how this mediates the claiming of a pro-social identity and what matters to people in living crime-free. Such risk-related concerns are similar to Shover's (1985) study of ageing men, forty-years plus, who had committed property crimes in America. He reported personal shifts due to age and becoming more settled and responsible. This entailed a shift in aspirations and goals alongside a growing tiredness of a criminal lifestyle. There was a greater 'pull' of normality and personally meaningful ties to conventional others or activities. Shover proposed the *changed calculus* where the individual has a keener sense of the costs of criminal behaviour. It is the development of new and conventional commitments plus a growing fear of imprisonment that contributes to desistance from crime. Thus, he placed emphasis on a shift in personal outlook and individual agency, rather than the role of external social controls, in choosing not to engage in crime.

8.6 Growing up and becoming wiser

10/2011

A dominant theme across all the participant's life stories is a belief that they had grown up too quickly. Some described taking on responsibilities from an early age within the family environment that meant they had 'to grow up fast'. Anti-social behaviour and drug use is linked to associating with young adults who are already in the justice system or heading that way. Starting at a young age for some led to status and a belief that they were being 'clever and wise'. Nobody recalled older people in prison trying to talk them out of crime in any memorable way. Neither were strong role models or transformation stories recalled to provide a map away from a crime life. Custodial sentences at a young age, especially the first one, initially instilled fear and trepidation but were not considered to act as a deterrent. This is not surprising as all but two participants have multiple prison sentences. Many knew people in prison from their area and said they were able to 'settle in'. What is interesting is a shift that appears as stories turn to focus on how they have changed as a person over time, with age, and with transforming one's life. In different ways people refer to becoming more mature, wiser and 'an adult'.

Staff referred to people growing up, becoming more mature accompanied by a realisation, 'They're not young anymore'. This was related to transforming one's life in two ways. Firstly, a scaling down of criminal activity. Secondly, a dramatic shift that led to a pro-social, responsible, productive, 'adult' lifestyle. Turning to participants' lived experience, John considered although he was still active in crime he had become more sensible with age even though he was aware recently he had not been very 'wise':

Jo: How you've changed as you've got older?

John: Become wiser. ... I've got a little bit wiser. Yet saying that I feel I'm probably in for my most stupidest crimes right now. So I wasn't very wise just before I came in here 'cause I went and got nicked for something which needn't have happened.

For those earlier in their transformation process, and noted earlier in the thesis, was a shift in what was valued and mattered in life. Mark described how he took part in a *12-step programme* and 'things started clicking' in his head. This included not caring so much about image and no longer feeling comfortable in prison. He linked this to growing up:

It's just me, I've grown up. I feel like I've grown up you know for such a long period of time I was always stuck in that 18, 16, 17, 18 year old mode in my head. And now I feel an adult.

Mark found it hard to put his emotions into words but linked it to feeling, 'like a man' and being, 'free' from his, 'hard man image'. Having, 'had enough' and, 'wasted his life', he explained he was on the verge of finding out what he wants, what matters to him in life, who he is and who he wants to be as a person. Sam similarly reflected on his life and 'woke up' thus recognising that living the same life for 20 years and to be old and sitting in a police cell, 'isn't good'. He related such recognition to, 'just growing up a bit'. Jason said he felt free from his previous association with gangs and that he does not, 'owe anything to anybody'. He believed that going to prison played a role in his maturation as a person:

Yeah it's hard to put into words really but ... massively changed, made me feel so much more maturer. It's coming back to I know what I want now. Back then if you said to me two years ago, 'Jason what do you want?' Two years ago I would have said, 'Oh, fucking millionaire, be the biggest drug dealer in the world.' Something cocky and fucking stupid like that. If you ask me now I'll give you a sensible, achievable answer. That was two years ago when I was sort of immature.

When I met with Ryan three months after he had been released from prison he spoke about how he thought he was 'old enough' to realise that the only thing he really needs is food and somewhere to stay. He also gained a sense of achievement from being pro-

active like phoning up places to obtain employment. He felt, 'doing things in life you have to do' and taking responsibility were enabling him to mature. He believed there was still growing up he needed to do:

A growing up definitely 'cause a lot of things from a normal adult perspective rather than a ... [.....] drugged up. I'm still a kid really like because I haven't really had to grow up, you know. I went from prison from a young age and I was still pretty much in my head the same age as when I first come in having not been outside too much at a time. And so I was still quite young but maturing and accepting responsibility for things I've done. I think that's really helped me mature.

Ben believed it had taken all of his 35 years to get to where he is now and gain a knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of, 'How pro-social people work'. He recalled making a conscious decision to transform in prison and just 'grew up':

I'm tired of putting on a brave front and telling everyone it's okay when it's not, you know. It's a jacket full of lies. When I was going behind my door my head was falling off 'cause I was sitting there thinking, 'I can't do this no more'. And I did just put my hands up and said, 'You know what? You've won.' I come straight to that age where I grew up. I just grew up. I just said I'm not a child anymore. I'm 36 now. Yet I've been institutionalised since I was seven. You know what I mean, seven to 16 in boarding school, 16 to 35, 36 I've been in prison. I've done one thing one way for far too long Jo. And I'm done with it. I'm absolutely done with it.

Stuart initially responded that he did not think age played a role in him being 'in recovery'. However, later in our meeting he referred, without prompting, to age when he shared how communication with others was important in transforming his life:

I really believe that now. But you give me all that when I was younger ... 'Yeah whatever. You don't know what you're talking about old man.' Do you know what I mean? Or old woman. But yeah they're all true. Maybe coming of age as well, maturing as well.

Participants that had been crime-free for longer were less vocal about the role of growing up and maturing in their change stories than those earlier in the process. Andrew described that from leaving school to the age of 25 he treated life a joke and got used to going in and out of prison. When he got a 'big sentence' he said:

I thought to myself, 'You know what? I'm going to be 33 when I come out now.' I was only 25. I thought I'm going to be 33, 32, 33 when I come out. And I think ... matured a lot. I did a lot of thinking. I had a lot of time to think ...

Eliza described having an increased awareness that she can beat herself up and not see the good in herself that other people might see. This is something she feels she has been able to recognise because she's got older. When I asked Tom how old he felt he said about five years older than his actual age and:

I do feel, yeah, feel grown up. I don't feel carefree. I feel ... overloaded a lot of the time. And, you know, I haven't really got the time to think about how I'm feeling all the time 'cause I'm either in work mode or I'm in family mode.

Further he explained how he believed he should deal with problems and issues head on which he learnt from the *12-step programme* where, 'You got to be honest, you got to look at things head on' and you take ownership for your part:

Just being responsible. And that's why I feel old. You know what I mean, 'cause I'm doing that stuff. You know. Grown up. Looking at that stuff. Trying to do something. You know what I mean. As opposed to just, 'Oh I've got my wages so going down the fucking pub getting smashed.'

Tom identified how other people, particularly from counselling and his sponsor from the *12-step programme*, have enabled him to deal with experiences from when he was younger including early drug misuse. He observed from his current youth work how other people are still playing out his own experiences. He believed today people are more willing to go to an extreme level in their crime and drug use. Tom related this to knife stabbings and shootings reported in the press with the impact predominantly on 16 to 19-year-old black males without Fathers. He said he has to remind himself he is, 'Sort of an old man' as he will be turning 36. In our meeting he posed the question of how you empower young people to get pride in themselves when their vision of what pride is to have, 'Twenty grand in your house and a nice fat wallet every day.'

Simon, Christine and Jack referred less than other participants to age and its role in their ongoing transformation. Their approach to life, similar to Andrew and Tom, was portrayed as one of making more of life, making the best of life, embracing age, taking responsibility, thinking of others, being a productive member of society, and continuing to grow and improve their lives. Simon, Christine, Jack, Eliza, Tom and Jack had all shared their stories of transformation in their local communities. They are employed in roles to assist other people who are socially excluded. One aspect they shared of being wiser was the desire to give back to others or to society and make a positive contribution. These are features of a flourish and redemption narrative. Listening to their stories I was struck by the quality, or virtue, of wisdom and I would argue their accounts could be considered 'wisdom narratives' offering insights and hope into transforming one's life and claiming a pro-social identity.

8.6.1 Wisdom

Wisdom has had minimal consideration in the desistance literature. Le (2011) noted that wisdom and happiness have often been considered to be the fruits of a good life throughout history. Wisdom can support well-being and well-being can reciprocally give rise to wisdom. Within the literature there is no consensus on the definition or concept of wisdom. After a period of disinterest scholars have begun again to explore its adaptive value and how acquiring it may, if not lead to flourishing or happiness, at least be part of the road to it (Brugman, 2006). Age is not believed to a predictor of wisdom during adulthood or older age. Any event, argued Brugman (2006), no matter how unremarkable can trigger wisdom. Randall and colleagues (2001, 2008) have adopted a narrative approach to wisdom; they noted the importance of this quality in ageing and challenging the dominant biological-medical story of decline. They proposed a concept of ‘ordinary wisdom’ that is not age-related and is something that all people can potentially possess, access and cultivate.

“Ordinary wisdom is about finding meaning in life and suffering ... It is about accepting, owning, and valuing our lives and lifestories, including both un-lived lives and our untold stories. Ordinary wisdom does not manifest once and for all, however, but in the form of a journey. Moreover, it is a journey fraught with doubt, confusion, paradox and tension, ambivalence and fear.” (Randall & Kenyon, 2001, p. 13).

Randall & McKim (2008) noted the aspects of wisdom that a scholar sees as most salient will be linked to their particular discipline. They offered Birren & Fisher’s (1990, p. 326 cited in Randall & McKim, 2008, p. 216) definition that embraces many aspects of wisdom:

“integration of the affective, conative, and cognitive aspects of human abilities in response to life’s tasks and problems.” It is a “balance between the opposing valences of intense emotion and detachment, action and inaction, and knowledge and doubts.” While it “tends to increase with experience and therefore age,” it is “not exclusively found in old age”.

Wisdom therefore has a narrative dimension and, simultaneously, is a narrative process. It is not a once and for all achievement rather it is an unfolding journey and quest that is never completed. An important process is that of a life review where experiences are gathered into a meaningful pattern which accepts the inalterability of the past, the unknowability of the future and a detached concern with life in the face of death.

Simon, Christine, Tom, and Andrew particularly described in their stories a process of life review and ‘dealing with their demons’ to enable them to move forward from the past and claim a crime-free life and identity. This can occur spontaneously and may also be facilitated by involvement in structured activities such as rehabilitation programmes and counselling. They also developed greater self-knowledge a key means that Randall & McKim (2008) argue enable the development of one’s story and keep it open, ever expanding and ever evolving. This involves an evaluation of one’s behaviour over time that can lead to the recognition to achieve atonement and reconciliation that can lead to life repair and making amends. Thus, the life review is a means of opening up to growth, learning and transforming failures into successes. That is not to say there will be not be the challenge of resistance. Rebecca commented on her regret she had not been more open and committed when she attended a rehabilitation programme in prison:

But see if I go through my RAPT stuff there’s loads. I was reading it the other night and there’s loads of stuff in there. Loads. And I was thinking, ‘My God Rebecca’ do you know what I mean? Even though I’m 34, I still, that’s bad like really. It’s not nice the life I’ve led. When I actually look back and read it I was thinking, ‘God you could have put a lot more in there really.’ If I’d have opened right up. Do you know what I mean. When I sit and really think about it. ... Yeah, it’s bad. Do you know what I mean. It’s sad really.

This highlights the importance of *openness*, another key component of wisdom, to people, support, interventions and opportunities to become and remain crime-free. Hence, there is the possibility of becoming wiser by looking at our own life stories and listening to others. Randall & Kenyon argued even lives that can be considered tragic may possess an integrity and wisdom of their own.

Larger narratives in the environment also have their own wisdom that shape personal wisdom and therefore, at least in part, wisdom is socially constructed (Randall & Kenyon, 2001). Examples of this are religion, intervention programmes, family story and the community story. Randall & Kenyon (2001) noted the importance of a ‘wisdom environment’ that is conducive to exploring, celebrating and evoking ordinary wisdom or eliciting wisdom stories. This can be achieved through the process of coauthoring which naturally happens when we share and listen to stories. Thus, other people are crucial for the emergence of wisdom. This highlights the relational aspect to transformation and the need for a broader menu of stories to be shared to enable others to benefit from their wisdom.

8.7 Summary

This chapter focused on exploring the role of ageing in the narratives of people who have criminal convictions and of staff working within criminal justice agencies. I identified three public narrative forms of age-related change: *old enough*, *young enough* and *any age*. For those earlier in the transformation process, in their mid-twenties and thirties, a sense of being *too old* for a criminal lifestyle was explored. Through the consideration of *time* and *physicality* the influence of the dominant narrative of ageing decline in Western Society became apparent. A more active embodied *embracing of age* and the body-self was identified as a process that aids transformations and challenges this dominant narrative. Consideration was given to shifts in personal *mental outlook* and the *risks* associated with continued criminal activity and the notion of maturing through *growing up and becoming wiser*. Finally, a narrative conception of *wisdom* was introduced that provides a potentially useful lens with which to understand the process of transformation and enduring change. This highlights the relational component and the importance of environments that can cultivate wisdom. Attention now turns to the question of how people keep going and remain crime-free over the long term.

CHAPTER NINE: KEEP GOING

9.1 Introduction

“A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going.*” (Giddens, 1991, p. 54)

In this chapter I explore the meaning of “success” and the processes in sustaining a crime-free life and adaptive narrative identity. This is informed by the resilience theoretical framework that asks how people sustain health and psychological well-being in a dynamic and challenging environment (Zautra, Hall & Murray, 2010). Resilience can be considered more than just an absence of negative identity, behaviours, and experiences as this in itself does not guarantee ‘a good life’. Through the thematic analysis of staff interviews and the holistic-content analysis of the stories of Simon, Christine, Jack, Andrew, Tom, and Eliza, who have been crime-free for a longer period of time (12 months to over nine years) I consider two key questions, firstly, what does it mean to live well? This explores the *meaning of success and ‘a good life’* for staff and participants. Secondly, how do people keep going? Six resilience, or positive/adaptive coping, processes were broadly identified: *agency/mastery; relatedness; awareness and identity; religious coping; perseverance, persistence, patience;* and *humour*. These are illustrated through from participants’ stories through vignettes and quotes. Integral to these processes is the ability of participants to maintain, sustain and ‘grow forward’ with one’s (re)constructed or re-storied narrative identity.

9.2 Meaning of success and ‘a good life’

This section explores the question *what does it mean to live well?* Within Chapter Seven, Claiming an Adaptive Identity, the narrative types *cope* and *flourish* referred to a sense of ‘living’ and ‘to live’ rather than battling, fighting, existing and surviving. Additionally within Chapter Six, Spirituality, I outlined the importance of a shift in what matters to people in the transformation process. Revised life goals for those trying to change their lives included a job, home, quality time with friends and family, simple things, being honest, crime-free and drug-free. In this section I re-present staff views followed by participants to show the public and personal narratives of success and a good life in relation to desisting from crime.

9.2.1 Staff meanings of success

I asked staff if they knew of any success stories and often only one or two were clearly recounted. Many of these were young or older adults or people on their first sentence. Quite often success stories turned into accounts of failure, how progress in ‘the right direction’ was observed only for the staff member to hear later on that the person had returned to prison. A consistent comment was, ‘Only the odd one or two really make that break.’ For example, a PEI responded when I asked if he’d seen any successes:

... Well I keep thinking I’m seeing successes and then for some reason there’s usually a little hiccup later on down the line. ... I could probably say there’s maybe two lads names that I could think of that, as far as I know, have left the prison and continued to stay out.

Staff that worked in prisons and probation spoke of adjusting their expectations and enthusiasm for success. This was related to dealing with disappointment and discouragement from seeing people return to prison time after time. There was a view that for individuals with limited capabilities and resources success would be very hard to obtain. They were sometimes referred to as ‘too risky’ or ‘no hoppers’. The prospect for those with many convictions was not considered great as one PEI commented in relation to what he termed ‘habitual criminals’:

There ain’t no successes. Nah. They will always be back. It may take the police three, four, five years to catch them but they will always be back. And you can see it in them that they will always be back.

Alongside this I was struck how staff consistently spoke of ‘never giving up’ on people. In defining success some staff considered there was not enough focus on small changes in a positive direction. A senior manager who had worked in both probation and prisons commented, ‘I think we are too focused on all or nothing. I don’t think life is like that for anybody.’ It was not just about stopping crime but also less serious and frequent criminal activity. A PEI commented in relation to physical activity interventions:

It depends how you measure success. I suppose I think if there’s any element that they take away from here, no matter how small, that changes their life in any positive way then that’s a success.

And a Probation Support Officer supported this view:

I think ... not necessarily getting them drug or alcohol free, but just a realisation of understanding what their motivations are, why they did it, trying to make some sort of changes. Just any little changes is something really. And for them to have a belief that they don’t always have to be like that. That it can be different I think. I don’t ask for an awful lot [slight laugh]. But I want their expectations to change, I want them to see that there’s more. And they’re so capable of doing it. It’s that that I want them to see.

Success was commonly viewed as *living a law-abiding life and being a productive member of society*, for example:

Jo: What I was interested in is what you would see as success?

PEI: Oomph ... umm ... somebody just leaves the establishment perhaps and actually uses what they've got and puts that into practice to lead a law-abiding life. Somebody that I think, more interestingly, is if you know the background of the individuals that you have on your learning programme, and some of them have never been in work or went to school. Somebody that then goes through your learning programme and then you could follow up and actually see him in a working environment contributing to society. Living a law-abiding life that would be success.

There was no 'one thing' given as a reason for success and often a mixture of 'things', individually-based, were cited including:

- Family background
- Move geographical area
- Right time and some luck
- Use support/sentence and multi-agency working
- Want a better life and believe can have it
- Have accommodation
- Change social circle and have good relationships
- Connect with a good role model
- Education, training, employment
- Openness to suggestions/new experiences
- Had enough/see the benefits of giving up crime.

Length of time crime-free was not often referred to. One Probation Officer considered success would be evidence of no involvement in crime for at least one year. A SOPEI suggested after 10 years crime-free someone could potentially be declared 'non-criminal'. All staff viewed success as broader than just stopping criminal activity. It was about fulfilling potential, being a better person, having a better life. This contrasts with the 'official' definition of recidivism, official reconviction statistics, used for measuring performance and evaluating rehabilitative efforts. The staff perspective reminded me of my own experience at the start of this study - an awareness of how failure stories predominate and gradual change is portrayed as the normative route to changing one's life.

9.2.2 Participants meanings of success and a good life

05/05/2010

My first meeting with Andrew and as I'm explaining the study I mentioned that one of my assumptions is that a criminal lifestyle could be considered unhealthy living. Andrew pulled a face that suggested he did not agree. This was the first time someone begged to differ. I asked him what he thought and he told me that he did not think this was necessarily so as some people may consider it to be way of living and not unhealthy. This reminded me that for some success was living at all and how a crime life can have a 'survivalist' feel for the person living in that lifestyle. As we spoke I was struck how his story emphasises gradual rather than dramatic change. Andrew has been crime-free for a year whereas Simon, Christine and Jack have been crime-free for longer. I wonder about the impact of length of time being crime-free. Andrew shared he can still understand why people commit certain crimes and it's only now he is 'out of the madness' he sees it differently saying he saw it as normal when he was in it.

I asked Simon, Christine, Jack, Andrew, and Tom how they viewed success and if they saw themselves as a success. Andrew defined successful living in similar terms to staff relating to inclusion in society and the views of others:

I think successful living to me is living life on life's terms. Living life correctly you know. Not breaking the law, becoming a part of the community you know and people saying, 'Yeah he is a part of the, he is a person in the community.' 'He's not a toe rag. He's not a person who goes to jail every year. He's somebody who looks after his wife and takes care of people and is polite.' Yeah of course I want that. And I think slowly it's coming. It takes time you know. People don't forget overnight. I know that. I understand that.

Simon viewed success as being able to keep going and pondered carefully about whether he was a success. He spoke about how, in a complex way, he is a success as from 'the outside' he has a good job however the meaning for him was broader. Simon shared that with his focus on work and study his family can get neglected and so he has intentionally been spending more time with them, especially his youngest child, to ensure they have experiences together. I asked him what he saw as failing and he responded:

... Giving up. I always say that my philosophy is you only fail if you've given up. Yeah. Because even if you have done something and it hasn't worked it's not a failure because there's something to learn from it. It's only failed when you just give up. In terms of family, failure is, you know, if time isn't focused on the family as it should, based on them, that's a failure.

Christine similarly linked success to both work and her children:

Christine: I do. I do. I do. I do see myself ... I do see my ... self as a success. I feel ... that, ... I ... yeah, I do. I do. I do you know. ... Yeah. I do [laughs]. When I think about it, I do, yeah.

Jo: In what way does that

Christine: I do just for the fact of how my life has turned around. How I'm back in the prison and able to work with women. And how working with the women also helps to ground me and remind me that that's what you could go back to if you're not careful, you know. I see it sort of like with my children, evidence in their lives, you know. And, yeah, I do, in little things. Don't get me wrong sometimes I can slip into beating myself up but it's not for very long [short laugh].

And Tom viewed his life as a success:

Yes. Possibly. I do. ... I do see my life as a success. You know. All I wanted was to stop using, and all I really wanted, deep down, my core beliefs, I just wanted to settle down with a decent woman, have a couple of decent kids, you know, and be able to provide for them. And not be too hard on myself. I got so much more than that.

Participants' views of success were also linked to views of a good life. This is informed by Western society's stories of good living. Although I did not explicitly ask Eliza if she considered herself a success she expressed in the future she wishes to carry on enjoying her job, progress to a 'certain level', have greater job stability, earn a decent salary, and have a life outside of work. Jack assessed his life in relation to society's values:

Jack: Oh yeah it is good in the way that world says is good, I've got three lovely kids, lots of friends, drugs worker, even though I don't want to be I'd leave it tomorrow to do other stuff but

Jo: What's the other stuff?

Jack: My Christian stuff really. [...] trying to find my way and that doesn't mean I'm right 'cause people would preach you are doing your Christian stuff in your job you know. There's all different ways of looking at ministry but, you know, I've gone part time because I was on a 21 grand a year job going up to 50, 60 and I jacked it in and went part time 'cause it don't interest me. Everyone there is just talking about money, bigger houses, bigger cars, bigger gardens, better clothes, bigger iPods, smaller iPods, whichever way it is these days, bigger tellies. I just got rid of my telly, got a little teeny one. I just, it doesn't mean anything it never has but ...

I asked Simon what it means to him to live a good life he thoughtfully commented:

... Umm ... to be able to do things that make me feel good in myself. Like the things we're talking about. To be able to train, to be able to study and my faith. To spend time with my family and ... I know that's very important.

Christine described:

For me what I see as a good life is for me to be able to just provide simple food, go to work, for me to be honest, for me to be able to be content, I pray for this, content in who I am not what I do.

And:

... just appreciating little things, simple things. Sometimes I forget and I then have to come right back and say gratitude, you know. Sometimes I forget but once I stay doing what I do, I pray, it brings me back. It kind of humbles me and brings me back to reality. And I find all that good. Just the most simple ... things is a good life

[laughs]. This good life. I have to keep bringing it back to simple. Keep it simple. I find it good that I can see my kids changing. You know, silly little things. Within all this success and a good life was not tied to simply whether they had reoffended or not. It was so much more than this and more than what the Western world might sometimes prescribe as success or a good life too. Bottoms et al. (2004) stated that if people are looking forward to a more positive life then it is important to explore empirically the content of those positive hopes. This is related to a continuum of conformity as well as personal and social identities. They ask what models there are for successful adulthood in a British society or a given group within this society. The American Dream is legendary and they ask if there is an equivalent 'English dream' to which people aspire. They noted in their research on desistance that one dream is a not-too-onerous but safe job with a stable company, enough money, some consumer luxuries, a steady partner and possibly children. The stories of Christine, Simon, Jack, Eliza, Andrew and Tom indicated broader dreams and values.

Their comments have affinity with the strengths-based theoretical approach to rehabilitation of the Good Lives Model (GLM) developed by Ward & Colleagues (Laws & Ward, 2011; Ward, 2002; Ward & Gannon, 2006; Ward & Maruna, 2007; Ward & Stewart, 2003). Its premise is that people who have criminal convictions are human beings with similar aspirations and life goals to other members of the community. Specifically it argues there are meaningful human goods that all human beings are striving to achieve such as knowledge; relationships (intimate, romantic, family and community); mastery experiences (in work or leisure); healthy living; sense of belonging; meaning and purpose; happiness; creativity; and autonomy. However people with criminal convictions have not necessarily had the skills, opportunities or resources to gain them in a pro-social way. Its strength is that it examines the relationship between criminogenic needs and human needs and focuses on positive ways of living, personal identity, and viewing people as complex beings. It is a complement, rather than opposed, to risk-focused approaches. The development of the theory is relatively recent and rapid over the past decade and its core assumptions have evolved over that time. Presently few evaluations or empirical evidence are available to support its core components. What it emphasises is that a coherent, integrated life plan that is tied realistically to a person's abilities, preferences and living environment is likely to result in higher levels of well-being and the judgment that their life is of value. In this way the conception of good lives is context-dependent and there is no such thing as the right kind of life for an individual across every conceivable setting (McMurran & Ward, 2004).

What the staff and participants highlight in this study, and the GLM promotes, is that success as measured by crime reduction is only a part of the story in transforming one's life. Broader societal and cultural conceptions of success and what a good life means to people informs how they story their identity: who they are, who they want to be, and values about life and living. The other part of the story therefore concerns how to live a better life. This supports the argument to consider approaches to well-being, adaptive coping and flourishing as well as risk management in supporting people to desist and transform a criminal life and construct a pro-social identity.

9.3. How to keep going: role of resilience

04/2012

I initially titled this chapter keeping going. However I noted that my supervisor closed his encouraging e-mails messages when feeding back on this thesis with 'keep going'. I realised this term was more apt.

I asked staff what factors they considered keeps people going in desisting from crime. It became apparent this is a difficult question to answer as most staff working in prison and probation do not continue to have long-term contact with people who show enduring change in their lives. Two points raised were how the person deals with situations to not relapse back into criminal or drug-using behaviour and continuing to want a better life. This highlights the dimensions of the will to be crime-free and the mechanisms involved in sustaining this change in managing setbacks and obstacles. Within this section I firstly summarise briefly the resilience framework. Secondly, I aim to convey through quotes and vignettes based on participant's stories some of the key processes in maintaining transformation.

9.3.1 Resilience framework

The domain of resilience shares a common ground with the desistance approach even though they were developed separately (Robertson, Campbell, Hill & McNeill, 2006). The major pioneers in this area are Garnezy, Rutter and Werner. Much academic work to understand the factors and processes that affect resilience are mainly located within developmental psychology or psychopathology frameworks and a minority have adopted a social constructionist stance (Hill, Stafford, Seamen, Ross & Daniel, 2007). The consensus of opinion among scholars is that the construct resilience has had varied meanings and definitions. Incorporated in most humans is the capacity to 'self-right' or to 'bounce-back' from adversities and for plasticity in changing and adapting (Davis, 1999).

There have been calls from academics for a process approach to the study of resilience which is based on viewing it not as a fixed attribute but as one that can emerge later in life despite earlier problems with coping. Different models of resiliency have been proposed such as the compensatory model, the challenge model, and the protective factor model. Padesky (2007) reported that with regard to characteristics of resilient individuals there are six areas of competence (adapted from Davis, 1999): physical (good health, easy temperament); spiritual (meaning in life, connection with humanity and environment); moral (make a contribution, engage in useful tasks); emotional (emotional regulation, delay gratification, humour); relational (trust, make and keep good friends, empathy); and cognitive (see other viewpoints, plan, problem-solve, self-understanding, adaptive appraisal). Just two or three pathways may be sufficient to be 'resilient' and, as Bonanno (2004) noted, there are multiple pathways to resilience rather than a single one. One myth Padesky highlighted that can prevent the fostering of resiliency is to label and dismiss a person as, 'loser', 'addict', or 'not get better'. Hence, resilience encourages a focus on change as always possible and a move from risk, deficit and pathology to include 'self-righting' capacities.

Hauser, Allen & Golden (2006) argued that great effort has been made to define protective factors, which are circumstances and personal attributes associated with recovery from illness or tragedy. Yet lists cannot describe *how* some individuals are able to manage and sometimes emerge stronger from experiences that destroy others. Adopting a narrative approach Hauser et al. noted the importance of ongoing acts of sense-making that occurs in personal narratives. They asked to what extent the ways people think and rethink their lives and the stories they tell themselves contribute to the way they deal with their circumstances. In their study they found that former 'troubled teenagers' had grown up and managed to integrate and transcend their earlier experiences through the resilience triad of agency, relationships and self-awareness. One way they could grasp how people create and maintain meaning over time was through hearing the stories people tell about themselves.

Similarly, in a different context, Denham (2008) explored the narratives of resilience of American Indian families in an ethnographic study. One resilience process identified was forming a coherent narrative to overcome difficulties and sense-making in order to rebuild a shattered identity. Albert (2007) studied the lives of four former gang members in the US through in-depth interviews exploring the characteristics and components of resilience that aided them to leave their gangs and forge productive lives. Common themes included perseverance, optimism, humour, a desire to reach out

to others and give back, empathy, compassion, hardiness and resolve. Albert identified three resilience characteristics: internal locus of control (being in charge and responsible for one's life); meaning and purpose (having a compelling reason and vision for the future to stay committed); and a positive relationship with a caring adult or mentor that acted as an anchor and lifeline for continued success. Finally, Runggay (2004) conceptualised desistance for women as a readiness to reform or desist from crime. She proposed that strategies of resilience are additional, creative methods of supporting and sustaining conventionality. Without these women may become trapped in unrewarding conventional arrangements to avoid a return to deviance rather than for its intrinsic satisfaction. Thus, resilience emerges as resourcefulness in coping rather than invulnerability to such hardships and is a capacity which can be learned and developed.

With this framework in mind I considered how resilience processes help maintain transformation. In Chapter Five I discussed the role of physical activity in managing emotions and gaining mastery. In this chapter I explore the 'resilience triad' of agency, relationships and awareness. The latter I expanded to include identity. Three other prominent processes were: religious coping; perseverance, persistence, patience; and humour.

9.3.2 Agency/mastery

At the core of agency and quest for mastery is the belief that you can influence your environment (Hauser et al., 2006). It is about trying things out, being purposeful, a feeling of personal control and ability to direct one's life. When Andrew spoke how probation staff and his wife were important in him changing he also said that felt he needed to give himself credit for the work he had put in and ultimately it was him that kept himself out of prison. Simon displayed one of the strongest examples of agency and mastery in his story of enduring transformation, particularly though his use of the words 'drive' and 'focus':

I think for me is just a belief that if I focus it will happen. It was really just a choice that I made in terms of when I decided I was going to study and work my mind and I was going to focus on the spiritual side of things with my faith, I decided in terms of my physical training as well. After reviewing my life I thought, 'Yes, that is I how think I can contribute something positive after all of this'. I thought okay that is what I am gonna do. When I get out of prison I would love either to do some work with ex-offenders or people with drug addiction or mental health issues or somewhere in those areas. That is what I would like to do, something where I can relate to some of the stuff I have been through.

Education played a prominent role in Simon gaining and maintaining a sense of mastery and competence. When I asked him about the role of education he told me it was, ‘A long old story’. He commented he was a person who had a drive to study and actively planned and pursued how to get qualifications. This, he said, ‘Required real drive’. The vignette below provides a brief version of Simon’s longer study story:

I’ve done a lot of stuff. I haven’t not studied since I started in 1997 when I was in prison. I always jokingly say when people always ask me about why I’m always studying, ‘Well I need to balance things. My criminal record is this high so I need my academic record to be at least this high’. I focused on the fitness courses and qualifications when I was in prison. They were available and linked in with the community and I gained both qualifications and work experience. I would design activities and I thought sport is a great way to engage with young people and ex-offenders. There was a training course that had a volunteer element to it and I sent my CV and an opportunity opened up. So all of that stuff I learnt through the sports was the thing that got my foot in the door because I had that knowledge to be able to teach. It sort of went from there. I just thought I’m going to put everything into all of them. Study, physical training and faith. That’s how it’s continued. For me they’re the important parts. After I came out of prison I did a Masters and then I was looking at other courses. I was talking to a Church Minister and he talked about this MA missionary leadership course. I asked and he gave me more information and I thought that sounds really interesting. I started it when I was in the second part of my masters. I’ve just handed in my other Masters dissertation and graduated too. Now I have to complete this course and my aim is to try and finish it next year. Then I’ll look next to do a Doctorate. That’s why I need to finish this course and then it will take me 5 years to do that if I focus. Then it’s going to be something really focused around ministry, consulting, and community based support work. The study is a family thing. My Dad has always studied and his brother. So in one sense it’s like I’ve still been able to achieve this even though all of that has happened. In another sense, if I’m honest, there’s an obsessiveness with anything I do. There’s always lots going on and if I wasn’t doing this I would be doing something different.

Temptations for Simon were less about drugs and crime and rather about legal offers of work that are money focused and not consistent with other values in his life. To deal with these he reminds himself, ‘I need to stay focused’. Agency was also illustrated in the routine Simon has established in his life. His weekly routine varies but consists of working, spending time with his family, studying, and going to the gym six or seven times a week. Simon summed up, ‘It’s a lifestyle I have taken from that whole focus and it’s continued. It’s just a routine I have now got myself doing and I have just continued to do. It just happens now really.’ A routine and structure to living was also highlighted as important by Tom in ongoing desistance:

Then it all became easier ‘cause I had daily structure. Three days a week I was working and I trained for three days as well. I got into a relationship with my daughter’s Mum. I’m still training, still fighting, and I had daily structure. Which is what you need. I was able to look after myself and I had good people around for me who’d given me a chance. I was running the football and doing the football sessions on all different estates in town. I just kept really busy. Really, really busy. Packed a lot in. I’ve packed so much in.

Tom shared now it is a case of continuing to put all that he has learnt into practice and, 'Just doing it.' Christine illustrated the notion of personal control when she told me how she brings things into her life slowly now. She shared a story of buying a treadmill and gradually building up the time she ran on it rather than going to an extreme. She chooses to do things gradually, partly because of her fear of how easy it is to go back to drugs and crime, but also because she feels she has a choice:

And for me I've learnt that even now, is where I'm at now, it's not where I'm gonna stay, you know. I've got choice. I feel I've got choices now whereas years ago I didn't feel I had a choice at all.

9.3.3 Relatedness

Relationships with family, friends as well as assistance from services, agencies and organisations continued to play a role in enduring transformation. This can be a source of support but also tension to be managed or coped with. Christian faith and Church provided Christine, Jack and Simon with social support and awareness to know that they are not on their own and religious coping is explored later in this section. An area to shift was the presence of 'good' people. Simon referred to one main difference is that he is actually with his family now whereas before he was never there. He described that most of his friends have a faith or are doing positive things. He does not see a lot of the people he used to 'hang out with' when he was involved in crime and has, 'More family focus'. Simon however found that being on probation license for over three years caused frustrations that he had to manage. Firstly, being in the probation office when others moaned about being on license for a few months. Secondly, 'a wakeup call' after forgetting an appointment where he was warned he was still serving a sentence and could be sent back to prison. He referred to this as a, 'Rude awakening' as he felt he'd moved forward and questioned the necessity for that approach. Simon stated that he now uses that experience to understand the frustration of clients with whom he currently works. Christine did not identify probation as being a source of support in her story rather she described support from particular people helps her maintain change:

Whilst in the rehab there was a lady that used to come and do bible studies and I connected with her and I can phone her up anytime. When anything comes up I can talk to her about whatever and she doesn't judge me. She doesn't say, she just listens. And then she'll bring things, she may say one word and then things start clicking in and I think, 'Oh'. I don't think she realises what a good counsellor she is but she works for me. She doesn't know she's doing it and I've told her she does it. But it works for me, my hidden fears I can say to her, I get it out. And I tested her with little bits, 'Oh how's she going to look at me now?' and tested her again with a little bit more. And she's safe [laughs] she's safe. So I've got that. Don't get me wrong I've got a lot of friends in my work I can talk to. A lot of people that I could go to but I choose not to. I

talk to my manager about my kids 'cause I look at her kids and I know that she's showing me different things or saying to me, 'Okay why don't you try this'. So I go to her. But with my other friend, my personal stuff inside I'll expose it to her so that's my main support there. I haven't got any counsellors. In our job you can get counsellors so maybe I could get a counsellor if I wanted to. I don't think there's any harm in that. I don't know why I haven't done it. It's not something I've thought of. I thought of a bereavement counsellor when one of my older children died but I believe I'm working through it the way I bereave. And again if all of a sudden I start thinking about it I've got another friend that I can phone up and say 'Oh I was thinking about it, got tearful, felt a bit guilty about the past' and let it go. So there is different people that I can phone up.

Andrew spoke of the support he had gained from the prolific offender unit who early on introduced him to activities that enabled him to structure his life and develop interests in fishing and gardening. He actively talked about accepting and making use of help and the services that were available to him. This seems particularly crucial to sustain the early phases of changing. He described how assistance from drug agencies and counselling helped him to address issues from his childhood and that he accessed support and services at the right time for him. This gave him the confidence and courage to face things. In relation to ongoing change he no longer seeks contact with associates from his crime life:

If someone is trying to talk negative to me I just shut them out and walk away ... you know I haven't got time for people like that no more. Whether that's right or wrong I don't know. But I think that if I was still to have acquaintances in my old circle I wouldn't be where I am today 'cause peer pressure is a big thing. I still see some of my old acquaintances but I just don't have nothing to do with them. I'll be polite to them, I'll say hello but I don't stop and have conversations with them. I don't want to know what they're doing, I don't want to know where they're going. And if they ask me about anything in my life I just say, 'To be honest it's nothing to do with you.' I leave it like that. I'm not nasty towards the people who are still in the madness because I know what it's like to be there. I feel sorry for them if I'm honest. Just like people probably felt sorry for me when I was in the madness.

The support he gains from his wife also plays a crucial role in not taking risks:

Jo: Are you aware you're getting in a position where you might do that now?

Andrew: No err

Jo: or have you had any experience?

Andrew: Not only that you know ... I've learnt by my mistakes, you know and now if I can't see myself heading for a fall my wife can. You know and she can say to me, 'You know what Andrew ...' and I can say, 'Well okay. I'll think about what you said to me.' And then we discuss everything, we talk about everything. There's nothing she doesn't know about me I don't know about her. So it's good thing.

An openness to pro-social others and constructive support incorporated, over time, a shift from being about crime to being about everyday relationships. This was key for Tom in maintaining change:

I've got old friends in my phone that are still out there using but I don't really have nothing in common with them. Nothing to say. And that's it. Most of my friends are all in recovery. When I first come round nearly all my friends were in recovery and then over the years your circle gets smaller. People have gone off and used, some have died, they get married, they get jobs. At times it's just been my higher power, my recovery and me. And now it's my recovery, my family, my higher power. As the years go past my involvement with my sponsor is still deep but it's not continuous every day. I see or speak to him on the phone most weeks. It's not like when you first come on and they're your crutch sort of thing. It's got to be very tight and then as you can do it more on your own ... it just changes. The relationship just evolves and changes really. You are just more accountable for your own actions. Now it's not about drugs and crime. It's about me as a person and about relationships with other people and how I think about myself and how I react to people. If I'm not alright with myself how can I react to people in a good manner? It's not about the drugs itself they're the end result. When people relapse it's because it's their thoughts and feelings they're not dealing with. They don't deal with that so they revert back to what they know. But the relapse has happened months, weeks before because they're not honest enough to deal with what's going on. They're not telling no one 'cause you're disease always wants you isolated, stops you from speaking to people and going to meetings, starts filling you up with guilt and shame. The next thing you're using 'cause that's how you deal with it. It is kind of a battle. It's not about using it's about how I am with other people.

Tom described how after a few years crime and drug-free he stopped going to NA meetings and thought he could do it on his own. He found he, 'just got more insane' in his head and came to the realisation he needs it for the rest of his life to 'stay clean'. Tom also sought counselling briefly a year before we met to assist him through a period of negative feelings and thoughts. Tom still feels a gap in his life is the type of guidance and role models that some people get from their parents. Jack also described struggles around relationships and part of his ongoing progression is to manage and learn to deal with relationships that he finds a challenge. On the other hand, Jack spoke positively of his children and building the bond he has with them as well as striving for 'unity' with his wife. Relationships from the past can also be a point of difficulty. Christine at our third meeting described a visit with her children to see their Dad who was in prison. He tried to get her to take a number to get drugs into the prison and she refused and told him that she doesn't that live life anymore.

Similar to Hauser et al.'s (2006) study the place of relationships and the ability to remain removed from negative influences and to form caring relationships is crucial in sustaining transformation. Participants were able to actively respond to positive people, agencies and organisations in a pro-active way and had the resources to take advantage of it. This generally meant a smaller but pro-social circle of 'good people'.

9.3.4 Awareness and identity

Hauser et al. (2006) described awareness as the ability to reflect and manage one's thoughts and feelings. Reflection, in their view, was more than noticing what one feels, it is an effort to make sense out of feelings and the ability to think about one's thought processes more productively. This links to agency and mastery. It is about being aware of one's self and issues and not necessarily acting on it but making active efforts to learn to manage. This involves a honing of skills where effort is not wasted on just hoping to escape the rigours of life. Christine spoke insightfully about her awareness that her 'old ways' can come up but over time she has found she can no longer 'automatically slip into them' without thinking. This is linked closely to her sense of identity and she spoke firmly that it is because she is not who she was anymore that her old ways don't 'fit her' like they did before. This is an ongoing process that she believes will never stop. This is complemented by her awareness of her purpose in life, firstly that she has one and secondly that her life has value. She is conscious that her reward is still moving forward, being challenged and stretched. Key to this, and linked to agency, was taking more responsibility and ownership rather than blaming. The process of awareness and identity is shown below in Christine's story of managing stigma:

You can look at the stigma, which yes it's true the past but they can't deny the truth of what I am now. So it's there. It's not manufactured, it's real. They can't deny the truth. And when anybody says anything about my past. It's like when I buried my child, the one that I didn't bring up for 11 years, my brother said 'Oh you was a rotten mother, you was this, you was that, you put your drugs first, you put men first, you put thieving first, blah, blah, blah'. And I had to listen to that 'cause everything he said was true. But it's not what I am now. I said 'What you're saying is true but it's not who I am now'. I think all the stigma and that I think you got work through it yourself. 'Cause when you're able to work through it then whatever outside throws at you it don't matter 'cause you've worked through it and you're open, you're able to talk about it. So it can't have me no more 'cause it's not a secret. It's not hidden. I'm free from it 'cause it's not a secret no more, I can talk about it and it's not who I am it's what I was. For me in my story, in my life, I've always tried to change the outside and thinking that from once the outside is okay that everything's alright. But what I know now is that the foundation is built on the inside. For once I'm real and honest about what's going on with me as much as I can identify it. Then I'm more safe and I'm in a strong place.

Eliza spoke about her awareness of how work has helped her and writing plays a specific role in helping her to manage the way she feels and expressing herself more effectively. Eliza described herself as resilient, calmer and settled in a routine but recognises ongoing struggles to manage negative feelings and tensions. She reflected that she may benefit from further counselling but does not yet feel ready. Eliza mentioned at one time she thrived on traumatic things happening and saw herself as good at dealing with disaster and chaos. However she feels she'd like more personal

control and still has things to learn in life. Andrew described his awareness he's still learning to live crime and drug-free. He has learnt he does not need to go out and commit crime nor need drugs to live life. He is aware of how his views have shifted and is learning from his mistakes. Simon also displayed awareness and linked this to feeling he was at a crossroads in his life at the time we met:

It's a funny stage, it's another turning point. The last six months or so it's been difficult in a sense because I feel that I've reached a point where I had that vision when I was in prison, I feel I've kind of reached there now. I'm sort of waiting for the, 'So now what?' Having had the challenge of having experienced and learnt all of this how does that now fit for the future? I'm at a point now where my future's not as clear as it has been. ... In one sense I'm okay with it in another sense it's difficult. It's this struggle again between spirituality and independence. It's difficult for me 'cause I like to know. But in a sense it's not because I'm supposed to be just handing it over and just trust it and just doing what I feel I should be doing and then it will all be revealed at some point. ... It's difficult. I'm looking back at the moment. I'm just spending a lot of time just thinking and just really looking back on different things and saying so what's the learning in that? Are there any clues there for my future plans? Eventually it will show itself to me then I can say, 'Now I understand why that had to happen'. Now it's the waiting to find out what that's all about. From past experience I've had I know something's going to happen 'cause it's always like this at those transition phases. It's always sort of just waiting.

Jack's awareness informed his identity in that he feels his dramatic conversion freed him to stop living a lie and be the 'nice person' he was really 'deep down.' Alongside this he is aware of continuing to grow and learn. Tom similarly spoke of the role of self-awareness in keeping him going:

You get more self-aware. A lot of the wrongs you can put right straight away. You're changing your behaviour so you're doing the exact opposite to what you was doing before. So that you're not doing it just for one day, you're just constantly doing it and applying honesty and mindedness and willingness in all aspects of your life. So you don't steal, you don't cheat, you don't lie to people, you don't manipulate people, you just do what you have to do and go home and try not to upset people. If you have upset someone you make direct amends. If you don't you just get resentful and it's their fault. It's not what they've done it's how you react to it. So you're accountable for yourself.

Tom was also acutely aware that an area of risk for him is struggling with money and paying for things. He told me he knows people in recovery who still do 'dodgy things' such as selling 'knocked off' tobacco and DVDs. He said he chooses not to do that as he gains self-respect and dignity from his job. This again linked to identity as he explained that his old life and his new life are completely separate and associating it with the person he is and continues to want to be:

I'm not a dodgy character. I'm upfront and straight.

In keeping going for Tom it is now less about making sense of the past and more about the present and trying to live in the moment, being thankful rather than worrying.

The theme of awareness and identity links to the work of Antonovsky (1987) and sense of coherence. He described that the person in the best position to manage stress is the person that can comprehend or understand events and also find meaning in them. All participants were aware of the risk of complacency and not managing temptations that they could go back to a criminal life. As all but Andrew work with people who are at risk of exclusion I was curious as to how this did or did not pose a risk. Christine summed up neatly how it aids her to keep going:

I did a lot of voluntary work. I worked in the rehab I'd been through and I did a lot of street work. I still go out on the streets now and talk to the drug dealers and addicts. I talk to them now 'cause I really believe that being still kind of close to where I come from, but not a part of it, keeps me safe. Because I'll always remember that's what you could go back to so quick. So quick. So it always keeps me safe, always keeps me in reality, it always keeps me very real.

9.3.5 Religious coping

The notion of religious, or spiritual, coping offers an explanation as to why religious individuals under strain are less likely to turn to crime in response to life's adversity than their equally strained but non (or less) religious peers (Mahoney & Pargament, 2004). This is not to promote religion as a cure, as I commented in Chapter Six, spirituality can also be linked to a continuation of crime and harmful behaviour. There is evidence religion can have a stress-buffering role by assisting coping with significant negative life events and act as a significant resilience factor for many people. Common religious coping resources are prayer, faith in God, and guidance from a pastor or minister. It is also often associated with self-efficacy and the active confrontation of problems (Heintzman & Mannell, 2003; Pargament & Cummings, 2010).

Christine described earlier that she has a person she can turn to at her Church for support who she finds non-judgmental and offers guidance and support. Faith and prayer were highlighted as key when I asked her how she has managed to overcome obstacles and difficulties in her ongoing transformation:

I pray [smiles]. It's my faith. I pray. Do you know what I mean? ... You know, I've learnt, I'm learning like. It's like in my life, right, if things didn't go my way I'd feel rejected and I start dejecting myself from, and I start isolating myself. But now I've learnt, okay if that door doesn't open I look for another door. 'Cause there's something in me, there's a passion in me and it's not going away. I know the door's going to open and it's all a matter of time and a matter of changes that need to take place in me. You know what I mean? So, I'm more patient I suppose. You know? 'Cause before it's sort of like kick the door off go and steal.

Without a higher power she does not believe that she would know how to be crime and drug free. Christine relayed the following story showing the role of faith and learning about ‘true happiness’ in her life:

I remember when I came out of the Christian rehab right and I can remember I didn't have no money. And my head was saying 'Christine you're gonna have to go out to thief to get some money'. 'Cause that's all I knew how to get money. But then I ended up finding 20 quid believe it or not. It was crazy. This is the truth, I was on the toilet at home and the electric was running out and I was in a very desperate place and I didn't have no money. I was going to have to pick the kids up from school and I didn't want to ask their Nan, their Dad's Mum, for money. Pride probably or fear I don't know. But I remember in my head saying, 'Well you can't even depend on the social security you might as well go and thief'. And then my faith came up and it was like, 'No depend on me'. This is the truth right. And then when I came out of the house I found twenty quid on the floor. It sounds mad. But there was twenty quid that got me my electric and stuff. But finances are big things for people coming out of rehab and prison and the systems not quick enough to support people. If I hadn't found that twenty quid I don't know what I might've done to be honest. What do you do? When you're struggling and you don't wanna go and thief but that's all you know how to do but you haven't got any money. It's hard. I was on benefits and I learnt how to live on the money that I had. I didn't have materialistic things but by then I knew that wasn't the most important thing. 'Cause I learnt from years back when I was a thief and I had material things that it wasn't bringing me true happiness. So I learnt how to live off benefits and just meet my needs, not my wants. ... And that kind of helped me to be happy. And I found, in a mad sort of way even now when my wages run thin, I seem to be more happy.

Faith is fundamental to Christine's identity and how she makes sense of her life and assists with other aspects of living crime-free. She explained that faith teaches her forgiveness, to love, to stop condemning herself and to keep trying. It has facilitated her coping more recently with adverse events including the death of one of her children and a serious accident.

Simon explained how faith has enabled him to progress and keep going including a challenging situation at work at the start of the current global recession and potentially losing his job. He stated:

When things don't work out for me, I just think, 'Wow, I wonder what God's got planned then?' It's normally better than the thing you didn't get. Strange.

An aspect of religious coping that seems to run contrary to the notion of agency/mastery is its role in coping with those situations where one has a lack of control or experiencing emotional distress. Simon referred to 'handing things over' to faith and to God and expressed, 'It's about handing things over that I just can't control and my own strength.' Similar to Christine and Simon, Jack described the fundamental role faith and giving testimonies has played in his on-going transformation. In Chapter Six I described his conversion story and how loss of faith played a role in his struggle after four-and-a-half

years. Support from pastors and a return to faith enabled him to ‘get back on track’ and faith plays an on-going role in his life as shown below:

Trying to work out what happens to you and giving testimonies to what happens to you. And then you listen to these testimonies three years later and think, ‘Who let me get away with saying that stuff?’ ‘Cause you grow and learn and I listen back to my testimonies on CDs from where I was first a Christian six years ago and I think, ‘Oh’. I was telling these Christians that I’ll be floating in eight years time, I found out I was on my bottom in six years. I know people who’ve been a Christian five years and they’re still struggling I thought when I’ve been a Christian that long I’ll be floating and I wasn’t. I was just about dragging myself along the floor. It’s not easy, it’s a big thing. I’ve given testimonies where it’s been simple, I was once this and now I’m not. It’s bigger than that. It’s more than that. It’s an ongoing thing.

Jack told me the story of the analogy of a fish turning into a man and how when one has experienced such a fundamental shift in their self and identity it is not as easy to return back to being a fish once that transformation has taken place. Jack also emphasised that change is not just about drugs, or just being a Christian or just ‘being straight’ rather it is ‘lots of stuff’. He noted the need for practical support alongside religion. That wanting to stop is a big part but then it is what you do about the rest of your life. This affirms the need for *working through* to maintain being crime-free as Jack commented:

Do practical stuff as well. ... Just to maintain life. ‘Cause ... I suppose even with God and even with being a Christian if you don’t treat your wife good ... you’re gonna get a divorce. If you hit your kids around you’re going to lose them. You can be a full on Christian and worshipping God but if you’re not doing practical stuff to learn about life and being around with people and learning, you’ll still have stuff going on.

Pargament & Cummings (2010) argued that two key factors as to whether someone will involve religion in the process of coping are the degree to which religion is available to the individual and the degree to which it is perceived as offering compelling solutions to the adversity experienced. In addition, they stated if someone has developed a deeper set of religious beliefs, practices, and relationships they will find faith solutions more available and compelling than others. This is particularly heightened when there are more limited social and personal resources as part of a disenfranchised group. Religiousness in this thesis has appeared as a catalyst for positive life changes and ongoing life transformation. However its power for positive transformation is balanced by its potential for serious harm and this is pertinent when spiritual struggle is experienced. There is still a great deal more to be learned about the connections between religion, spirituality, resilience, transformation and desistance from crime.

9.3.6 Perseverance, persistence, patience

Christine regarded her transformation as a progressive process over time involving learning and growth based on having faith and a passion in life that is consistent with pro-social living. She used the metaphor of life as a journey and stated she has learned patience from her faith and the acknowledgment that change takes continued effort over time to learn and develop as a person. Simon shared how in the past he recognised he was impatient as we discussed the role education played in transforming his life:

So education is a real way out. ... And then it's just real patience. Just real patience because there will be long periods of time when things seem like it's not happening and you've put lots of work in and just need to have the patience to see things through. Try to forget about short-cuts. There's no short cuts in this sort of long-term plan. There's no short cuts, you do what needs to be done.

Patience was also related to changes in his identity:

As a person I've completely changed. There's always bits you need to improve as you go on. But in certain situations I have so much more patience now. In different situations in the most frustrating situations where I would be very frustrated or angry or whatever it's so much more manageable because I know very often these things are for positive reasons as difficult as they can be sometimes. I talk to my wife sometimes and she'll say certain things where we've had some big arguments in the past and I would disappear for ages. Now I'll just take a walk around the block, come back and I'll be able to have a conversation about it and I am able to talk through those things. Whereas before I couldn't even talk about them. I'd get mad, leave and wouldn't come back for days and days and still wouldn't even talk about it when I came back.

Andrew described it has taken him the past three years to get to where he is when I met with him. He stated that patience is key as it may take him another twenty years to achieve his dreams. He stated he is not in a rush and as he is aware he has not had the best lifestyle. For Andrew it is about making the best of what he has got, live life to the full and get used to, 'Being outside properly'. His awareness of the need for persistence and perseverance over time is shown below:

I found my meaning in life. I've got a wife who I need to look after. We're trying for kids, that's another big responsibility. She's close to her Mum and her Mum's got quite a few illnesses so I tend to look after her a lot. My relationships are good. Sometimes I get stressed and that but you know what? Everybody does. It's just a way of life, but I would say that I've got no worries really. I've got a good life so I live healthy. I feel at the moment I'm where I need to be in my life ... I got my goals for this year. I've not even planned for next year. I don't want to. As I said before, I'm not somebody who plans months and weeks in advance. I try to do things day by day. But you know by the end of the year I know where I want to be and if I'm not there I'll be upset with myself but I won't be too hard on myself because I know it's a long road. I can see that, I can understand that.

Finally, Tom mentioned he would like to write a book about his experiences and I asked him what message he'd like the book to have. His response succinctly summed up the need for persistence and support:

You can do it. You can do it if you put your back into it. You can change your life. There is help out there if you want to change it. You have to get support because you can't really do it on your own.

While exploring what makes life worth living and building the enabling conditions of life Seligman (2011) refers to the work of Roy Baumeister and self-discipline. He proposed this is the queen of all virtues and the strength that enables other strengths. An extreme trait of self-discipline is GRIT defined as very high persistence and a high passion for an objective. The underlying rationale is that very high effort is caused by a personality characteristic of extreme persistence. The more GRIT you have the more time you spend on the task that multiplies progress to your goal. Key to this is deliberate practice. Hence, effort is no more and no less than how much time you practice the task. This is related to the concept of self-control. In essence, and consistent with what is described by participants in this study, practice, patience, effort, time devoted to an endeavour, self-control and GRIT are crucial in achieving a desired goal such as becoming crime-free, becoming a better person and having a better life. As Seligman commented the challenge lies in increasing understanding about building patience as well as persistence, self-control and GRIT.

9.3.7 Humour

12/06/2009
Simon spoke about his crime life in functional terms. At times, he laughed and smiled about some escapades he'd had in that lifestyle. It wasn't laughter in finding it 'funny' more a 'dark drama comedy' at how mad it all was. He became more serious when he talked about the drive he has in his life, how family and relationships matter now, and how on his last sentence he felt he'd wasted his life and needed to show something for it. Money had become a burden and being straight and no longer money-focused seems to equate to being 'free'. Simon mentioned, smiling, that in his job he has to deal with people's impatience as they feel they have wasted time and are in a hurry. He can relate to this and points out to people it does take time.

I noticed with Simon, Jack and Christine, although less so with Tom, Eliza and Andrew, when they would spoke about 'criminal escapades' there would be a short laugh and a wry smile. In different quotes throughout this thesis there have been occasions I've noted short laughs or laughs. As I transcribed the interviews I found myself thinking about what humour means. I did not find myself feeling the humour was inappropriate. I came to a rather simple conclusion that perhaps it is a way of coping with the madness

and insanity, self-inflicted or circumstantial, that we can experience in life. A sense of tragic irony that may possibly alleviate negative feelings. That is, laugh or go mad. Research has shown that resilience has been associated with the ability to regulate emotions, increase positive emotions and the use of humour to cope well (Bonanno, 2004; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004; Brewer, 2009). The capacity to find appropriate humour in past and present events is key to living positively, particularly if it used creatively and involves taking a detached, ironic stance (Bluglass, 2007). Such research has shown that positive emotions can help reduce levels of distress by quieting or undoing negative emotion and increasing contact and support from important people in the social environment. However, as Bonanno (2004) commented, laughter in the context of a socially stigmatised issue may predict better adjustment but also potentially carry social costs. This remains an under-researched area in desistance from crime.

9.4. Seeking balance

What became evident from speaking with participants who had been crime-free for a longer period of time is that current challenges, stagnation, frustration, life's ups and downs, was not necessarily the risk of reverting to crime or drugs but rather depression, self-harm and suicide. A key current issue, one that reflects perhaps a general current Western existential crisis or goal, was finding balance in their lives. This issue was mentioned by all except Andrew who described himself as still working on being outside 'properly'. Christine summed this up neatly relating it to the need for hobbies bringing back into perspective the role of leisure and physical activity in staying crime-free:

Now I'm looking at getting a balance 'cause I need to find a life. I need a life out of work, of being a Mum. I need another life now so I'm trying to look for balance in it. Because even on a Friday I go out on the streets doing outreach and stuff. I go to NA meetings but within that I need to find something. I haven't found it yet. I don't do anything. Hobbies. I love running and I've got a treadmill that I use at home. ... I used to, in school, like painting and drawing so maybe that's something I can look at. I don't know when I'd do it. It's finding the time but I bet it's important. My heads telling me I should be doing that but right now I'm not doing something for me. I think for me everything happens really slow and I have to wait until that's okay and then I can add something else. I can't add too much 'cause I kinda lose it. So maybe slowly.

9.5 Summary

This chapter explored the meaning of success and a good life to staff and participants. Consistently this was more than being crime and drug-free. It was being a better person and living a better life. This highlighted the need to consider support for pro-social well-being and adaptive coping to complement risk and deficit-focused approaches. Six resilience processes were identified that played a role in supporting enduring desistance and the dilemma of achieving ‘balance’ in one’s life was articulated. This raised again the rehabilitative role of physical activity and leisure. A transformative quality to resilience that is dynamic, developmental, sustainable and reinforcing was acknowledged. It does not occur magically or immediately but requires effort, patience and can fluctuate over time (Albert, 2007). In this respect resilience is similar to the concept of posttraumatic growth (PTG). This refers to, “positive psychological change experiences as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p. 1). Thus, it is about change in people that involves a movement beyond pre-trauma levels of adaptation and has the quality of transformation in functioning.

Important in both PTG and resilience is the process of constructing a narrative understanding of how the self has been and remains positively transformed by adverse life circumstances and ‘a wasted life’ (Neimeyer, 2004; Pals & McAdams, 2004). As Cyrulnik (2009, p. 19) commented, “The ability to knit together a feeling of selfhood appears to be a major factor in the aptitude for resilience.” He argued that resilience is not found in the person or the environment rather it is midway between the two as individual development is always linked to social development. It is the ability of people to find creative responses and solutions in order to bounce back, heal wounds and enable the person to make sense of their life, their self and continue with a coherent notion of who they are and who they want to be. As Runggay (2004) noted the process of desistance involves claiming a pro-social identity and is sustained by the deployment of strategies of resilience and survival in conditions of adversity.

The stories and quotes of resilience shared in this chapter indicated that it not just that people are *becoming* resilient they are also *remaining* resilient. Hauser et al. (2006) referred to this as the notion of *accumulated protection*. This is the tendency of a person to function as they have been is, in part, because the effects of their previous behaviours accumulate and push them further in the direction they were already heading. I additionally argue that the role of keeping a pro-social, adaptive narrative

identity going is also crucial. Desistance, like resilience, can be reached by many pathways and similarly they are both an outcome and a process. In this way the participants' life transformation can be thought of as an endurance event. It is not about getting it right all the time or being the perfect person or just about being happy. It requires challenge and a satisfaction gained from keeping going in life transformation rather than giving up or giving in.

The previous six chapters have explored the key aspects that emerged from this narrative inquiry. I now turn to the final chapter to reflect and make sense of transforming criminal lives and identity, and consider theoretical and practical implications and future possibilities.

CHAPTER TEN: REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Introduction

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward.”
(Søren Kierkegaard)

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate, make sense of, and bring to a close my exploration of aspects of transforming criminal lives explored in the preceding chapters. Although I have more to share and discuss I am compelled to reach this point due to the combined practical constraints of time, word count, the requirement to submit this thesis and a need to return to regular paid work. To achieve this I firstly present some personal reflections and my conceptual thinking on aspects of the process of transformation. Following this I reflect on the theoretical implications arising relating to the desistance literature and rehabilitative role of physical activity. The ‘so what?’ aspect of my study is considered by highlighting policy and practice implications. Finally, I address this study’s limitations and consider future possibilities and research directions.

10.2 Autobiographical reflections

At the beginning of this thesis I shared my autobiography and the seeds of how I came to be interested in how people transform criminal lives and the role physical activity may play in this process. Coming to the end of this thesis I’m still able-bodied, enjoy learning and have no criminal record. I remain physically active although I haven’t played hockey for over two years having shifted from being a player to a volunteer club committee member. I’ve been reminded that as much as I wish you could avoid suffering and struggle in life you cannot. I now know of six people who have sustained being crime-free. Five of which, as I write this chapter, for nine years plus.

I began this study thinking about ‘offenders’, ‘persisters’, ‘ex-offenders’, ‘desisters’, ‘non-offenders’, and ‘citizens’. I’ve moved to thinking about ‘people’, ‘men’, ‘women’, ‘human beings’ who can be suffering, destroying, surviving, existing, coping, managing, thriving and flourishing in this short life we get to experience. I’ve been moved to think in terms of human functioning, stories of lives being lived; and transforming one’s life in the face of adversity, personal demons, and difficulties integrating into so-called ‘mainstream’, ‘conventional’ society. Within this process I’ve heard stories of hope and hopelessness; helpful and dangerous stories. The narratives

are not objective; they involve subjectivity and multiplicity. They involve one's own view and other peoples' view of living that are informed by the stories and narratives available to us culturally. There is no one definition of a good story or a good life. Transformation is not about the 'perfect life'; it's about ongoing striving for a better life; growing, learning and dealing with what life throws at you. It's not just about simply maturing; it's about gaining a practical wisdom about your life and how you're living. It doesn't mean that you do not make mistakes or your life is trouble-free. More often it is about finding ways that work to cope and deal with yourself, others and circumstances without causing harm. Sometimes you feel you are surviving, other times you are getting by or getting there, and there are those times, somewhat rarer, when you feel like you are flying and progressing. Flourishing.

There doesn't appear to be some great tangible reward, or certificate, for being a law-abiding, responsible, respectful, thoughtful person in society. The reward, as far as I can tell, is the dignity and self-respect gained from not harming yourself or others; having a sense of meaning and purpose; a feeling of freedom; a potential for satisfaction from giving back to society and leaving some form of positive legacy. Transformation can be achieved in multiple ways. As much as I'd secretly hoped, there is no cure, no formula, no magic wand, and no simple and final answer. I was fortunate to do this study at a time when I needed a meaningful challenge and goal. Similar to Devlin & Turney (1999) I was energised by the zest for life and living that, having been to some of life's very dark places, the people who were transforming their lives had found. They were excited and challenged by life, the future and 'reaching for its peaks'. This struck home to me as I was reading an article by Simon Barnes in *The Times* newspaper offering advice to today's students where education had become about transforming yourself into, 'An effective economic unit'. He argued, 'Education should be wide, exciting, intoxicating.' He proposed it is an error to think the entire purpose of modern education is to make you a more wealthy person, it should be, 'Ending up a richer person.' Without doubt the lessons I've learnt from the stories shared to me in this study have enriched my life. They confirmed for me the Dalai Lama's approach of, "a belief in the possibility of relief from suffering [that] starts with accepting suffering as a natural fact of human existence, and courageously facing our problems head-on." (1998, p. 112). The narratives taught me further about gratitude, compassion, respect, giving back, not giving up, and the power of stories to constrain and enable one's life.

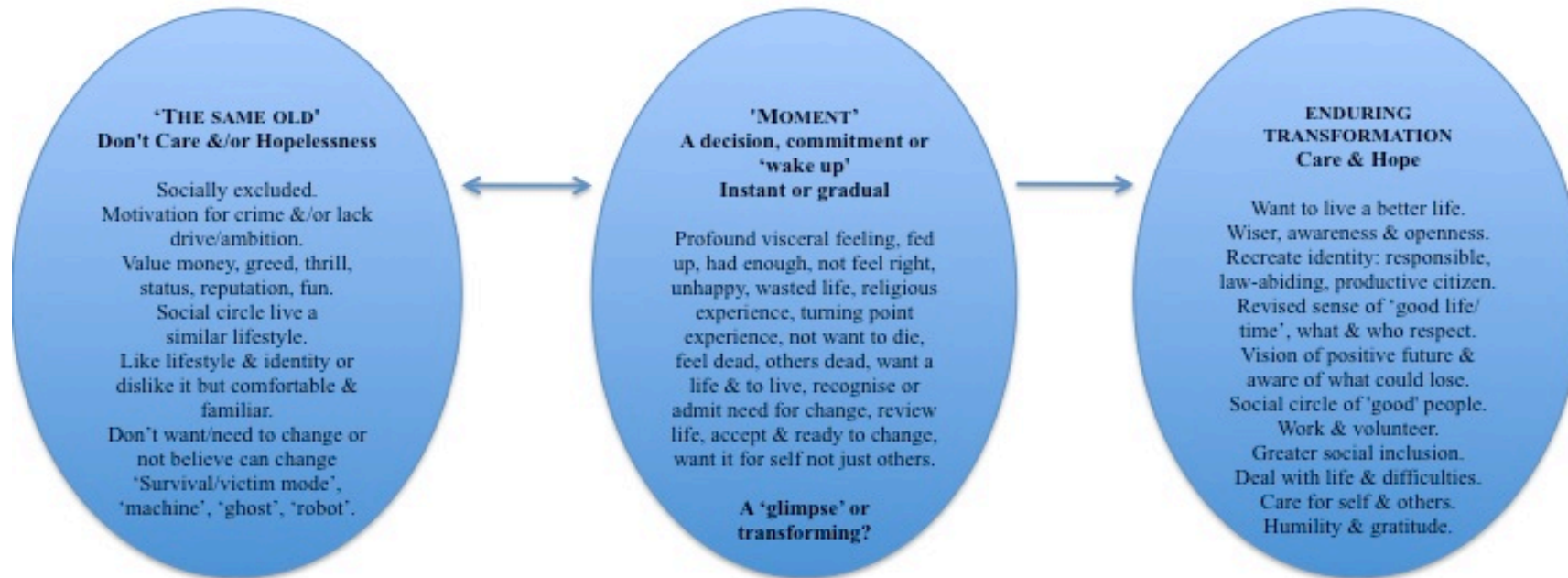
10.3 Making sense of transformation

This section presents my conceptual analysis and attempt to make sense of the process of transformation, Firstly, in terms of understanding what I have referred to as the ‘moment’ of transformation. Secondly, by unpacking the interconnecting dimensions and aspects relevant to participants desisting from crime for an enduring period of time. Throughout this research I have found myself unavoidably seeking the ‘Holy Grail’ of trying to understand not just how a person begins to claim a crime-free identity and life but so remains. The latter has been described as secondary desistance (Mauna & Farrall, 2004) although I prefer the term *enduring transformation* or *serious desistance*. Through the stories I have heard this has been portrayed as active, dynamic, fluid and non-linear with a sense of moving forward despite difficulties, struggles and obstacles. As part of this analysis I have attempted to holistically model a general interpretation of the stories from this study, with reference to the literature, and identify the broad domains of the transformation process.

10.3.1 Understanding the ‘moment’ of transformation

Figure 4 portrays my attempt to articulate what throughout this study has been difficult for participants and staff to explain. It was sometimes described as what they wish could be bottled and given to others to enable life change. I referred to this in Chapter Four, Transforming Bodies, as *an unexplainable aspect*. It seemed to exist at a profound, embodied, visceral, and pre-verbal level. I have termed it the ‘moment’ in the transformation process that involves a realisation, a conscious decision and a serious commitment to change one’s life and sense of self. This is unique and individual. When there is ongoing positive change this leads to *enduring transformation*. If the change is briefer and there is a relatively prompt return to a criminal identity and lifestyle this is termed a ‘*glimpse*’. A shift has occurred and the potential remains for further future sustainable transformation. After a ‘*glimpse*’ the ‘same old’ identity or life may no longer ‘work’ the way it once did but is experienced as comfortable and familiar even if it is no longer as enjoyable. This is not a stage model rather it aims to show that the stories indicated there tends to be two camps: the old self/life and the (re)constructed self/life.

Figure 4: ‘Moment’ of transformation



The 'moment' can be described as a 'waking up', a shift in view of life and self; accompanied by a realisation of not 'really living' and recognition of unhappiness, discontentment and 'feeling dead'. A 'normal' or 'conventional' world begins to appeal rather than, as Jack told me, make you, 'Run a mile.' Thus, a breakage in one's life story and narrative is created. The person may be sick and tired of 'the same old' and feel their life has been wasted. Tom referred to this as being, 'Defeated as a person on every level.' Within the diagram arrows are used to show how the 'moment' can, suddenly or gradually, lead to enduring transformation or a return to the 'same old'. Healy (2010) referred to the notion of 'tipping point' by Gladwell (2000) as a useful way to conceptualise the onset of the desistance process where rapid changes in thinking may be related to modifications in behaviour but may not always last.

In the early phases of the transformation process a new life and identity is actively being created but it is not yet established and the support of constructive others is required, if not essential. During this time a range of difficulties have to be dealt with. For example, putting distance between one's self and associates in a crime life; dealing with personal issues; overcoming addiction; being open to pro-social opportunities; the experience of stigma and cynicism as to the genuineness and authenticity of change. Participants often referred to this period as being 'in limbo'. Healy (2010) referred to it as 'betwixt and between' crime and convention. Desistance researchers have observed, as did I, that people can remain in this transitory position drifting between conformity and deviance (Bottoms et al. 2004; Burnett, 2004; Healy, 2010; Leibrich, 1993). In the diagram this would be seen as still being connected to the 'same old' life.

From the stories, especially religious conversion experiences, some 'moments' may lead to dramatic changes. Healy (2010) drew on chaos theory to explain how small changes in one area of a person's life can engender dramatic changes in other areas. She proposed these events precipitate a process called a 'conformative spiral' that can gradually lead individuals out of crime. What I was struck by was how those who were crime-free for longer no longer kept, as Tom referred to it, 'a foot in both camps'. It is likely for *serious desistance* both feet need to be firmly placed in the 'enduring transformation camp'. Alongside this is an awareness of the risk of complacency and returning to a transitory position between crime and convention. For example, selling stolen goods, heavy alcohol use, use of violence. Another arrow may be required in the diagram from 'enduring transformation' to the 'same old' to reflect the risk of returning to a criminal identity/life depending when difficulties, setbacks and obstacles are experienced.

Aspects that enable enduring transformation have been highlighted in previous chapters particularly in Chapter Nine in relation to resilience processes. For example, hard work, effort, acceptance (of self and others), forgiveness, not giving up, persistence, patience, striving, dealing with setbacks, appreciation, luck, good relationships, institutional support, sense of growth and learning, becoming wiser, made sense of who was and who want to be, being honest and real, and giving back or making a positive contribution to society. Participants that had been crime-free for longer spoke about how this becomes easier over time as they move further away from the person they were and the life they had. The ‘old ways’ and ‘old self’ become harder to fit the pro-social person they have become and remain. This becomes an ongoing process strengthened by continuing to find meaning and purpose in being crime-free, ‘waking up’ to issues, dealing with them and letting them go to move forward. Participants also continued to guard against complacency and pride in one’s reconstructed pro-social identity and life.

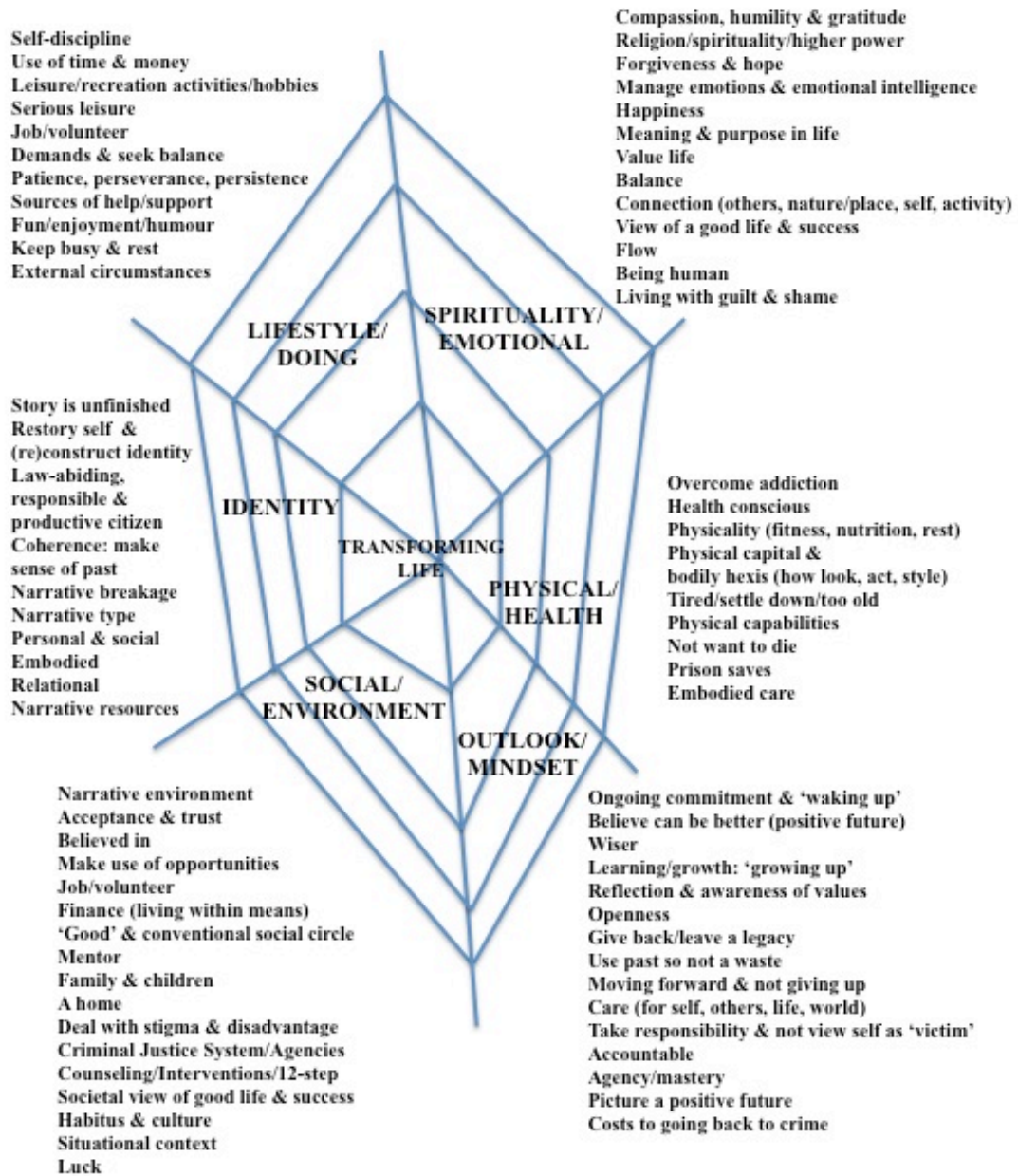
10.3.2 A domain-based understanding of transformation

The second model, (see figure 5), is based on my interpretation of participants’ stories of enduring transformation and informed by my reading of desistance, resilience, and behaviour change literature. It is one potential model and it is not definitive, exhaustive nor completely new. My aim is to show a holistic approach through the metaphor of a spider’s web with six domains involved in transforming a criminal life:

- Spirituality and emotional
- Physical and health
- Outlook and mindset
- Social and environment
- Identity
- Lifestyle and doing.

It is not a stage model nor do I view enduring transformation as a linear process. Within the diagram particular aspects are identified that may play a role for an individual. It is not assumed that all of them are required to enable serious desistance. The model shows the dynamic process of claiming, or (re)weaving, a revised pro-social and adaptive identity and life. This is an active creation that is unique, individual and draws on culture/context. Reweaving a web can be done in many ways. There is no one single method. The use of the spider’s web as a metaphor was inspired by Jack who described his transformation in our first meeting as, ‘It’s complicated and it’s a web of stuff.’

Figure 5: Spider web model of transformation

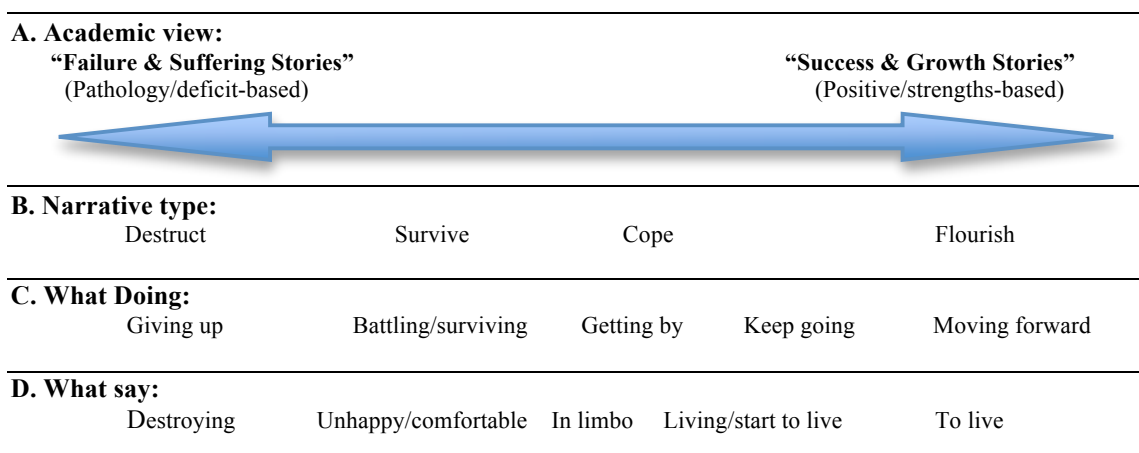


It captures the ongoing and unfinished status of such change. It highlights how strands of life and self, like a web, have the potential to integrate and disintegrate and be simultaneously resistant, resilient, flexible, fragile, adapting and reshaping. It incorporates the human capacity for continuity and change, aspects of the external environment, culture/habitus and the agentic element of how each person may choose to weave their life.

Each life is complex as shown by the strands of the web that are interconnected. The influence of agency, social structure, environment and biology are alluded to but how these relate to formulate a comprehensive picture of enduring transformation requires further understanding. My focus has been on capabilities, resilience, strengths and adaptation rather than risk and pathology. Deficits play a role and need to be incorporated or represented in some way; perhaps as pre-programmed potential as suggested in the theory of desistance by Bottoms et al. (2004). The domains provide routes of access to generate different types of capital such as physical, social, economic, cultural, symbolic, and psychological. These may lead to three overarching life pathway outcomes: desistance from criminal activity and addiction; maturity and wisdom; development of adaptive coping and narrative identity. This may lead to an increase in subjective well-being and the potential to flourish in life.

Two continuums are relevant that are not depicted in figure 5. Firstly a deviance-conformity dimension the extremes of which represent non-law abiding, ‘deviant’ individuals who are excluded from ‘conventional’ society; at the other, law-abiding, ‘normal’ citizens fully integrated into ‘conventional’ society. Similar to Bottoms et al. (2004) I propose that many people are not likely to be at the extremes but somewhere in-between. The second continuum I termed human functioning and formed the basis for the narrative types portrayed in Chapter Seven. Figure 6 portrays the different perspectives from an academic view and, from this study, the narrative type and how participants spoke about living life. This is clearly subjective and open to interpretation and may vary for each domain. It is fluid although it is possible to feel ‘stuck’ particularly at the ‘failure’ or ‘destruct’ end of the continuum. ‘Success’ and ‘growth’ may feel more liberating.

Figure 6: Continuum of human functioning



10.3.3 Possibilities and problems of models

The spider web and ‘moment’ of transformation models aim to be holistic and encompass multiple stories of change. They are open to expansion and revision in light of accumulated knowledge. This is not about providing a definitive model rather ones that evolve in light of further insights and as society and culture changes. Thus, highlighting the benefits of models to communicate an understanding of complex processes. Within the behaviour change field there is a proliferation of models (e.g. stages of change; self-determination theory). Aunger & Curtis (2007) in their review of behaviour change models found over forty assigning them to six different categories. The problems of such models, including the ones I present, are that although they can be grounded in actual lived experience, they can take away from the personal journey made by each individual. To retain an individual perspective and respect for multiple stories of transformation, I re-present how Tom, Simon and Christine modeled their transformations as described in Chapter Five.

Tom described ‘a triangle of things’. Firstly, mental and emotional health that included attending NA meetings and being with family. This is ‘head stuff’ dealing with the way he feels about himself and his relationships with others. This included a spiritual component through reliance on a higher power. Secondly, he described a need for fun and physical activity so he could, ‘Feel his heart pumping’ and ‘switch off’ from ‘head stuff’. This was gained through fishing, boxing, and football. Finally, work and volunteering provided him with structure to his day and feelings of dignity, respect, self-worth and fulfillment. Tom also spoke about letting other people into your life as without this you may create one but you are on your own. Christine and Simon also viewed their development as a triangle but between mind, body and spirit with Christian faith providing a firm foundation (see figure 7):

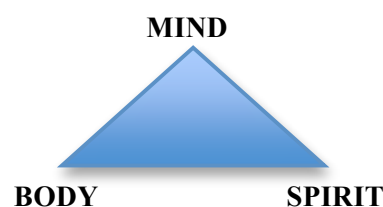


Figure 7: Simon and Christine’s model

Simon focused on developing his mind through education and obtaining academic qualifications to balance out his criminal convictions. He developed his body through

training at the gym and his spirit through Christian faith practice. All of these combined to provide him with structure with which to build a pro-social life and identity. Simon also focused on developing the quality of the relationship with his family. Christine similarly focused on work, running on a treadmill, Christian faith practice and developing the relationship with her younger children so they could have a better life. Tom, Simon and Christine did not offer a formula for their success and each had their own unique journey desisting from crime and drug use. They all advised that to start the process of change each person has to start with where they are currently at in life. What was evident in theirs, and other stories, is that struggle and challenge, as well as successes and achievements, are part and parcel of enduring transformation.

10.4 Theoretical implications: selves, bodies and physical activity

Within Chapter Two of this thesis I reviewed research and theories of desistance from crime, narrative identity, and the rehabilitative role of physical activity. I now consider the contributions of this study in these areas.

10.4.1 Theorising desistance and life transformation

Throughout Chapters Four to Nine, I aimed to convey how this study replicated or introduced new insights and understandings of transforming criminal lives. I reflect below on the key points learnt from the personal and public stories shared in this thesis.

Narrative identity

A narrative approach provided an opportunity to explore elusive processes of transformation such as identity (re)construction. In this thesis I represented how some participants were constructed in the telling of their life story thus claiming a narrative identity. From my analysis emerged four narrative forms or 'ideal types': *destruct*, *survive*, *cope* and *flourish*. Within these types the active performing of identity was illustrated demonstrating how narratives are more than 'just stories' (Blaxter, 2004a).

These types can be related to how people story the way they are functioning in their whole life as well particular domains. For those that had been crime-free for longer tended to story their lives as 'cope' and 'flourish'. It was these two types where the endpoint signified overcoming past failings and social exclusion and reconstructing oneself as a law-abiding, responsible, accountable citizen. The flourish type is similar to the redemption script identified in Maruna's study of people successfully desisting; and the quest narrative identified from peoples' stories of serious ill-health (Frank, 1995).

For those earlier in the transformation process it is likely the focus is on ‘making it’ (Brodsky, 1999; Rungay, 2004), ‘getting there’ or ‘getting by’ rather than the redemptive and generative focus on ‘making good’ (McAdams, 2006; Maruna, 2001). This involves the cultivation of progress and personal growth taking into account current resources, relationships, obstacles, and social context.

A renewal process was indicated in the narratives of those that had achieved enduring transformation. Thus, becoming either a ‘new person’ or revealing a ‘real’ self, that is neither criminal or anti-social and creating an identity that is aligned with ‘conventionality’ and pro-social living. Similar to Maruna & Roy (2007) rather than a knifing off this was a process of reconstruction. Although a strategy of narrative breakage was employed as a demarcation was drawn between the ‘old self’ and the ‘new self’. Similar to Harris’s (2011) study of desistance this highlighted the importance of an identity shift in distancing oneself from an undesired past self to a desired possible self who is ‘clean’ i.e. crime/drug-free.

The importance of constructing a coherent explanation for how one has changed was also observed in this study. This supports Maruna’s (2001) and McIntosh & McKeganey’s (2000) contention that identity formation depends on the ability to offer a convincing explanation for one’s recovery or reform. The importance of a coherent story for adaptive functioning is highlighted by Linde (1993, p.3),

“In order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable and constantly revised life story.”

Linde argued that life stories express our sense of self, who we are and how we got that way. Hence, they are also an important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others. Thus, the coherent story may enable people to overcome and convince others that may be cynical or suspicious of their transformation. Thereby finding a way to negotiate and resist stigma or discrimination.

Similar to Maruna (2001) and Maruna et al. (2006) this study noted limited opportunities for reconstructing personal narratives and too few plausible available scripts in culture from which people can model. Cultural discourses will impact on the narrative told. Western cultural stories place ‘criminals’ near the bottom of the rung of our social order (Maruna, 2001; Opsal, 2011) and frame them as ‘irredeemable’. Highlighted in this study and in identity reconstruction was a relational component. This included others believing in the person, participants offering wisdom stories on

their own transformation, or others simply having a hope and faith and providing constructive support. Eakin (1999) noted one of the most adaptive functions of this aspect of narrative identity (re)construction is the enhancement of bonding and social solidarity. Indeed, participants who had been crime-free for longer had shared their stories publicly so that others can benefit from their wisdom and hope that they could make it post-prison and transcend the label of the ‘incorrigible criminal’.

Identity (re)construction also involved ongoing *narrative processing* (Pals, 2006). This is the ongoing task of narrating and interpreting past experiences and incorporating into one’s life story. It is an active and engaged effort to explore, reflect on, or analyse difficult experiences with openness to learning and incorporating a sense of change into the life story. This appeared as one strategy by participants that had been crime-free for longer to deal with obstacles and setbacks and maintain change in their lives. Individual’s lives, stories and identity (re)construction remained unfinished and ongoing. As Simon simply articulated after he had read his story summary:

It’s been an amazing journey so far and it hasn’t finished yet.

Welcoming the body

One of the main contributions of this thesis is consideration of the body and embodiment processes in understanding the process of transforming criminal lives. This was driven by questions asking where it becomes visible and what meaning this may have (Smith & Watson, 2001). There has been limited attention to the body in desistance research and theorising although its potential role had been acknowledged (Giordano et al., 2002). Drawing on the work of Shilling (2008) and Frank (1991, 1995) I proposed that desistance could be viewed as a process of embodied and storied action. Different bodily habits were identified at different phases creatively transforming habits that are no longer effective for the person. This can lead to a shift in physical appearance, daily routines, new ways of acting and being, and a shift in caring about the body-self and others. Within a creative transforming phase the communicative body was identified as one that is striving to create itself and relieve the suffering of others through sharing the story of their experience. Thus, using one’s body to connect and assist others to transform their life. Two embodiment processes were identified. Firstly, *embodied care* as a way of being in the world the body’s habits and behaviours facilitate (Hamington, 2004). This focuses on growth, flourishing and well-being of self and others. This can come from tacit knowledge the body and not just what can be articulated. Secondly, *acquiring physical capital* described the process by which

participants became more physically capable and energised for the challenge of transforming their life. This was reflected in a shift from bodily neglect to healthier bodies and improved self-presentation that has an exchange value in terms of providing the potential to achieve higher levels of integration in society.

The exploration highlighted how bodies can both enable and constrain desistance from crime and the construction of an adaptive identity. Thus, the body is not irrelevant to the process. It is deeply implicated particularly in how it cares for itself and the bodies of others. This concept also acknowledges the limitations and capabilities of embodied individuals and the influence of circumstances and external environments. Within Shilling's framework, desistance can be viewed as a 'complicated apprenticeship' in both becoming and staying crime-free depending on the person's capabilities and limitations. What became apparent was that participants by attending to their body in conjunction with cognitive processes and situational context may assist the construction of a pro-social life and identity. Thus, I argued the body-self can 'fire itself up' to transform and desist from crime. Paradoxically, I observed a 'winding down' too. Here the risks of a crime life, including longer prison sentences and risk of injury and death begin to take their toll. The demands of a crime life and the sense of a 'wasted life' begin to outweigh the gains. How this relates to enduring transformation and the creation of 'good habits' requires further exploration.

What matters, maturity and wisdom

The importance of spirituality in terms of non-religious and religious aspects emerged in this study highlighting the importance of what matters to people in desistance and transformation. This supports Vaughan's (2007) notion of a *moral conversation* with oneself, whereby recasting what truly matters the individual develops a new identity that is incompatible with a criminal lifestyle. This included finding a value to life itself, shifting in what one would like from life, and the desire to be 'normal' for those earlier in the transformation process. People found meaning and purpose from a variety of sources including family, work, education, a worthwhile pursuit or activity, and faith. Similar to Shover's (1985) findings good relationships, contentment and a simple life became more important than money and material goods for those that had desisted for longer. This was expressed by participants trying to transform too, even if they were still seeking to obtain these goals. Finally, people's notions of what mattered were influenced by the narratives available in one's family, community and society.

Within secular society change theories tend to emphasise a gradual and incremental process, the stories in this thesis of dramatic conversion provided a counter-narrative (Andrews, 2004). This highlights there is still much to learn about how people transform their lives and the stories available culturally to assist this process. In this study, religion appeared as a 'hook' for change (Giordano et al., 2008) and the notion of hope was identified as important in providing both the will and the way to achieve a pro-social life and identity.

The virtue of wisdom and *becoming wiser* emerged in this thesis, which has not been explored, to my knowledge, in relation to desistance from crime. This raised the importance of a 'life review' and openness to dealing with issues that may prevent crime-free living. This remains an ongoing process. A sense of growing up emerged strongly for those who were trying to desist. Hence, a theme of being 'too old' may play a role in initiating a crisis of habits and prompting the need for transformation. For those that had been crime-free for longer this was linked to increased self-knowledge and reflexivity. The influence of a narrative of decline became apparent and how this may open up an opportunity to consider change. This replicates previous findings in relation to the impact of age and health as a desistance factor. An active embodied embracing of age and the body-self were identified as an aspect aiding transformation and challenges the dominant narrative of ageing decline in Western Society.

Enduring transformation: resilience and flourishing

I have argued in this thesis similar to others (Serin, Lloyd & Hanby, 2010; Vesey et al., 2009) that the processes and pathways into crime are not necessarily the same for leaving. Without considering the possibility of how this process occurs there is the risk of being left with what appear to be *successful accidents* (Lutke, 1997). Where strategies seem to 'work' but we lack insights into how, why, for whom or when. What emerged from the stories of those who had been crime-free for longer were understandings into the achievement of *enduring transformation* or *serious desistance* and, for some, personal growth and flourishing. Both the resilience framework and strengths-based approaches provided useful lenses with which to consider the aspects that aid the process of 'staying straight'. On reflection, at the end of this study, what has not been overly helpful are the paradigm conflicts that exist in 'offender rehabilitation' theorising. I referred to this in Chapter Two where four 'paradigms' ('deficit-focus', 'what works', 'strengths-based' and 'desistance') exist but there has been limited fully interdisciplinary discussion across these perspectives. Insights are unlikely to exist in

just one paradigm. This study is situated in the ‘desistance’ and ‘strengths-based’ perspectives. Thus, a critical contribution of this research was the value of attending to how people deal with setbacks, get on with things the best they can and even flourish in sustaining major life and identity changes. Much knowledge has been developed to predict and understand how people suffer and do bad things, however less focus has been given to how people form good habits and learn to live the world in a constructive and adaptive way. The ability of participants to sustain and ‘grow forward’ with their re-storied narrative identity seemed integral to this process. In this respect desistance can be conceived of as an endurance event that is not just about achieving happiness. Courage is required in responding to challenges and adversity, and dealing with life in order not to give in or give up but to *keep going*.

10.4.2 Rehabilitative role of physical activity

In Chapter Two it was noted there has been limited research into the meaning physical activity may have for socially excluded adults, and its role in supporting desistance from crime. This study makes a contribution to this area by unpacking its meaning for adult males and females in transforming their lives. Similar to previous research exploring physical activity with young people, this study indicated an enabling role for adults in managing emotions, gaining mastery and achievement, and increasing confidence. Within this study benefits related to health consciousness were highlighted and for some participants it aided recovery from drug addiction as well supporting the desistance process. This enabled people to construct an identity that incorporated being healthier, fitter and learning to take better care of one’s body-self. This often resulted in an improved self-presentation and appearance. Thus, providing a route for people to build up their physical capital that may assist in building other forms of capital such as social and economic. Indeed, the provision of physical activity within prison was credited with keeping the ‘chaotic drug-using offender’ alive and engage in life transformation with ‘a clear head’.

The issue of replacing one addiction with another was explored and how the risk of cross-addiction needs to be balanced with the beneficial achievement of a ‘serious commitment’ to physical activity. The concept of ‘serious leisure’ (Stebbins, 2007) may provide a fruitful avenue of further exploration. This is defined as the “systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that a typical participant may launch on a career centered on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience.” (P. xii). This

approach to activity is driven by a strong sense of control and personal competence rather than the feeling of being out of control and negativity that can characterise addiction to substances (Stebbins, 2010). Participants in this study particularly referred to physical activity enabling a reconnection with a feeling of 'healthy' enjoyment that had been lost through crime and addiction.

Physical activity provided a possible vehicle with which personal growth and adaptive identity change can be facilitated and consolidated as part of a 'whole' life transformation. Thus, finding similarities to Carless & Douglas (2010) and their research with people with mental health and the role of physical activity in facilitating people to recover an 'athletic identity'. Critical was the ability to generalise this into day-to-day living in the community and overcome structural (e.g. living in a rural area, cost of activities) and personal barriers (e.g. lack motivation, feeling stressed) to participation. Those participants who seemed to find benefit in the long-term tended to adhere to physical activity in their daily routines providing further structure to their lives. This reinforces the need for generalisation of insight and skills learned in one environment to every-day life to avoid 'fade out' effects (Leberman, 2007).

The importance of values and ethos in relation to physical activity emerged and the role of connection to the natural environment and the positive benefits of engaging in an activity. Research has found some evidence that physical activity outdoors in the natural environment can have additional positive effects on well-being, including increased energy and reduction in tension, confusion, anger and depression (Thompson-Coon, Boddy, Stein, Whear, Barton & Depledge, 2011). Further research is required to elucidate the effects on mental and physical well-being and exercise adherence. This study indicated that the ethos of an activity may assist the development of self-discipline and respect for others by offering opportunities to criticise and transform values. Hence, supporting the construction of an adaptive identity and life. Taking part in a voluntary capacity in activities provides work-based experience that may open up employment opportunities and enable growth, development of skills and self-worth that lead away from criminal activity. The role of criminal justice staff in introducing and offering physical activities to participants was critical and opened up broader avenues to support desistance from crime. It often provided an opportunity to engage with 'constructive' people who can support attempts to transform a criminal life. This was evident in being able to have conversations and interactions that were not based on 'crime' but rather sharing stories and hopes of a better or 'normal' life.

Nichols's (2007) theory, with its emphasis on the (re)definition of identity, personal growth, and criminogenic needs provides a valuable starting point to further develop a comprehensive model of change. Potential mechanisms of change identified in this study included building physical capital; constructive or serious leisure facilitating building a routine and structure to life; development of job-related skills and competences; opportunity to (re)story identity; emotion regulation; transform values; and gain a sense of mastery and achievement.

As stated in Chapter Two, the provision of sport and physical activity is no panacea for crime. It may play a neutral role or support a criminal life and identity. This study has highlighted its potential as a vehicle to support transformation and play a rehabilitative role. Particularly when the values and ethos of an activity, and the personnel involved, are consistent with developing a pro-social life and adaptive identity and are incorporated into the routines of daily living.

10.5 Policy and practice implications

Throughout the thesis implications for policy and practice have become apparent. Within this section I consider three main areas that became particularly pertinent for professionals or anyone supporting someone to live crime-free.

10.5.1 Physical activity and leisure

Rehabilitative physical activity, sporting and leisure interventions can elicit extreme value judgments in terms of their possible benefits in reducing crime (Kelly, 2011, 2012; Wagner, McBride & Crouse, 1999). Within this thesis my aim was to consider the complexity of issues involved rather than seeking to answer whether 'it works' or not in reducing crime. What emerged as important is what motivates the person to participate, the values they hold, and encouraged to develop, through the activity. The ethos and values of an organisation and of the people providing the activity is critical, particularly if the intention is for it to be rehabilitative. Staff providing criminal justice services were critical in providing an introduction and supporting participation in constructive physical activity and sport. The stories shared emphasized their role in highlighting opportunities and actively negotiating initial access to activities in the community as well as in prison settings. An important challenge is finding ways to support people to integrate 'healthy' activities into their day-to-day life and as part of their identity. This is particularly relevant if someone considers they have a 'sporting

identity' that crime and addiction has supplanted. Judgments about the nature of a specific activity are unhelpful without attempting to fully understand the ethos of it and how it does, or does not, play a role for someone trying to transform their life. Particular barriers to participation can exist including cost, lack of transport and access to activities especially in rural areas.

There is a potential risk of cross-addiction for people that have a history of substance misuse or believe they have an 'addictive self'. On the other hand, this tendency can be harnessed as a serious commitment to an activity that can lead to sustaining a 'good' habit, mastery and achievement. Positive benefits were highlighted in connecting to nature and the outdoors to release negative energy, anxiety and 'bring perspective to life'. Hence, some activities can lead to a positive state of mind that enables more effective emotion management and, for some, an embodied way to connect back to emotions that may have been dulled. The crucial point is whether the activity is leading to any negative or 'unhealthy' consequences and how integrated it is into a person's life in striving for transformation. An aspect that emerged in this thesis is the contribution it makes to gaining 'balance' in one's life. This study suggested that rather than the understandable concern that people become fitter and stronger to commit crime the issue is finding ways to sustain health consciousness in everyday life. This links to the development of key embodiment processes of building physical capital and care for the body-self. Finally, physical activity interventions and qualifications may only lead to employment for a few especially committed and talented individuals. However, they do play a role in opening up opportunities to achieve qualifications, develop skills, knowledge and confidence, and provide people to gain 'work' experience through volunteering. All of these are transferable skills and may lead to other opportunities that play a role in contributing to living a better life.

10.5.2 Stories and narrative resources

I have argued desistance can be conceptualised as an embodied and storied process that is social and personal at the same time. Narratives are social creations and we are born into a world with a ready stock of them that can be resourced to shape our social interactions (Murray, 1999). It can be difficult for people to transform their body-self unless they are provided with some constructive alternative storylines or counter-narratives. Nelson (2001) noted the importance of counter-narratives in facilitating narrative repair and argued they are, "tools designed to repair the damage inflicted on identities by abusive power systems, which aim to "re-identify such people as

competent members of the moral community and in doing so enable their moral agency” (p. xiii). Smith & Sparkes (2005) further suggested, “the potential for reconstructing self stories is enhanced when access is gained to counter-narratives that provide alternative maps and emplotments” (p. 1100). Thus, focusing on opening up avenues for the potential for transformation rather than guaranteeing actual change. McAdams (2006) referred to this as ‘borrowing pieces of stories’ and working them into your own. This highlights the need to consider practically how stories of success, big and small, can be incorporated into someone’s life story to support desistance.

The importance of a shift or gaining meaning and purpose in life indicated it would be beneficial to understand how people see themselves, who they would like to be and what they value about themselves, others and life. Frankl (2004) proposed a therapy method focused on a search for meaning that should be less retrospective and introspective. Rather it should be focused on the future and the meanings to be fulfilled by the person. Even in the midst of a destruct, condemnation or chaos narrative Frankl would argue that, “we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation” (p. 116). This raises the question of how to incorporate and address issues of identity and narrative construction when working with people who are trying to stop crime. McIntosh & McKeganey (2000) advocated training staff working with clients dealing with drug addiction to enable them to address these issues. When supporting someone it may be useful to consider how they story their life; and being mindful of whether one is closing down or opening up the possibility for transformation.

Maruna (2001) commented that people who had been crime-free often displayed a positivity about life and observed this maybe troublesome for some people. I also observed that participants who’d been crime-free for longer showed a passion and energy for life and the person they had become. Hence, I concur with Maruna a sense of optimism and hope is useful for sustaining desistance. However, I also discerned alongside this positivity an ongoing management of feelings of shame, guilt and a tendency to ‘beat themselves up’. What seems important is allowing different narratives of change and to not rigidly categorise people into one story type or another. This may reflect a researchers and clinicians need, than the actual person trying to desist, to ‘box’ the type of transformation. Rather, the goal is to enable multiplicity recognising that change can be storied in multiple ways.

10.5.3 Support and environments

Already highlighted as critically important in transforming a criminal life are relationships with others that are supportive and constructive. Different support levels are likely to be required at different parts of the transformation process. Porporino (2010) commented it is possible that earlier on in the process the focus is likely to be on day-to-day coping and developing and it may not be until later that a desire to give back and leave a legacy appears. Other people's faith and hope can be a powerful source of spiritual fuel. Alongside this is the importance of others to bear witness to the uniquely human potential to turn a predicament into an achievement (Frank, 1995; Frankl, 2004).

One implication of 'successful' transformation is that a person can become high profile as a community leader that inspires others to transform their lives. Bolkas (2000) noted, in relation to religious conversion, that having reached a 'celebrity status' there is a danger people can take things on too quickly, becoming overwhelmed and burdened by the challenge of living a better life. Guidance from positive others and the practice of patience may become valuable. Jack at the end of our last meeting commented, as someone who had been asked to give his testimony in public a number of times, that if you fall off your 'pedestal' it is far more noticeable than those who are not so open with their story. This can be both a blessing and a burden. Sparkes (2004) referred to the notion of the 'obligation of the cured' in cancer survival who embrace their purpose in life to help others. Such a relational position links to the desire to assist others or give back that is evident in the communicative body and quest, redemption and flourish narrative types. It is important to enable opportunities to do this whilst guarding against over-burdening a few 'celebrated' individuals.

In Chapter Eight the potential of cultivating wisdom environments or one that encourages maturity was acknowledged. Frank (2000) in the context of healthcare noted the issue that 'patients' and 'physicians' can live in different 'lifeworlds' (p. 362). This has similar implications for professionals in the criminal justice system. Indeed one PEI commented that with 'staff' and 'prisoners' it can be like, 'looking through different windows' at the world.

Mahoney & Pargament (2004) and White (2004) noted that people might look upon dramatic and religious conversion with suspiciousness. They noted the potential for it to aggravate anti-social behaviour and interpersonal conflicts as well as provide people with a unique source of strength to overcome difficulties. Sacred and secular varieties of transformational change represent legitimate ways that people can profoundly, positively and enduringly redefine their personal identities and relationships

(White, 2004). What is important is to support the person to construct new narrative guides for how they construct their identity and relate to others. Alongside this there may still be residual problems and issues that need to be worked through. Bird (2010) recommended encouraging people to construct it as the beginning of a journey rather than the destination. O'Connor & Duncan (2011) noted the recommendation by the American Psychological Association that humanism, spirituality and religion should be integrated into therapeutic work. This needs to occur so it matches with people's particular way of establishing meaning in their life or feeling connected to something important. They proposed that human, social, and spiritual capital needs to be integrated more fully into intervention programmes provided within criminal justice settings. For people outside 'the system' it is about being a companion to support and stand with the person as they progress through their transformation (Miller & C'de Baca, 2001). Thus, returning to Frankl's point, it concerns fostering hope and belief that change can and does happen even when things look their darkest.

10.6 Limitations

The strengths of this study, and the qualitative approach, are their ability to capture complexity and enable a deeper understanding of lived, embodied experience and the personal, social and cultural meanings of a phenomenon. In Chapter Three I highlighted the limitations of the narrative approach. It is one form of inquiry and should not be elevated above others and there are many debates and unresolved dilemmas within this 'paradigm' (Atkinson, 1997; Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; McAdams et al., 2006; Smith & Sparkes, 2006, 2009). Below I outline four particular limitations to this study:

- (1) I focused on people that had been involved in 'street crimes' including offences such as violence, robbery, burglary, theft, drug dealing/possession, and car offences. I did not include people convicted of sexual crimes, murder, nor solely 'white-collar' crimes such as fraud. Three women took part and three people, Christine, Tom and Simon, were from an ethnic minority group. A greater number would have enabled similarities and differences across gender and ethnicity to be explored more fully. This study was located in England and Wales and although the issues identified may translate to other countries, especially similar Western societies, they may not apply so well to others. The five participants that had been crime-free for over five years all work as a

‘professional ex’. Their stories have been shared in their community and are accessible to the wider public. They described themselves and their lives as ‘all or nothing’, ‘extreme’ or ‘dramatic’. This may account for the sense of ‘two camps’ and narrative breakage between an ‘old’ and ‘new life’ that I observed.

- (2) I commented in Chapter Four, *Transforming Bodies*, on the tendency for the body to disappear in textual representations and become lost through the use of analytical lenses. Sparkes (2009) discussed the problems of producing multi-sensory ethnographies that incorporate a more balanced consideration of embodiment. He cited Hockey & Allen Collinson’s (2007) argument in the analytical depiction of sporting activity that, “the prevailing narrative orthodoxy has generally failed to capture and portray evocatively the phenomena of sporting experience” (p. 31). This can lead to a reinforcement of a mind and body split that such writing, including this thesis, is attempting to overcome. Other cultural methodologies of accessing the ‘unspeakable’ such as poetic and visual representations, although considered, were not adopted (O’Neill & Spybey, 2003). Evans, Davies & Rich (2009) also critiqued theorising and approaches to understanding the body within educational settings. They argued that researchers need to deal with both the ‘physical’ and the ‘phenomenal’ universes of discourse and bodily mediators of lived experience (p. 391). This means attending to the biological dimensions of embodiment and its discursive representation. Finally, this study does not consider power relations nor provide an in-depth gendered analysis. There is also a need to explore more thoroughly the emotional aspect of desistance (Giordano, Schroeder & Cernkovich, 2007).
- (3) This is doctoral research hence time and financial considerations prevented the ‘ideal’ of a prospective longitudinal study employing a mixed method research strategy. This would provide an opportunity to combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches in a comprehensive investigation of life transformation that may benefit more fully researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. This study was retrospective and cross-sectional. For those that were crime-free for longer this may mean their accounts of transformation are influenced by the tendency for people to strive to rationalise and portray themselves as coherent (Bottoms et al., 2004). It would have been beneficial to have included more significant others to share their perspective, however time

constraints prevented this approach. The issue of retrospection I believe was less relevant when exploring the day-to-day processes involved in sustaining a pro-social lifestyle and adaptive narrative identity. This is about asking people how they ‘stay straight’ in the present. The difficulty faced by all researchers is that once a study is completed it is retrospective. Even within longitudinal research the findings will be contextualised within the particular era in which it was conducted. Lives, and stories, remain ongoing and unfinished.

- (4) The main form of representation within this thesis was the modified realist tale. The dissemination impact of this research, at present, stands to be rather limited. Thus, there remains a need to consider other forms of accessible representation. This would enable the research to be communicated to a wider audience than the few academics and professionals that may read this thesis and the resulting journal articles. This is a common challenge for qualitative researchers - how can the stories be harnessed to reach a greater variety of people? Consideration is given to this issue in the following section.

10.7 Future research and possibilities

Having considered the limitations I explore below future research directions and possibilities that arise from this study. The following suggestions may be helpful to build theoretical knowledge:

- (1) Further work on developing a comprehensive theoretical model of change, building on the work of Nichols (2007), for the use of physical activity to support desistance from crime for young people and adults across the life course. This could include further exploration of *serious leisure* (Stebbins, 2007) and a spiritual element to physical activity in claiming a pro-social identity and life.
- (2) The nature of dramatic change, enduring transformation, and ‘good habit’ formation (Aunger & Curtis, 2007; Rowson, 2011) require further understanding. It would be beneficial to explore how people sustain ‘good habits’ over an extended period of time (ten years plus).
- (3) Develop further understanding of patience and self-discipline (Seligman, 2011) and resilience processes like humour, religion and spirituality in transforming criminal lives. Aspects that emerged in this study had resonance with research

into ‘recovery’ from serious mental health. Similar elements were identified including: healthy connections to others, hope, (re)establishment of a positive identity, building a meaningful life, taking responsibility and control (Shepherd, Boardman & Slade, 2008). There may be lessons from the ‘recovery’ literature that could helpfully apply to life transformation within a criminal justice context.

- (4) It would be beneficial to consider integration of the theoretical and empirical insights of strength-based and deficit-based approaches, the ‘what works’ literature and desistance. These tend to operate as standalone academic research enterprises that can compete rather than pull together. Scholars have recently sought to address this. Serin and colleagues in the US (Serin & Lloyd, 2009; Serin, Lloyd & Hanby, 2010) have formulated an integrated life-course model for enhancing people’s re-entry that includes risk and desistance factors. In the UK, McNeill (2012) has recently advanced the case for a more fully interdisciplinary understanding of ‘offender rehabilitation’ to move beyond the contemporary ‘paradigm conflicts’ (p. 18).

In terms of future empirical studies the following possibilities exist. I noted earlier the ideal of a mixed-method prospective longitudinal study. It would be useful to undertake further exploration of the criminal justice staff experiences and the role of public and institutional narratives and how they may enable or constrain people trying to transform. Two types of studies are lacking in criminal justice research. Firstly, inquiries attending to autobiographical reflections on positioning and reflexivity (Phillips & Earle, 2010), secondly, collaborative and action participatory research projects. A biographical approach combined with participatory action research and arts practice (see O’Neill 2008; O’Neill & Harindranath, 2006; O’Neill & Hubbard, 2010) has been beneficially applied to issues of social exclusion/justice exploring the lived, embodied and relational experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. This research approach offers a potential transformative space that may enable stories of those who have ‘made it’ to be fed into policy, practice and the broader cultural narrative menu.

Finally, from a practice perspective the following possibilities exist. The model produced in section Desistance researchers have begun to translate theory into principles for effective practice. Further translation of the insights with specific practice and intervention implications is required. It would be useful to consider the practical

means by which to expand the cultural narrative menu available to people trying to change. Including how stories of success can be made available to people that may benefit from hearing them. I commented earlier on the challenge of disseminating findings of this study more widely beyond the restrictions of a narrow academic context. Possibilities that exist include turning the stories into a play, such as an ethnodrama. A tradition of theatre-based interventions within prisons has existed for some time. Poetry is another form. Both of these offer ways to engage people and share complex stories in meaningful and sensitive ways (Richardson, 2000a; Sparkes, 2002). There is the possibility of considering contemporary technology such as podcasts, website information, and you-tube clips. Discovering Desistance, an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Project, has produced a documentary, *The Road from Crime*. The project, led by Professor McNeill, explores issues relating to desisting from crime and included workshops with probation professionals to explore implications and develop ideas on how best to support the process of desistance. Other possibilities include posters, leaflets, and self-help booklets that may have a broader reach and complement the provision of intensive, structured interventions. Thus, providing other avenues to open up the possibility of living life in different ways.

A further challenge is to consider how prison and probation settings, environments focused on ‘compliance’, ‘control’ and ‘public protection’ as well as ‘offender rehabilitation’, can maximise opportunities to cultivate wisdom, openness, maturity, the (re)construction of identity and pro-social living. Liebling (2012) discussed this in terms of whether people can flourish in prisons proposing only sometimes and only under some conditions. She reflected on the ‘moral environment’ of the prison and how to encourage personal development through the arts, yoga, education, work projects and sports. Another challenge is how to address the dominant cultural narrative of the ‘incorrigible offender’ who cannot change. Rather than focusing on the Government and Criminal Justice System, the emphasis is on how the broader community and society considers its role in relation to people that are trying to transform their lives.

The desire to give back and make a positive contribution has been highlighted by this thesis and previous research. It is important to consider ways to open up avenues as to how people that have built a crime-free life and identity, can give back so others can learn from their practical wisdom. This is evident in mentoring, volunteering and peer support programmes; and activist approaches such as the recently established charity User Voice. The founder, Mark Johnson, is the author of the bestselling

autobiography *Wasted* that charted how he transformed his life from crime and addiction. In an interview with the *Prison Service Journal* in 2010 he stated, “All the system wants is an emotive story, and then puts you back on the shelf”. The mission of User Voice, which is led and predominantly delivered by ‘ex-offenders’, is to engage people in bringing about the reform of the criminal justice system and reduce offending.

10.8 Summary

In this final chapter I have described how the stories shared in this thesis impacted on my academic understanding and provided personal enrichment. Suspense seems to be endemic in stories of criminal lives that have been transformed. Will the person go back or continue to remain crime-free and move forward? Towards the close of this research two stories brought home to me the difficulties and successes in life transformation and the power of stories. Ryan returned to his old area and was convicted of a new offence resulting in a prison sentence. He shared in our first meeting if he were to return to his old area he believed he would return to his ‘old ways’. This was the first time in his view he had made a serious commitment to change. During the ten months he was released he was drug-free, obtained casual full-time employment and began a college course. Christine has been crime and drug-free for over 12 years. In January 2012 we met to discuss the conceptual models. Her passion for halfway houses for women has become a reality. As we spoke she shared with me that she had been nominated as an Olympic Torch Bearer. She told me when she was younger she had a dream that one day she would run at the Olympics. In March Christine confirmed she is one of eight thousand inspirational people that will carry the flame as it journeys across the UK to mark the London 2012 Olympics.

Within this Chapter I have presented my conceptual thinking in making sense of transformation and how it may endure. I discussed the implications of this inquiry for theorising desistance/life transformation and the rehabilitative role of physical activity. Insights for policy-makers and practitioners have been highlighted. Finally, I considered the limitations of this study and potential possibilities to inform future research and practice in this area. The specific contribution of this narrative inquiry has been to provide a complex account of the role of human agency in the transformation process. As I have reflected back I hope, as the quote by Kierkegaard implies, by interpreting what has been experienced this can be used to shape the future. Thus, this thesis does not remain just another ‘emotive story’ that is placed back on the shelf.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide – life history participants

1. Grand tour questions:

- 1a Tell me about your life?
- 1b Tell me about how you got to where you are today?

2. Life phases

Think about your life as a book with a number of chapters or stages. There can be as many stages or chapters which you think fit your own life. Please write down the years from when you were born until now. When did the first stage end? Let's make a note here, when did the next stage end? Please put down the age that each one begins and ends for you until you reach to where you are today. Now give a title for each of these stages. For each stage I will ask for a significant event (high and low), the reasons it's important and the kind of person you think you were at that stage.

3. View of self and age:

- 3a How does how you see yourself changed over time? (Go with their stages and thoughts also think about 0-10, 11-13, 14-17, 18-24, 25-33, 34-45, 45+ years)
- 3b How would you describe yourself as a person currently?
- 3c How do you feel about yourself at the age you are now? How old do you feel?
- 3d What has changed for you as you have got older? (describe event)
- 3e How have you stayed the same as you have got older? (describe event)
- 3f How have your views of crime changed? (describe event)
- 3g How have your views of crime stayed the same? (describe event)
- 3h How have your views of going straight changed? (describe event)
- 3i How have your views of going straight stayed the same? (describe event)
- 3j Is there a central theme/idea/message that runs through your life?

4. Sport and physical activity and leisure activities:

- 4a What role has sport/physical activity/leisure activities played in your life? (stages)
- 4b How regularly participate now? (describe)
- 4c What level did you get to?
- 4d What like and dislike about it?
- 4e How has it helped? (stages)
- 4f How has it not helped? (stages)
- 4g How has your physical self changed over time in relation to crime lifestyle?
- 4h Have you any hobbies? (describe how look in and out of crime and stages)
- 4i How do you spend your day currently, is there a typical week?
- 4j How do you spend your free-time & weekends?

5. Turning points/transitions:

- 5a Have there been any key or important turning points in your life? (describe)
- 5b How are you/have you managed the transition to a pro-social lifestyle?
- 5c Who has been important to you, in key moments and turning points?
- 5d How do you think people used to see you in the different stages? (family, friends, partner, work, groups/clubs)
- 5e How do you think other people see you now? (family, friends, partner, work, groups/clubs)

6. Setbacks/obstacles/crises:

- 6a What kind of setbacks/crises have you experienced?
- 6b What keeps you going when you get setbacks, crises or obstacles in life?
- 6c Have you experienced stigma or discrimination? (describe)
- 6d How have you dealt with discrimination in the past and the present?
- 6e How have you overcome your difficulties?
- 6f What have you learned from your difficulties?
- 6g What advice would you give to other people about making changes in your life?
- 6h What has been the key things for you in making changes?

7. Success and good life:

- 7a Tell me about your lifestyle when you've been into crime?
- 7b Tell me about your lifestyle when you've been straight?
- 7c What do you see as success in life?
- 7d What do you consider to be a good or healthy life?
- 7e What do you see as failure or not succeeding in life?
- 7f What do you consider to be bad or unhealthy life?
- 7g How do you feel you have succeeded in life?
- 7h Do you view yourself as successful? How did that come about?
- 7i What is/are the most important values to you in living life in different stages and now?
- 7j Do you know anyone who has gone straight? What do you think worked for them?
- 7k Do you know anyone struggling? What do you think is going on for them?
- 7l What do you see as good enough in terms of going straight?

8. Future

- 8a What are your current goals, plans, hopes, dreams? (work, home, family, relationships, hobbies, travel, wishes, dreams, hopes)
- 8b. What does the future hold for you?
- 8c. What do you hope for and what do think you can hope for?
- 8b Anything else you would like to tell me?

9. Interview process

- 9a What are your thoughts and feelings about this interview?

APPENDIX B



SCHOOL OF SPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Qualitative Research Unit

A narrative inquiry into desistance from crime and the role of physical activity

Information sheet for participants

Who is this information sheet for?

This sheet is for anyone who has shown an interest in this study. The purpose of this sheet is to tell you about the research. It is important you make a good informed choice about whether or not to take part in this study. Only after reading this and having the time to ask questions about the study will you be asked to consent to take part in the study and invited to sign a form. If you decide to participate it is appreciated. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and it is appreciated you considered this request.

What does 'informed consent' mean?

Giving informed consent means you fully understand what it is you are agreeing to. This includes understanding what is likely to happen to you and the information you give when you take part in the research. If you do not understand what the research involves, this is not informed consent.

What is the research about?

This is an independent piece of research based at the University of Exeter, UK and is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the PhD in Sport and Health Sciences. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding into how people seek to manage the change from an offending to a non-offending lifestyle and try to make good in their lives. It looks at the views and life experience of yourself and others and how this may change over time and with age. It also looks at how taking part in physical activity may or may not help.

What will I be asked to do?

To be involved in one or more interviews which will focus on your views and experiences of how people manage to stop offending or not, how a person's view of themselves may change over time and with age, and the role that may or may not be played by taking part in physical activity. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. It is your experiences, and what you want to tell about them that is of interest. The information you give is up to you and you are free to not answer any

question. Should you feel uncomfortable about any issues that you or the I (Jo Day) raises, you are free to change the topic, take some time out of the interview for a while, or stop the interview altogether. The length of each interview will be agreed with you; in the past people found they feel okay between 1 to 3 hours. If you agree, the interview will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you. You may also be asked to create or take pictures to assist the interviews and may also be asked if you would be willing for me (Jo Day) to speak to a friend, partner, or family member about their views on how people make good. If available and seems relevant you may also be asked for permission to access relevant official records. You will be asked for contact details as you may be contacted in the future to ask if you would mind being interviewed again about your views and experiences.

What will happen to the information I give?

All of the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed by me (Jo Day) for the purposes of analysis. All information will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be made publicly available. The information will be stored securely at the University of Exeter. Only me (Jo Day) and my supervisor, Prof. Andrew Sparkes, will have access to the data. The information you give will be kept for an indefinite amount of time for use in future analysis. If you do give information during the interview which will either threaten the safety or well-being of yourself or other people then appropriate others may need to be informed and this will be discussed with you. The use of personal data conforms to the data protection guidelines and The Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Health Sciences has reviewed and approved this project.

What feedback will I get?

You will be able to read transcripts from the interview and you may be asked to read my views of what has been said in the interviews. If you wish to view a summary report of the study and any publications once they are completed then there is a box you can tick on the consent form you sign.

If I consent what will happen?

I (Jo Day) will contact you and arrange a suitable time and place for an interview. It may be just one interview or a number of interviews.

If I don't consent what will happen?

There will be no disadvantage to you and you will not be contacted again.

If I consent can I change my mind at a later date?

You may decide not to take part in the study at any time, for any reason and without any disadvantage to yourself. You may request that any information collected from you to date be destroyed and not used either now or in the future. However, if your information has already been used in a completed report or publication this cannot be removed although it will not be used in future research.

Questions

If you have any questions about this, and/or the research in general, either now or in the future, then please do not hesitate to contact either myself as postgraduate researcher:

Jo Day

Qualitative Research Unit, School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU

jkd205@exeter.ac.uk

01392 262818

Or my supervisor

Prof. Andrew Sparkes, Qualitative Research Unit, School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Exeter, St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter, EX1 2LU

[A.C. Sparkes@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:A.C.Sparkes@exeter.ac.uk)



SCHOOL OF SPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCES
Qualitative Research Unit

A narrative inquiry into desistance from crime and the role of physical activity

Participant Consent Form

Researcher: Jo Day
Qualitative Research Unit

School of Sport and Health Sciences
University of Exeter

Heavitree Rd, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Email: jkd205@exeter.ac.uk

Phone: 01392 262818

Supervisor: Prof. Andrew Sparkes
Qualitative Research Unit

School of Sport and Health Sciences
University of Exeter

Heavitree Rd, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Email: A.C.Sparkes@exeter.ac.uk

Name of Participant (upper case).....

Name of Researcher (upper case).....

THIS SECTION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT:

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes / No

Have you received enough information about the study? Yes / No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? Yes / No

This study has been explained to you by whom?

.....

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

- At any time
 - Without having to give a reason for withdrawing
 - Ask for recordings and information collected to be destroyed
- Yes / No

Do you understand that:

- The interviews will be recorded
 - The interviews will be transcribed and along with any photos and recordings held securely at Exeter University to help analysis and will be kept for an indefinite amount of time for use in future analysis
 - The interview transcripts may be used for publications
 - Your identity will not be revealed at any time in the information held at Exeter University or in any publications
 - You may be asked to give permission for relevant official records, if available, to be read by the researcher
 - Appropriate others will need to be informed if any information is given which will either threaten the safety or well-being of yourself or other people
 - You may be asked if a partner, friend, family member or any other significant person would be willing to be interviewed
 - You may be contacted again in the future and asked if you would be willing to be interviewed
- Yes / No

I agree that data from my interview transcripts can:

- Be used in future publications Yes / No
- I agree to take part in this study Yes / No
- I would like to receive a summary report and copies of publications Yes / No

Signed (Participant): Date:.....

Signed (Researcher): Date:.....

APPENDIX D

Personal Information Sheet

Participant:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Gender:	
DOB/Age:	
Ethnic Group:	
Religion:	
Current Occupation:	
In a relationship:	Yes (how long/cohabit): No
Children:	
Location:	Prison/probation or license/community
How physically active now:	Very/moderately/not
Involved in sports or physical activity now:	Yes (which): No
Intend to be involved in the future:	Yes (which): No
In crime cycle or out:	Active Inactive
Believe can be crime free:	Yes No
Offence history	Not relevant No. Convictions: No. Prison sentences: Types of offences:
Last time committed an offence:	Not relevant Date: What:



SCHOOL OF SPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Qualitative Research Unit

A narrative inquiry into desistance from crime and the role of physical activity

Information sheet for staff participants

Purpose of the information sheet

This sheet is for anyone who has shown an interest in this study. The purpose of this sheet is to tell you about the research. It is important you make a good informed choice about whether or not to take part in this study. Only after reading this and having the time to ask questions about the study will you be asked to consent to take part in the study and invited to sign a form. If you decide to participate it is appreciated. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and it is appreciated you considered this request. Giving informed consent means you fully understand what it is you are agreeing to. This includes understanding what is likely to happen to you and the information you give when you take part in the research. If you do not understand what the research involves, this is not informed consent.

Purpose of the research

This is an independent piece of research based at the University of Exeter, UK and is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the PhD in Sport and Health Sciences. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding into how people seek to manage the change from an offending to a non-offending lifestyle and try to make good in their lives. It looks at the views and experience of how this process may occur and what role age and taking part in physical activity may or may not play.

Your role in the research

To be involved in one or more interviews which will focus on your views and experiences of how people manage to stop offending or not, how a person's view of themselves may change over time and with age, and the role that may or may not be played by taking part in physical activity. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. It is your experiences, and what you want to tell about them that is of interest. The information you give is up to you and you are free to not answer any question. The length of each interview will be agreed with you; in the past people found they feel okay between 1 to 3 hours. If you agree, the interview will be arranged at a time and place convenient to you.

What will happen to the information I give?

All of the interviews will be recorded and later transcribed by me (Jo Day) for the purposes of analysis. All information will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be made publicly available. The information will be stored securely at the University of Exeter. Only I (Jo Day) and my supervisor, Prof. Andrew Sparkes, will have access to the data. The information you give will be kept for an indefinite amount of time for use in future analysis. The use of personal data conforms to the data protection guidelines and The Ethics Committee of the School of Sport and Health Sciences has reviewed and approved this project.

Feedback

You will be able to read transcripts from the interview and you may be asked to read my views of what has been said in the interviews. If you wish to view a summary report of the study and any publications once they are completed then there is a box you can tick on the consent form you sign.

Consent

If you are interested taking part I (Jo Day) will contact you and arrange a suitable time and place for an interview. It may be just one interview or a number of interviews. If you are not interested in taking part there will be no disadvantage to you and you will not be contacted again. If you do take part you are free to decide not to take any further part in the study at any time, for any reason and without any disadvantage to yourself. You may request that any information collected from you to date be destroyed and not be used either now or in the future. However, if your information has already been used in a completed report or publication this cannot be removed although it will not be used in any future research.

Questions

If you have any questions about this, and/or the research in general, either now or in the future, then please do not hesitate to contact either myself as postgraduate researcher:

Jo Day

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Or my supervisor

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SCHOOL OF SPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCES
Qualitative Research Unit

A narrative inquiry into desistance from crime and the role of physical activity

Staff Participant Consent Form

Researcher: Jo Day
Qualitative Research Unit

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Email: jkd205@exeter.ac.uk

Phone: 01392 262818

Supervisor: Prof. Andrew Sparkes
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School of Sport and Health Sciences
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Heavitree Rd, Exeter, EX1 2LU

Email: A.C.Sparkes@exeter.ac.uk

Name of Participant (upper case).....

Name of Researcher (upper case).....

THIS SECTION IS TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT:

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes / No

Have you received enough information about the study? Yes / No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions? Yes / No

This study has been explained to you by whom?

.....

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

- At any time
- Without having to give a reason for withdrawing
- Ask for recordings and information collected to be destroyed

Yes / No

Do you understand that:

- The interviews will be recorded
- The interviews will be transcribed and along with any photos and recordings held securely at Exeter University to help analysis and will be kept for an indefinite amount of time for use in future analysis
- The interview transcripts may be used for publications
- Your identity will not be revealed at any time in the information held at Exeter University or in any publications

Yes / No

I agree that data from my interview transcripts can:

- Be used in future publications Yes / No
- I agree to take part in this study Yes / No
- I would like to receive a summary report and copies of publications Yes / No

Signed (Participant): Date:.....

Signed (Researcher): Date:.....

APPENDIX G

Interview Guide – staff participants

- 1. Background information**
Name, Gender, Nationality & ethnicity, Age, Years in job (at time of interview), Professional background, Job title
- 2. View of successful pro-social living and a good life**
What would you see as a success or someone doing well?
Have you seen any success stories or doing well in relation to prisoners leading a pro-social life on release? (If yes, ask for examples. If no, probe why not).
What do you think the reasons are that people succeed?
What do you think are the reasons that people do not succeed?
How would you define desistance from crime? What is good enough desistance in your view? (explain term desistance if needed)
What do you see as a good or healthy life for people you work with to aim for?
What do you see as a failure and or an unhealthy life?
- 3. View of identity change and age:**
How do you think age affects participation in a criminal lifestyle?
What differences do you see between younger adult offenders and older offenders? (18-25 years, 26-39 years, 40-59 years, 60 years plus)
What similarities do you see between younger adult offenders and older offenders? (18-25 years, 26-39 years, 40-59 years, 60 years plus)
How does how people see themselves affect their ability to lead a pro-social life? (Probe in what way and for examples).
- 4. Sport and physical activity and leisure activities:**
What activities are available?
How do you view the role of sport and physical activity programmes? (probe positives and negatives, different functions)
How do you think such activities may assist in leading to a pro-social life?
How do you think such activities enable changes or shifts in the way prisoners think about themselves and others?
How do you think such activities may be unhelpful?
- 5. Turning points/transitions:**
What do you consider to be the key turning points that may assist people to lead a pro-social life?
How do you think your service can assist people further? (probe reasons)
- 6. Management of setbacks/obstacles/stigma:**
What are they key obstacles people have to overcome in prison and on release?
How do you think your service can assist people further? (probe reasons)
- 7. Views of research**
What do you think would be useful to you to know in terms of the role of sport and physical activity programmes with prisoners?
Anything else you would like to add?
How have you found this process?
Explain next steps

APPENDIX H

Further Contacts

ADDACTION

Nation-wide drug and alcohol treatment agency provides links to local groups.

Website: www.addaction.org.uk

Tel: 020 7251 5860

Write: 67-69 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6PU

ADFAM

Support agency that provides contact details for local help groups.

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Tel: 020 7553 7640

E-mail: admin@adfam.org.uk

Write: 25 Corsham Street. London, N1 6DR

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

For help where drinking alcohol causing problems or difficulties.

Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Tel: 0845 769 7555

E-mail: help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Write: General Service Office, 10 Toft Green, P.O. Box 1, York, YO1 7NJ

APEX TRUST

Support agency provides help for people with criminal records to gain employment.

Website: www.apextrust.com

Tel: 020 7638 5931

E-mail: jobcheck@apextrust.com

Write: St Alphage House, Wingate Annexe, 2 Fore Street, London, EC2Y 5DA

BRIDGING THE GAP

Support agency that provides contact details for local help groups.

Website: www.btguk.org

Tel: 020 8090 1486

Write: Vestry Hall, London Rd, Mitcham, CR4 3UD

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING & PSYCHOTHERAPY

Provides help with finding and choosing a counsellor or therapist

Website: www.bacp.co.uk

Tel: 01455 883316

E-mail: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Write: BACP House, 15 St John's Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB

CARING FOR EX-OFFENDERS

Help with reintegration through the local church.

Website: www.caringforexoffenders.org

Tel: 0845 644 7544

E-mail: info@caringforexoffenders.org.uk

Write: Holy Trinity Brompton, Brompton Rd, London, SW17 1JA

CRUSE

Provides assistance to bereaved people to help understand grief and cope with loss.

Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Tel: 0844 477 9400

E-mail: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Write: PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1RG

DRUGSCOPE

Independent drugs information organisation.

Website: www.drugscope.org.uk

Tel: 0870 774 3682

E-mail: info@drugscope.org.uk

Write: Prince Consort House, Suite 204 (2nd Floor), 109/111 Farringdon Rd, London, EC1R 3BW

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS

For help where gambling may be causing problems or difficulties.

Website: www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Tel: 020 7384 3040

E-mail: info@gamblersanonymous.org.uk

GAMCARE

Provides support, information and advice to anyone suffering through a gambling problem.

Website: www.gamcare.org.uk

Tel: 020 7801 7000

E-mail: info@gamcare.org.uk

Write: 2nd Floor, 7-11 St John's Hill, London, SW11 1TR

NACRO

Information and advice for ex-offenders and resettlement such as housing or a job.

Website: www.nacro.org.uk

Tel: Resettlement & helpline 020 7840 6464 Freephone for ex-offenders, friends & family 0800 0181 259

E-mail: helpline@nacro.org.uk

Write: 159 Clapham Road, London, SW9 0PU

NEW BRIDGE FOUNDATION

Provide services to help with resettlement.

Website: www.newbridgefoundation.org.uk

Tel: 020 7976 0779

E-mail: info@newbridgefoundation.org.uk

Write: 27A Medway Street, London, SW1P 2BD

PHOENIX HOUSE

Specialist drug and alcohol treatment provider.

Website: www.phoenixhouse.org.uk

Tel: 0207 234 9740

E-mail: info@pheonix-futures.org.uk

Write: 3rd Floor, ASRA House, 1 Long Lane, London, SE1 4PG

RELATE

Provides service to anyone who is dealing with a difficulty in their relationship.

Website: www.relate.org.uk

Tel: 0300 100 1234

E-mail: relateonline@relate.org.uk

Write: Premier House, Carolina Court, Lakeside, Doncaster, DN4 5RA

SAMARITANS

Provides confidential non-judgemental emotional support for 24 hours a day.

Website: www.samaritans.org

Tel: 08457 90 90 90

E-mail: jo@samartians.org

Write: Chris, PO Box 90, Stirling, FK8 2SA

GLOSSARY

Prison Category System (men and women)

Category A: closed and highest security prison for people at significant risk to the public should they escape and also for high profile cases.

Category B: closed security prison for people moderate to high risk to the public should they escape. Also includes local prisons where people can be held on remand prior to sentencing.

Category C: closed security prison for people at moderate to low risk to the public should they escape. Also includes people awaiting release and close to the end of their prison sentence.

Category D: open low security prison for people at low risk to the public should they escape. Focuses on resettlement prior to release.

Basic, standard or enhanced prison status

An *Incentives and Earned Privilege Scheme* operates in each prison. There are three levels basic, standard or enhanced and depending on the level a person is on will determine the number and kind of privileges to which they are entitled.

Gouching

Refers to a state after someone has had a hit of heroin that may cause extreme drowsiness and to drift in and out of semi-consciousness.

IPP

Indeterminate Public Protection sentence.

HMPS

Her Majesty's Prison Service.

MOJ

Ministry of Justice.

NOMS

National Offender Management Service.

NPS

National Probation Service.

Prison Gym Orderly

A job within the prison where the person works in the gym and supports the Physical Education Instructors in the delivery of their physical education and recreational programme.

Prison Gym Staff

Each prison has a gym and sports facilities some include artificial surfaces or a playing field. The gym is staffed by Prison Officers that have undergone specialist training to become qualified Physical Education Instructors (PEIs). They are managed by a Senior Physical Education Instructor (SOPEI).

Probation Staff

Probation Officer has responsibility for a caseload of people convicted of criminal offenses and supervising them on probation license or probation order. Will have contact with the person whilst they are in prison. May also be responsible for an area of work within a probation team. Probation Support Officer has a caseload of people to supervise on probation license or probation order, supporting the Probation Officer who has overall responsibility for their work.

Prolific and Priority Offender Units

A multi-disciplinary team including Probation, Police, Drug Agencies, Councils and Community Support Worker who work together to address the needs of the small number of people in the community that commit a high number of crimes.

ROTL

Release on temporary license.

12-Step programme

Includes NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) a specific type of rehabilitation programme to address addiction to alcohol or illegal drugs and are delivered in both prison and in the community.

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