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'Prove Me the Bam!'
Victimisation and Agency in the Lives of
Young Women Who Commit Violent Offences

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of University
of Glasgow for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences
University of Glasgow, January 2007

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Susan A. Batchelor

Glasgow, January 2007

Abstract

This thesis investigates the social meanings attached to violence committed by young women. It challenges dominant discourses on young women's violent offending by describing and analysing the multiple motives and meanings that 21 women in prison gave to their violent behaviour when they were interviewed by the author in 2001.

Examination of the criminological literature on women who offend suggests that discourses relating to violent young women fall under four main headings, each of which draws upon an essentialist framework underpinned by fixed dualisms of masculine/feminine and/or victim/agent: female violence as a failure to conform to the feminine (the pathological violent female); female violence as a result of femininity (women as emotional, irrational and 'out of control'); female violence as the result of patriarchy (the cycle of abuse); female violence as the result of women's liberation (equal opportunity violence). The central argument of the analysis of the interview materials is that young women's accounts embody persistent conflicts and tensions, which defy simple classification. These include: ambivalent feelings about their families and their localities; complex attitudes regarding risk and risk-seeking behaviour; contradictory views about the use of violence; and a confused sense of gender identity. Within the interview setting young women attempted to make sense of these contradictions by either (a) challenging the definition of their behaviour as violent by drawing on (sub)cultural norms and values to demonstrate the normalcy of their activities, or (b) challenging the notion that they themselves were violent by attributing their offence to experiences of victimisation and the intoxicating effects of drugs and/or alcohol.

Taken together, these findings provide a powerful and sophisticated challenge to essentialist arguments about the emergence of a new breed of 'girl thugs' who simply seek to emulate the violent behaviour of young men. Criminally violent young women are not liberated young women, but young women who are severely constrained by both their material circumstances and attendant ideologies of working-class femininity and kinship. They are not determined by these circumstances, however. By pointing to the risk-seeking nature of young women's

violence, the study demonstrates the positive contribution violent behaviour can have in terms of young women's sense of self and self-efficacy. By illustrating the rule-governed nature of much of the violence committed by young women, it challenges images of female offenders as emotional, irrational and 'out of control.' Finally, the thesis questions pathological discourses by demonstrating how young women's violent offending can fulfil both traditional familial and (sub)cultural norms. In short, the study acknowledges that subordination and agency are simultaneously realised in young women's lives, and thereby demonstrates that there is no such thing as the essential violent young woman.

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Chapter One

Introduction: The ‘Problem’ of Young Women’s Violence

Fundamental objective of thesis

This thesis examines the social meanings attached to violence committed by young women. It problematizes the ways in which young women’s violence has been understood and explained within academic discourse by describing and analysing the multiple motives and meanings young women themselves ascribe to their violent behaviour.

Context of the study

We are dealing with more and more drunken and violent young women in our town centres [...] it’s a worrying problem that we need to look into. (John Vine, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland, quoted in MacAskill 2004)

In the absence of good public information, single incidents about women offenders can lead to misinformation about the nature of women’s offending and the punishments they receive. This makes it hard for service providers to form a clear view about how well their services are targeted and how effective they may be. (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorates for Scotland 1998, Recommendation 5)

Public and professional concern about young women’s violence has continued apace since the mid 1990s and in May 2004, Scotland’s most senior police officer, John Vine, was reported as having expressed disquiet about the rising number of crimes committed by drunken and violent young women (MacAskill 2004). Scottish

Executive statistics published in the same year showed that, in Scotland, women had increased their share of violent crime, from 7.5 percent in 2000 to 13 percent in 2002 (Scottish Executive 2001, 2004). Alongside this apparent escalation was an increase in women's imprisonment, with the average daily population of female sentenced young offenders growing by 52 percent between 1994 and 2003 (Scottish Prison Service 2004). Looking at these percentage rises, Vine's call for new research into the growing 'problem' of female violence (MacAskill and Goodwin 2004) is understandable. Historically, women have formed only a small proportion of the offender population and the nature of the crimes they commit is comparatively minor (Burman 2004a). The emergence of a 'new breed' of 'post-feminist criminal' (Worrall 2000) would therefore pose particular problems for a criminal justice system set up to deal predominantly with the offending behaviour of men. Relative low numbers and a perceived lack of threat have meant that, up until now, young women who commit violent offences have not been a key focus for service provision, nor indeed for criminological research, resulting in a general lack of information as to their background and characteristics and 'what works' in reducing their violent behaviour. This contrasts with the situation in North America, where the topic is now well established as a field of academic endeavour. Most of this research has centred on girls' gang involvement (Campbell 1984, 1990; Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn 1999; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 1997; Miller 1998, 2001, 2002) and the experiences of Black and Hispanic women involved in the street-level drug economy (Baskin et al. 1993; Baskin and Sommers 1993, 1998; Maher 1997). The current thesis reports the findings from one of the first empirical studies to focus on young women convicted of a violent crime in the UK. Drawing on qualitative interviews with young women in prison in Scotland, the thesis explores how women who offend explain their involvement in violence, and in particular the ways in which victimisation *and* agency figure in their accounts. In doing so, it challenges existing theories of violence, which rely on essentialised understandings of masculine and feminine behaviour.

This introductory chapter describes the impetus for and context of the study, and in doing so offers a general overview of patterns of female offending in

Scotland. A brief discussion of the significance, theory and research method follow, and the chapter concludes by outlining the organisation of the chapters.

'The 'problem' of young women's violence

The idea for this thesis originated from previous research into teenage girls' views and experiences of violence, carried out with colleagues at the University of Glasgow in the late 1990s (and reported in Batchelor et al. 2001; Brown 2005; Burman 2004b; Burman et al. 2003). Developed within the context of a perceived increase in violent and aggressive behaviour by girls, and fuelled by considerable media attention (Batchelor 2001; Burman et al. 2001), the girls and violence study was concerned with the everyday understandings, conceptualisations and experiences of 'ordinary' girls drawn from a cross-section of backgrounds across Scotland. Whilst concluding that physical violence by girls was not a major social problem,¹ this research identified a clear lack of information relating to violent offending by young women.

Stories about the growing 'problem' of female violence – particularly girl gangs roaming the streets and randomly attacking innocent victims – have been a recurring feature of the pages of our newspapers in recent years (see, for example, Carroll 1998; Duffy 2005; English 2006; Grant 2003; Gray 2006; Kibby 1999; MacAskill 2004; MacAskill and Goodwin 2004; Mitchell 2000; Stephen 1999; Thompson 2001).² In January 2006, *The Scotsman* reported that 'Ladette life has Scottish girls "among most violent in the world,"' while the equivalent headline in the *Daily Record* read: 'Scottish teenage girls are among the world's worst when it comes to boozing and fighting.' In all such reports, 'girl thugs' are portrayed in highly gendered ways, wherein their sexuality and lack of femininity are emphasised. Media accounts typically suggest that physical violence amongst young women 'is

¹ The research team found little evidence to suggest that girls were using physical violence to any great extent, since only a very small proportion (5%) reported being routinely physically violent towards others. Perhaps most notably, the research did not find any evidence of the existence of girl gangs. Not one of the 800 teenage girls that took part in the research claimed to be in a girl gang, nor did they know of anyone else who was a member (Batchelor et al. 2001).

² More recently media attention has shifted to the so-called 'mean girl,' who uses 'relational' or 'indirect' aggression to psychologically injure those that they she is closest to (see, for example, Hill and Hellmore 2002). This is discussed in some detail in Chapter Two.

now commonplace' and that, over the next few years, girls will 'overtake boys in the violence stakes.' Thus, in a society where concerns about crime are already firmly embedded within a discourse of youth (Muncie 2004), young women depicted as loud, loutish, often drunk and disorderly, out of control and looking for fights, are increasingly regarded as a new source of the 'youth problem' (Thompson 1998; Worrall 2000, 2004). Indeed, it could be argued, as Angela McRobbie (2000) suggests, that in Britain today 'young women ... have *replaced* youth as a metaphor for social change. They have become a touchstone, and sometimes a problem, for the whole society ... one of the stakes on which the future depends' (ibid.: 200-201, emphasis added). Hence, whilst the rhetoric surrounding violent and anti-social behaviour by young women echoes concerns about troublesome young men, it also carries an added dimension of gravity precisely because they are young women. Female violence is newsworthy not because of the crime committed but because of the gender of the offender (as the press coverage of Moors murderer Myra Hindley starkly demonstrates). According to traditional gender roles, women are deemed 'essentially' gentle, submissive, and passive. Women who transgress these roles by committing acts of violence are therefore considered 'doubly deviant' (Heidensohn 1985), as having violated not only the law, but also the accepted norms of femininity. Young women involved in violence are particularly disquieting because they are perceived to be outside the traditional arena of family control (Hunt et al. 2000). For young men, being on the streets is a 'natural,' legitimised social activity governed by rules of masculinity (Campbell 1986; Kennedy and Baron 1993). Girls and young women on the street, however, are less typical (McRobbie and Garber 1976).

Patterns of offending

Compared to young men, young women in Scotland form a clear minority at all stages of the criminal justice process. While, in recent years, concerns have been raised about the increasing number of girls and young women being drawn into juvenile and adult justice systems in both the UK and elsewhere (Alder 1996; Batchelor et al. 2001; Chesney-Lind 1997, 2001; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1992;

NACRO 2001), the fact that boys and young men are responsible for the large part of detected youth crime is well documented (see, for example, Burman 2004a). A recent report by Audit Scotland (2001), for example, noted that in Scotland there are three times as many recorded male offenders as female offenders in the 8-21 age band.³ According to data from the Scottish Executive (2006), there are eight times as many convictions for males as for females in the 16-21 year age band.

The relative invisibility of young women within the criminal justice system can also be accounted for by the types of offences they commit. While young women appear as offenders in all categories of offences, from the most to the least serious, when compared with male offenders their criminal activity tends to be less serious and therefore is regarded as less of a social problem. As Table 1.1 demonstrates (below), in Scotland, female young offenders are most likely to have been convicted of miscellaneous offences (such as common assault⁴ and breach of the peace) and crimes involving dishonesty (mainly shoplifting).

³ In Scotland the age of criminal responsibility is eight years.

⁴ In Scotland, a distinction is made between 'common assault' and 'serious assault.' According to the official classification of crimes and offences, an assault is recorded as serious if the victim sustains an injury resulting in detention in hospital as an in-patient, or any of the following injuries: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushing, severe cuts or lacerations or severe general shock. Whereas serious assaults are recorded under the heading 'Non sexual crimes of violence,' common or 'petty' assaults are categorised as 'Miscellaneous offences' (Scottish Executive 2006).

Table 1.1: Females aged under 21 with a charge proved by 10 most common charges proved, Scotland, 2004/05*

<i>Main charge proved</i>	Number	Percent (N = 3,020)
Simple assault	594	20
Shoplifting	378	13
Breach of the peace	360	12
'Other' miscellaneous offences (including non-payment of TV licence and breach of probation/community service)	218	7
Unlawful use of vehicle	189	6
Crimes against public justice (includes perjury, contempt of court, bail offences and failing to appear at court)	182	6
'Other' theft (includes forgery, embezzlement and reset)	170	6
Vandalism	162	5
Breach of social work orders	127	4
Drugs	106	4

**Source: Criminal Proceedings In the Scottish Courts, 2004/05 (Scottish Executive 2006)*

Table 2 (below) presents the criminal proceedings data relating to female violence in Scotland for the period 1995-2004/05.

Table 1.2: Number of females with a charge proven for non-sexual crimes of violence, including handling an offensive weapon, Scotland, 1995-2004/5*

Age	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001**	2002**	2003**	2004/05**
Under 21 years	52	66	61	77	92	96	72	103	129	94
21-30 years	100	111	123	109	123	111	139	172	190	195
Over 30 years	89	107	106	116	133	108	117	138	163	217
Total	241	284	290	302	348	315	328	413	482	506

*Source: *Criminal Proceedings in the Scottish Courts 1995-2004/05*

**The figures for 2001-2004/05 include data relating to 'handling an offensive weapon', which were moved from the 'non-sexual crimes of violence' group to 'other crimes' in 2001.

These data show that between 1995 and 2004/05 the number of females with a charge proven for violence more than doubled (increasing by 265 additional offenders, or 110 percent). Young women increased their number from 52 to 94, an increase of 81 percent, or 42 offenders.⁵ Viewed in isolation, these figures paint a picture in which young women appear to be becoming more violent. However, as with all official crime statistics, care must be taken to place these data in context. Excluding handling an offensive weapon, which the criminal proceedings data now categorises under the heading 'Other crimes,' violent crime accounts for just over one-and-a-half percent of the total crimes and offences committed by women in Scotland (Scottish Executive 2006). Put another way, the overwhelming majority of female offending is non-violent. This feature is even more striking if we consider the actual number of offences committed by women compared to men. In 2004/05, 327 women had a charge for a non-sexual crime of violence proven against them in Scotland, compared with 2,010 crimes of violence committed by men (*ibid.*).⁶ What this contextual data tells us, therefore, is that while the number of women convicted of a violent crime is increasing, violence (particularly serious violence) is still an overwhelmingly male activity.

⁵ This general upward trend is replicated in England and Wales, where the number of women found guilty or cautioned for violence increased by 14 percent between 1994 and 2003 (Home Office 2004), and in the US, where the percentage of female juveniles arrested for violent crime increased by 101 percent during the period 1988 to 1997 (cited in Zager 2000: 90).

⁶ These figures rise to 506 and 5,275 respectively if the data on handling an offensive weapon are included (*ibid.*).

Because the actual number of women involved in violent offending is low, very small numerical increases or decreases can make a great deal of difference in terms of reported percentage rises and falls (Batchelor 2001). Drawing on the figures presented in Table 2, for example, we can see that in Scotland in 2000, 96 women under the age of 21 had a charge for a non-sexual crime of violence proven against them, compared to 72 women in 2001 – a decrease of 25 percent, or 14 less offenders (Scottish Executive 2002, 2004). This was followed by an increase of 43 percent in 2002, when the total number of young violent females rose to 103 – 31 more offenders than in 2001, but only seven more than in 2000.⁷

It is also important to acknowledge that official statistics say as much about sentencing patterns and policy changes as they do offending (Acoca and Dedel 1998; Steffensmeier et al. 2006). It remains unclear whether the increases in female offending reported above can be attributed to *actual* rates of violent crime or changing *responses* to violence. Again their low numbers make young women who commit violent crime extremely susceptible to changes in criminal justice policy and practice. It could be possible, therefore, that what we are witnessing is not an increase in violent offending per se, but the increased reporting, policing and prosecuting of young women accused of violent offences. As we have already noted, in the 10-year period prior to 2003 the average daily population of female sentenced young offenders grew by 52 percent (an actual increase of 12 prisoners) (Scottish Prison Service 2004).⁸ This number increased by another six offenders (to 30) in 2004/05 (Scottish Prison Service 2005). Such trends have led commentators to argue that responses to young women who offend have undergone a fundamental shift, from a traditional welfare-oriented approach to an increasingly punitive form of formal criminal justice intervention (Alder and Worrall 2004; Chesney-Lind 1997, 2001; Howard League 1997; Reitsma-Street 1999; Worrall 2000, 2001, 2004).

⁷ See Gelsthorpe and Morris (2002) for a discussion of the data in relation to England and Wales.

⁸ The number of male sentenced young offenders fell by four percent during the same period (a decrease of 23 offenders) (Scottish Prison Service 2004).

Women in prison

As a group, the lives of women who end up in custody are characterised by poverty, addiction, abuse and/or psychological harm (Carlen and Worrall 2004; Loucks 2004). Research completed by the Howard League (1997) into young women serving sentences in adult institutions in England and Wales, for example, noted that many of the inmates had been subjected to abuse, had been in care, abused drugs or alcohol, had experienced poor family relationships and family breakdown and had been excluded from school. In their report for the Home Office, Morris and her colleagues (1995) found that 36 percent of the women in their study were in need of considerable support, advice and counselling for abuse; a fifth had severe problems with accommodation; 36 percent had problems regarding child care; 34 percent showed high need in terms of debts and benefits; and 43 percent were experiencing severe difficulties in terms of employment. North of the border, Nancy Loucks's (1998) research revealed that one of the most universally shared attributes of female inmates in Cornton Vale was a history of violent victimisation, with 82 percent of respondents having experienced some form of abuse during their lives, often on a daily basis. Emotional abuse was most common (71%), followed by physical abuse (60%), then sexual abuse (47%).⁹ Over half of the women in her sample were addicted to drugs, and over a third said that they had attempted suicide at some point. Eighty percent were unemployed. In a subsequent study, Henderson (2001) reported that only 14 percent of women in custody in Scotland previously stayed on at school beyond the statutory minimum leaving age (16 years) and that most of those who had left did so without any formal educational qualifications (61% of total). Of the women in her study who had been employed, most were employed in unskilled manual work, usually for a period of less than a year. Unsurprisingly, therefore, two-thirds were dependent on state benefits as their main source of income and almost half said their offending was related to financial need.

Given the multiple deprivations so many women take with them into prison, it is unsurprising that explanations of female offending have tended to focus on

women's status as 'victim,' depicting their actions as symptomatic of individual pathology or, alternatively, the result of circumstances beyond their control. As is demonstrated in Chapter Two, both traditional and feminist analyses of violence have been inclined to couch women's offending in terms of a 'gender differences' approach, which tends to essentialise differences between (all) women and (all) men. One of the major limitations of this approach is that it 'fails to account for similarities in [men's and women's] experiences, and also overlooks important differences *between* women' (Miller 2001: 199).

The study

The theoretical and empirical investigation on which this thesis is based sought to challenge existing portrayals of violence by young women through an examination of the feelings, beliefs, and experiences of young women convicted of a violent crime. The key question addressed was: how do young women in prison construct and recount subjectively meaningful explanations of their involvement in violent offending? Ensuing objectives were:

- to identify and examine the portrayal of young women's violence within academic discourse;
- to explore the subjective meanings of violence held by young women sentenced to imprisonment for violent offending; to investigate the sources of those self-perceptions, according to young women themselves; and to examine the ways in which these impact upon offenders' sense of self and contribute to violent behaviour (within and out with the institutional setting);
- to track the trajectory of individual offenders, exploring how structural divisions (e.g. age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability etc.) and situational context are related to young women's violence, and the inter-relationships between them.

⁹ Young female offenders in Loucks' study shared broadly similar characteristics to the adult female population, but the small number involved made reliable comparisons difficult.

Methods employed by the study included in-depth oral-history interviews with 21 young women detained in HMPYOI Cornton Vale in Scotland, interviews with adults that work with such young women, and documentary analysis (see Chapter Four). All of the young women in the interview sample were single and all were white, and ages ranged from 16 to 24 years.

Drawing upon a feminist social constructionist perspective, the research considered the experience of violence from the position of young women themselves. Feminist theory views the gender and power relationships between men and women as a determining principle of social organisation (Harding 1987). This is not to say that women are the passive victims of patriarchal ideology, but that it forms the context within which they construct their own identity. Within criminology, feminists have addressed the issue of female victimisation (especially in the areas of rape, domestic violence and sexual assault), the treatment of girls and young women in the systems of juvenile and criminal justice, and the wholesale neglect of these issues within malestream academia (Alder 1995; Carrington 1993, 1994). One of the great strengths of this work has been the mass critical attention paid to the misrepresentation of women within criminological accounts and, in particular, the folly of relying on biologically deterministic explanations of women's lawbreaking behaviour. An unexpected outcome, however, has been the emergence of the female offender as 'a unitary subject ... a hapless victim of a patriarchal legal system' (Carrington 1994/1998: 72).

Feminists working from a social constructionist perspective seek to challenge and disrupt discourses that essentialise women (and men) and differences between them, thereby addressing the complexity of raced, classed, and gendered subjectivities. Pat Carlen, for example, has consistently urged the abandonment of reductionist accounts of women and crime and tried to dispel the myth of the 'essential criminal woman' (Carlen et al. 1985). In contrast to those feminist theories that have 'persisted in the quest for global, a-historical, monocausal and essentialist explanations' of women's offending (ibid: 9), Carlen's work assumes that 'social constructions of sex and gender vary both across and within societies and ... have heterogeneous effects as they combine with other forms of differentiation, in

particular ... class and race' (ibid.: 10). Lisa Maher's (1997) research is also notable for the attention it draws to intersectionality, particularly the ways in which the convergence of race and gender shape the life chances of minority women operating in the illicit drug economy. The current thesis aims to build on this body of research, demonstrating that women's involvement in violence, like men's, has multiple motives and meanings in different contexts. Drawing on feminist re-readings of the work of French social theorists Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, the thesis attempts to offer a more nuanced understanding of the 'dialectical' relationship between agents' autonomy and the constraints of broader social, economic, and cultural formations; what Maher refers to as the 'middle ground' (1997: 201). In so doing, it argues that working-class women's violence 'makes sense' (Phoenix 1997, 1999) in the light of local community values and practices.

Contribution of the thesis

Reports and other research indicate there is a lack of qualitative research on women offenders in Scotland, and on young violent female offenders in particular. This thesis seeks to address this gap.

The thesis also makes an original contribution to the field of feminist criminology by challenging essentialist views of women's involvement in violence. Academic interest in women's involvement in violent crime has burgeoned in recent years. However, much of this interest has been based on the assumption that violence is an essentially male or masculine trait, thereby reinforcing stereotypical notions about women as the 'weaker' or 'gentler sex' (Day et al. 2003; Kruttschnitt and Carbone-Lopez 2006). Whilst acknowledging that as a group women in prison are amongst the most marginalized women in society, this thesis aims to disrupt the notion of woman as victim by exploring the more nuanced elements of agency and resistance. In doing so, it demonstrates that women who commit violent offences are both frequent victims of and active participants in violent crime. Further, it illustrates that the meanings and motivations for violent crime are influenced not only by

gender, but also by other dimensions of social life, namely social and economic situation and the local context of practise.

Finally, because the thesis is in effect a study of the extent to which young women are free to shape their own actions, identity and consciousness independently of the economic, ideological, and political circumstances in which they find themselves, it also makes a contribution to the agency/structure debate.

Layout of the thesis

The current chapter, *Chapter One*, has introduced the thinking behind and overall aims of the study. *Chapter Two* examines the criminological literature relating to women who offend, looking specifically at violent female offenders. This literature is described under four headings: female violence as a failure to conform to the feminine (the pathological violent female), female violence as a result of femininity (women as emotional, irrational and 'out of control'), female violence as the result of patriarchy (the cycle of abuse), and female violence as the result of women's liberation (equal opportunity violence). The chapter demonstrates that discourses of violent young women tend to draw upon an essentialist framework underpinned by fixed dualisms of feminine/masculine, victim/agent. Women who offend are either depicted as passive and helpless victims – a portrayal that confuses victimisation with victim identity and thereby denies women's agency, or they are cast as mean and menacing 'bad girls' – active, autonomous agents, freed from traditional ties of family and gender.

Building upon the anti-essentialist approaches of Bosworth (1999), Carlen (1983, 1985, 1988), and Worrall (1990), *Chapter Three* attempts to offer a more nuanced understanding of the 'dialectical' relationship between young women's agency and the constraints of broader social, economic, and cultural formations. Drawing on feminist re-readings of the work of French social theorists Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, the chapter highlights the importance of attending to the operation of power outside of the narrowly defined political realm. In other

words, it demonstrates the distinction between agency and autonomy, and the need to attend to the preconscious, emotional and embodied aspects of resistance.

Chapter Four describes the methods used in undertaking the research, including the methodological principles framing the study, the fieldwork process and analysis. It also includes a breakdown of the characteristics of the sample under study, along with a brief description of each of interviewees.

Chapters Five through to Eight present the findings of the research, interspersing the narratives of the respondents with comparators from the literature described in previous chapters. *Chapter Five* explores the broader contexts in which young women become involved in violent offending, focusing in particular on their views of their neighbourhood and family affiliations. *Chapter Six* looks at the motivations behind violence and other forms of risk-seeking behaviour, and in doing so points to the positive contribution offending can have in terms of young women's sense of self and self-efficacy. The chapter also notes, however, the role of risky behaviours in managing emotional pain, particularly for those respondents whose substance use had progressed to dependence.

Chapters Seven and Eight examine the subjective meanings of violence held by the young women and the ways in which these impacted upon their sense of self and contributed to violent behaviour. In general, the respondents possessed negative views towards violence, yet believed that there were certain situations in which the use of violence was justifiable, and indeed necessary. *Chapter Seven* outlines these prescriptive and proscriptive rules of violence. *Chapter Eight*, the final findings chapter, looks at the ways in which respondents whose offences transgressed these 'unwritten rules' negotiated their identities as violent women. Read together, these two chapters demonstrate the contradictory ways in which norms of appropriate femininity can be drawn upon as a means of accounting for violent behaviour.

Chapter Nine presents an explicit statement of the thesis, recording all the arguments and supporting illustrations that have been expounded. By doing so, it demonstrates the contribution to knowledge that is being made.

Throughout the thesis, quotations by the young women in the sample are referenced by a pseudonym. The Appendices include a glossary to assist those readers not familiar with the Scots vernacular!

Definition of key concepts

The thesis deploys three related concepts in order to frame the examination of social meanings attached to violence committed by young women: 'agency,' 'discourse,' and 'essentialism.' Because these terms are used in distinct ways within this text, it is important to offer a preliminary explanation.

Agency

The term 'agency' refers to the capacity of social actors to engage in purposive action. It implies that actors have the ability to make choices and impose them on the world, whilst acknowledging that they do so in circumstances not of their own choosing. It is therefore subtly distinct from the concept of 'autonomy,' which refers to the capacity of an individual to make an informed, undetermined decision.

Discourse

In this thesis, I use 'discourse' in the Foucauldian sense, as the ways in which knowledge is constituted and meanings are produced, and how these are intrinsic, consciously and unconsciously, to power relations, social practices, and subjectivities or senses of self. In layman's terms, discourses are sets of related ideas, concepts and beliefs that allow us to make sense of and 'see' things; they delineate what can be said about a specific topic, and what gets counted as truth. As such, they are not merely bodies of ideas, ideologies, or other symbolic formations, but are also social 'practices that systematically form the objects [and subjects] of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 48). One of the major aims of discourse analysis, then, is to examine

'the way versions of the world, of society, events, and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse' (Potter 2004: 202).

Essentialism

'Essentialism' is the belief that categories of objects or subjects have irreducible and unchanging qualities which distinguish them from other categories of objects or subjects. Within a feminist context, it generally refers to the attribution of a fixed essence to women (Grosz 1995). Women's essence can be seen to reside in nature or biology, or in particular psychological characteristics, and women are variously understood as passive, compliant, nurturing, vulnerable, and/or emotional, irrational, manipulative, devious. The idea that women are identified as such on the basis of 'transhistorical, eternal, immutable differences' has been rejected by poststructuralist feminists on the basis that it naturalizes gender hierarchies (Fuss 1989). Instead they embrace the notion of 'fractured identities,' insisting upon the need to acknowledge the differences among women and men.

Chapter Two

Nuts, Sluts and the 'Post-Feminist Criminal':¹⁰

Discourses on Violent Young Women

This chapter reviews academic discourses on female offenders and violent young women, identifying the normative assumptions about gender and agency that emerge, as a means of setting the scene for the empirical investigation that follows (in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8). The chapter argues that accounts of 'violent women' prioritise an essentialist framework that ignores differences *between* women, thereby precluding any analysis of women's agency. As perpetrators of violence, women are often regarded as challenging dominant notions of femininity and are therefore constructed as 'doubly deviant' (monstrous or evil) or 'mad not bad' (unlike 'ordinary' women). Feminists have responded to these accounts by locating women's violence in the context of patriarchy, insisting, for example, on the powerlessness and oppressed nature of the female murderess. More recently, there has been a tendency to focus on women's 'superior' qualities as a source of violence and aggression. Current debates about the 'mean girl' claim that young women use their 'caring' and 'nurturing' emotional relationships to psychologically harm and 'viciously' injure those that they are closest to.

By prioritizing an essentialist frame, each of these accounts fails to explain how structures of 'race' and class place women in dominant and subordinate relationships to one another and how these intersections of power shape the violence committed by young women. From the point of view of privileged white women, female violence may be infrequent and unusual, but for lower class minority girls it is less of an anomaly, as some of the literature discussed below will demonstrate. Essentialist discourses also leave little room to depict complexity, ambiguity and

¹⁰ Here the term 'post-feminist' refers to the liberal/neo-liberal claim that the political demands of first and second wave feminism have been met (enfranchisement, equal pay, sexual liberation and so on) and that men and women now compete on a level playing field.

contextualisation. As Chapter Three demonstrates, if we are to transcend dominant representations of violent young women as either helpless victims or volitional agents, we need to develop a more complex understanding of the dynamic between subordination *and* agency.

Following Phoenix (1997, 1999), the chapter organises discourses on violent young women in terms of four 'ideal types' of explanation (see Weber 1949):

1. female violence as a failure to conform to the feminine – the pathological violent female;
2. female violence as a result of femininity – women as emotional, irrational and 'out of control';
3. female violence as the result of patriarchy – the cycle of abuse;
4. female violence as the result of women's liberation – equal opportunity violence.

Female violence as a failure to conform to the feminine - the pathological violent female

As Carol Smart (1977) documented, in her influential book *Women, Crime and Criminology*, up until the 1970s the study of crime and criminality was very much a male domain, with most theories of crime developed by male criminologists to explain male patterns of offending. Women's tendency (or otherwise) towards crime was typically ignored, ending up 'as a footnote to works on men that purport[ed] to be works on criminality in general' (Klein 1976). One of the key reasons for this lack of attention was that women were traditionally viewed as passive beings, lacking in autonomy to act on their own. Edwards outlines the dominant perspective as follows:

The influence of sexism and male bias in criminology and related disciplines have principally taken the form of neglect, underestimation and misrepresentation of the nature and extent of female criminality; and such accounts as were given tended to be influenced not by evidence, but by stereotyped, often sexualised and highly deterministic preconceptions of the 'female nature.' (Edwards 1989: 165)

In comparison to males, then, women were thought to be *by their very nature* 'less delinquent, less dangerous, and less involved in criminal subcultures' (Gelsthorpe 1986: 125). Consequently, when women did offend they were regarded as an aberration and depicted in highly sexist or blatantly misogynistic terms.

One of the earliest attempts to theorise female criminality typifies this trend. The most notable criminologist of his time, Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) is best known for his attempt to determine the similarities and differences between criminals and the insane. By measuring skulls, and noting behavioural and physiological traits, he concluded that criminals were atavistic degenerates, genetic throwbacks to an earlier biological ancestry. These 'born criminals' had an inherited propensity for behaviour that the rest of humanity had outgrown. They evidenced cranial abnormalities (including large ears, low foreheads and large, jutting jaws) and general hairiness, had a lower sensitivity to pain, were of lower intelligence and had great vanity.

With his son-in-law Guglielmo Ferrero, Lombroso applied the principles of his previous work to female offenders and prostitutes in 1895. Failing to find the numbers of abnormal physical stigmata that they had originally anticipated in female offenders, Lombroso and Ferrero concluded that *all* women were less evolved than men and thus closer to primitive types. Such a proximity to species type rendered the female more conservative than the male, the result being that when a woman did commit a crime she was considered much more cunning, much more evil, much more vicious and, ultimately, as offending against her true feminine nature. Whereas Lombroso and Ferrero viewed the 'normal woman' as a 'species of slavery' characterised by 'piety, maternity, want of passion, sexual coldness, by weakness and an undeveloped intelligence' (1895/1959: 151), female criminals were considered to approximate more to males, both in terms of their physiological features and their behaviour. Thus the female offender was regarded as more active and thus more masculine, as physically strong, of superior intelligence, intensely erotic and as lacking in maternal instincts (*ibid.*). This so-called 'masculinity hypothesis' has

proven particularly resilient, as we shall see returning time and time again as a possible explanation of female crime (Heidensohn 1985).

While Lombroso and Ferrero asserted that female offenders possessed fewer 'degenerative' qualities than men, they claimed that female prostitutes exhibited *more* degenerative qualities, and hence considered prostitution as the feminine equivalent of male criminality:

We have seen, and shall see more and more, how the physical and moral characteristics of the delinquent belong equally to the prostitute, and how great the sympathy is between the two classes. Both phenomena spring from idleness, misery and especially alcoholism. Both are connected, likewise, with certain organic and heredity tendencies. (Lombroso 1911/1968: 186, cited in Phoenix 1999: 38)

They concluded by claiming that,

Prostitution largely takes the place of crime for women, thus explaining why women seem less criminal than men, and also giving a probable reason why women's criminality is greatest in old age, when prostitution no longer offers a profession. (Ibid.: 192)

Alongside their observations on the sexual passivity of the 'normal woman,' this focus on 'deviant' female sexuality reinforced socially acceptable distinctions between 'chaste/unchaste, good/bad, virgin/whore and madonna/magdalene' (Edwards 1981: 49) and has proved to be an abiding feature of 'malestream' accounts of women who offend.

Another well-known version of the pathological explanatory model can be found in the work of W. I. Thomas. Like Lombroso and Ferrero, Thomas (1907) attributed essentially different personality traits to men and women. As Klein explains,

He attributes to men high amounts of sexual energy, which lead them to pursue women for their sex, and he attributes to women maternal feelings devoid of

sexuality, which leads them to exchange sexuality for domesticity. Thus monogamy, while chastity for women, is the accommodation of these basic urges, and women are domesticated while men assume leadership, in a true market exchange. (Klein 1976: 13)

Here again, the subordinate social status of 'ordinary' women is explained in physiological terms, as a result of their biologically determined passive natures. Women who offend are explained by recourse to notions of pathology or abnormality. Unlike male criminality, which Thomas regarded as a 'normal' (even inevitable) aspect of adolescence, there is no 'normal' or 'acceptable' phase of delinquency for females.

In his classic text, *The Unadjusted Girl*, Thomas (1923) drew on the ideas developed by Lombroso and Ferrero, equating female delinquency with sexual delinquency (i.e. the display of active female sexuality among the lower classes). Whereas middle-class women were trained to value their chastity as an investment, for poor women Thomas claimed that 'sex [was] used as a condition of the realisation of other wishes ... [as a means] to get amusement, adventure, pretty clothes, favourable notice, distinction, freedom in the larger world' (Thomas 1923: 109). Such behaviour was not 'immoral,' Thomas claimed, because this would imply a *loss* of morality. Rather, he considered unadjusted girls to be acting 'amorally,' in that they had not been socialised to realise the importance of their sexuality in the first place. Thomas's solution to the problem of delinquent girls, therefore, was mechanical adjustment to the traditional feminine role. In other words, he claimed that they should be taught the importance of chastity and saving themselves for marriage.

Enduring images of the pathological female offender

Underpinning the texts of both Lombroso and Ferrero and Thomas is an assumption that there exists a simple binary distinction between criminal and non-criminal women, so that, by definition, to be an offender is not to be an ordinary woman

(Carlen et al. 1985; Phoenix 1997, 1999). Indeed, as Heidensohn (1970: 134) points out, women who offend are considered 'doubly deviant': as offending against both the criminal law and also against traditional gender norms. This assumption is particularly evident in contemporary depictions of violent women, particularly those who offend against children. If we think about the 'Moors murderers' Myra Hindley and Ian Brady, for example, the greater repugnance felt towards Hindley (variously referred to as 'an icon of evil' and 'the most hated woman in Britain' by the British press) arises from a conviction that the abuse of children by a woman is especially heinous because it is against the order of nature (Birch 1993). In popular accounts of the case, Hindley's crimes (like those of Rose West) were firmly placed in the context of women's 'natural and instinctive propensity towards children' (Cameron 1996a: 25).

Another of the enduring myths emanating from classical theories of female criminality is that female delinquency is primarily an issue of 'deviant' sexuality (Omodei 1981: 51), which in this context, refers to any display of sexuality that takes place out with the confines of traditional marriage or the nuclear family (Vance 1984: 3). As D'Cruze et al. (2006: 48) state: 'The close association between women's moral status and their sexual chastity makes sexual deviance a recurrent theme [of academic, popular and professional representations of female offenders] and can indeed eroticise women's physical violence' (think mud wrestling). In his work on delinquent subcultures, for example, Albert Cohen (1955: 144) claimed that, contrary to the 'versatility' of much male delinquency, female delinquency 'consists overwhelmingly of sexual delinquency.' Carlen (1987, 1988) identified similar themes in her review of the literature on girls and local authority care, where she concluded that professional intervention with girls was more likely to result from concerns about sexual behaviour than concerns regarding criminal offending, while Hudson (1984) found that, amongst girls, behaviour deemed to be 'gender inappropriate' was a sign of individual pathology or that the girl was out of control requiring intervention and resocialisation into 'culturally defined femininity.' True-life crime sources typically ascribe high sex-drives to most female serial killers (see, for example, Davis 2001: 242), while cinematic portrayals of violent women with

'deviant' sexual appetites include the films *Heavenly Creatures* and *Basic Instinct*. Feminist criminologists have argued that such stereotyping not only serves to reinforce appropriate gender roles, it also acts as a warning to women who may otherwise consider straying from these roles (see, for example, Chesney-Lind 1986; Heidensohn 1985; Walklate 2004).

Female violence as a result of femininity – women as emotional, irrational and 'out of control'

In addition to discourses that outlaw or demonise socially threatening deviant or violent women, other explanatory frameworks redefine deviance as *part of* the natural feminine condition. One such work is Otto Pollak's (1950) oft-cited study, *The Criminality of Women*. Unlike Lombroso and Thomas, who saw female violence as something of an aberration, Pollak argued that women were as (if not more) criminal than their male counterparts, but were protected from detection due to their inherent social position and the types of crime they committed. As domestics, nurses, teachers and housewives, he claimed, women had special opportunities to commit undetectable crimes and prey on vulnerable victims (e.g. stealing from their employers, abusing their children or poisoning their long-suffering husbands). As a result of their routine need to fake orgasm and their concealment of monthly menstruation, he also considered women much more devious and cunning and hence better able to 'cover up' their offences. They were also vengeful and vindictive, particularly during menstruation, having suffered the trauma of a first period that destroyed 'their hope ever to become a man':

Particularly because of the social meaning attached to them in our culture, the generative phases of women are bound to present many stumbling blocks for the law-abiding behaviour of women. Menstruation with its appearance of injury must confirm feelings of guilt which individuals may have about sex activities which they have learned to consider as forbidden. As a symbol of womanhood, it must also, because of its recurrent nature, aggravate many feelings of irritation and protest which women may have regarding their sex in a society in which women have had,

and still have, to submit to social inequality with men. In both instances, it must lead to a disturbance of the emotional balance of the individual and this becomes potentially crime promoting. (Pollak 1950/1961: 157-158)

The final factor that Pollak advanced as an explanation for the lower rates of official female crime was that of gallant male action in the criminal justice system.

Enduring images of the emotional, irrational female offender

Whilst Pollak's theories sound laughable today, references to female psychology and biology have continued to hold a dominant place in the explanation of female criminality long after they have been challenged as adequate explanations for male criminality. An obvious example is premenstrual syndrome (PMS). In 1998, when Jane Couch took the British boxing governing body to an industrial tribunal alleging sexual discrimination, officials from the board told the tribunal that women were too frail to box and became emotionally unstable and more accident prone as a result of Pre-Menstrual Tension (Bennett 1998).¹¹ PMS is also used as an explanation *for* women's violence, as are other quasi-hormonal disorders such as post-natal depression and Münchausen's Syndrome by proxy.¹² The leading proponent of a link between menstruation and crime is Katherina Dalton (1961), who interviewed women imprisoned for theft, prostitution or public drunkenness. Using self-report data, Dalton concluded that almost half of the women's offences had taken place during menstruation.¹³ Explanations that focus on female psychology include the

¹¹ PMT is a component symptom of PMS.

¹² In 1981, 29-year-old Sandie Craddock, who had been charged with the murder of her co-worker, was found guilty of manslaughter based on a plea of diminished responsibility due to PMS. The judge accepted her defence counsel's argument that PMS was a mitigating factor in the incident, drawing on diary evidence to demonstrate that it 'turned her into a raging animal each month and forced her to act out of character' (Benedek 1985: 24). In 1988, 20-year-old Anna Reynolds, who had killed her mother by hitting her on the head with a hammer, also had her murder charge reduced to manslaughter. At her trial, it was again argued that she suffered from PMS, which led to a temporary loss of control and impairment, reducing her culpability.

¹³ A number of articles have questioned the validity of Dalton's results on methodological and theoretical grounds (Allen 1984; Horney 1978; Robinson 1986), for example the inaccuracies associated with retrospective accounts. Other criticisms include the failure to carefully define the

legal defence of diminished responsibility and 'battered woman syndrome' (BWS).¹⁴ In her study of filicide, Wilczynski (1997) concluded that the treatment of offenders who kill their children follows a distinct and sexually specific pattern. She found that mothers were not only less likely to be prosecuted than fathers who killed their children, they were also more likely to use 'psychiatric' pleas (such as diminished responsibility and infanticide) and, as a result, received more psychiatric or non-custodial sentences.

One of the difficulties of the use of diminished responsibility and BWS as defences is that they reposition women who kill as victims – as 'mad' not 'bad' – and thus ultimately as not responsible for their actions. Wendy Chan, for example, claims that, as a 'syndrome,' BWS transforms women's experiences of reality 'into a psychiatric disorder requiring therapeutic or medical intervention' (2001: 152). In her analysis of court reports written by psychiatrists and probation officers, Hilary Allen (1987) demonstrates that whereas reports written for male defendants reflect a readiness to label them as monsters or madmen but nevertheless as possessing agency,

Reports on female offenders almost invariably address themselves to the mental state of their subjects, and throughout these reports the discussion of both the offence and the appropriate judicial response to it is interwoven with complex observations about the offender's mentality and inner experiences. (Allen 1987: 83)

What's more, Allen contends, they present women as acting without conscious volition, without comprehension and without meaning, but do not explain this puzzling state of mind to the effect that it is portrayed as a quite natural state of womankind. Consequently women's status as moral subjects is revoked and the crime is 'rewritten as a mere event in nature, a natural disaster in whose devastation the offender has simply been swept away, without either volition or responsibility'

syndrome; use of inadequate entry criteria; and failure to consider variation in length of menstrual cycle.

¹⁴ Since 1990, an extended struggle by feminist activists helped achieve notable reversals of sentence in the cases of Kiranjit Ahluwalia and Sara Thornton, both of whom killed their husbands after suffering long-term domestic violence.

(ibid.: 85). The offender's 'volatile and determined personality' is presented not as the origin of her violent behaviour, but as evidence of the damage that she has suffered at the hands of others (ibid.: 85-6).

Court reports also invoke the domestic and 'feminine' positions of the women they are referring to in order to diminish the need for a punitive or preventative response (Allen 1987). The assumption is that the demands of public protection can be adequately met by placing a violent female offender under familial supervision. This reflects a long-standing belief that the family is the proper forum for the control of young women, and that violent women are as much in need of moral rescue as of punishment. In his work on violent youth gangs (or 'scuttlers') in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford, Davies (1999) found that the sentencing of female scuttlers tended to be relatively lenient, especially if parental co-operation in chastisement was forthcoming.¹⁵ In an analysis of more recent data, Kruttschnitt (1992) discovered that probation officers' reports recommended less formal (i.e. state-imposed) control for those women in a situation of strong economic dependency within the family, while Gelsthorpe and Loucks (1997) have shown that magistrates view the status of marriage as a sign of stability.¹⁶ Similar findings led Carlen (1988) to argue that the majority of women who go to prison are sentenced not according to the seriousness of their crimes but primarily according to courts' assessment of them as wives, mothers and daughters.

Normative conceptions of femininity are also reflected in the motives popularly attributed to women who offend violently. Whereas men are commonly thought to engage in 'instrumental' violence (i.e. they are motivated by a desire to control, subdue, or reproduce subordination), women's violence is typically portrayed as 'expressive' (committed in the heat of anger, to get one's point across). As one female newspaper columnist put it, 'It is in keeping with our nature to kill out

¹⁵ Although female scuttlers were denounced publicly in terms that suggested that female violence was viewed more seriously than male violence, magisterial concern with the moral well being of female gang members led to the adoption of alternative measures intended to deter young women from 'loitering' in the streets.

¹⁶ However living with someone was better than being alone as it provided a degree of social control (Gelsthorpe and Loucks 1997: 48). Ideally women should live with their parents or husbands (or long term partner), or at least have family in the area. Responsibility for children was recognised as exerting a controlling influence.

of passion, and to do so ruthlessly' (Douglas-Home 1996).¹⁷ According to Anne Campbell (1993), 'Both sexes see an intimate connection between aggression and control, but for women aggression is the *failure* of self-control, while for men it is the *imposing* of control over others' (Campbell 1993: 1, original emphasis). In other words, women aggress when they are driven to it by extreme anger or frustration, whereas for men aggression 'is what aggression achieves socially: it imposes control over other people, and in doing so creates winners and losers. It publicly affirms the masculine hierarchy' (Campbell 1993: 55). These different understandings, Campbell maintains, result from men and women's differing social contexts. 'Women are not born calm', she writes, they 'experience anger as often and as deeply as men' (ibid.: 20). The difference is that they learn different lessons around aggression than men do:

[a boy] must learn whom he can fight, what constitutes an adequate provocation, how to conduct his violence and when he can reasonably expect condemnation, recognition or glory for his actions ... the most remarkable thing about the socialization of aggression in girls is its absence. Girls do not learn the right way to express anger; *they simply learn not to express it.* (Ibid., emphasis added)

As a result, when women do experience feelings of anger and respond aggressively, they feel shame and humiliation. Aggression, according to Campbell's (1993) research, feels good to men but not to women.

This construction of the relationship between gender and aggression as a duality not only reinforces stereotypical notions of women as irrational, emotional, out of control, and so on, it overlooks wider forms of structural inequality (such as 'race' and class). As Campbell's (1984/1991) own research with girl gang members demonstrates, in certain social contexts women can adopt a much more instrumental approach to the use of aggression. The young women in her 1984 study grew up in

¹⁷ Love is portrayed as central to a woman's psyche, such that loss or betrayal may make her crazy; in other words, 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned'. During her trial for murder, Tracie Andrews' defence counsel claimed, 'the killing was the result of a spontaneous outburst of passion that overwhelmed Miss Andrews' (Weaver 1997a) and the prosecution described her as 'obsessive',

neighbourhoods plagued with violence, high crime rates, poverty, and alcohol/drug abuse, and where they either witnessed a great deal of physical assaults and violence or were the victims of such abuse themselves. Family breakdown, violent childhoods, and abusive and alcoholic parents characterized their home lives. The young women responded to this set of circumstances by demonstrating instrumental aggression in order to 'get a rep' and thereby enhance their chances of survival on the street:

Fear and loneliness – in their families, their communities, and their schools – are the forces that drive young women toward an instrumental view of their aggression. The key to this [survival] is the development of a reputation for violence, which will ward off opponents. (Campbell 1993:133)

Hence, under conditions of poverty, violent neighbourhoods, and dysfunctional and abusive home lives, traditional gender-role expectations lose their salience, or indeed take on a different form.

This is an argument taken up by James Messerschmidt. Building on the work of Bob Connell (1987, 1995), Messerschmidt argues that some women choose violence as a means of achieving a positive feminine identity, albeit in circumstances limited by the structures of labour, power, and cathexis. In other words, he recognises that as women's positions in terms of class and 'race' varies, so will their resources for accomplishing femininity. Drawing on Campbell's (1984/1991) work, Messerschmidt argues that:

In the particular context of the youth gang, the criteria of 'bad-girl' femininity involves physical strength and power as resources for publicly demonstrating individual proficiency at defending the 'hood' by conquering adversary gang girls. Indeed, girls (as representatives of a rival 'hood') are the subject of competition in the struggle to secure a situationally specific feminine identity. In other words, what is usually considered atypical feminine behaviour outside this situation is, in fact,

'possessive' and 'tormented by jealousy' (Weaver 1997b). The classic cinematic portrayal of the vengeful lover can be found in the film *Fatal Attraction*.

normalised within the social context of a neighbourhood conflict; girl gang violence in this situation is encouraged, permitted, and privileged by both boys and girls as appropriate feminine behaviour. Thus, 'bad-girl' femininity is situationally accomplished and context bound within the domain of the street. (Messerschmidt 1997: 82)

The girls-in-the-gang illustration thus reveals how social structures are constituted by social action and, in turn, provide resources for doing 'race,' class, and femininity in particularised ways. What is viewed as atypical behaviour outside the 'hood' is normalised within the context of inter-neighbourhood conflict. This highlights the limitations of relying on a gender-centric theory of violence, particularly one that is based upon a white, middle-class construction of femininity.

Female violence as the result of patriarchy – the cycle of abuse

The pathologisation of female offenders found in criminological and psychiatric analyses has been criticised for failing to engage with the social, personal, and political context of women's offending. A third explanatory model, referred to here as the cycle-of-abuse discourse, seeks to address this context and in so doing reclaim the welfare needs of offending women by reconstructing them as victims. This discourse is reflected in feminism's focus on male violence and attendant lack of attention to women who are the perpetrators of violence.

Feminist criminology originally developed in the late 1960s and 1970s as a critique of mainstream criminology (Heidensohn 1968; Klein 1976; Smart 1977). Put simply, early feminist accounts argued that women had been largely ignored by traditional studies of crime, and where they were depicted, it was in a blatantly sex-stereotyped manner. In her important essay on the sociology of deviance, for example, Marcia Millman (1975) noted that male researchers tended to glamorise and identify with their male subjects, portraying them as interesting and articulate people. In contrast, male studies of prostitutes – the only category of female deviance that captured male researchers' attention – silenced their female subjects, quoting

male 'authorities' on the subject rather than the women themselves. Even in Bryan's (1965) 'supposedly empathetic study of prostitutes,' she observed, 'the pimps are treated as more intelligent, observant and trustworthy than the subjects of the study' (1975: 261). 'Howard Becker,' she remarked, 'certainly never asked the wives of jazz musicians what *they* thought about their husbands' occupations, far less quoted them as authorities on the subject' (Millman 1982: 260, quoted in Heidensohn 1996: 151). One of the key tasks facing scholars working in the 1970s and 1980s, then, focused on depicting 'real women' and 'women's experiences.'

Women as victims

One of the first gaps in the criminological literature that feminist activists and scholars sought to address was the issue of female victimisation, especially in the areas of domestic violence and sexual offences (Carrington 1994; Heidensohn 2000). They demonstrated that women experienced far greater victimisation than was previously acknowledged, and that incidences of domestic violence and sexual offences against women were far higher than suggested by official statistics and crime survey data. Radical feminists such as Susan Griffin (1971) linked violence against women to a culture of male domination. As Susan Brownmiller (1975/1976) acknowledged in her analysis of rape, sexual violence and the threat of sexual violence are a means of keeping women in their place. All men, she claimed, benefited from the fact that some men rape. This important body of work achieved three key accomplishments. First, in demonstrating the universality of rape, both historically and cross-culturally, radical feminists crushed any assumption that rape was an activity undertaken by abnormal or pathological males. Secondly, it established rape within the broader (patriarchal) social structure. Thirdly, it implicated 'masculinity' in a 'conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear' (Brownmiller 1975/1976: 15, original emphasis). The critical concepts were patriarchy, domination, oppression, and exploitation, in which men were deemed the powerful and women were 'other' (i.e. non-aggressive and non-violent).

Without doubt these studies opened society's eyes to hidden issues of violence against women and demystified the perception of the domestic sphere as 'safe haven' (Rafter and Heidensohn 1995: 7). However, they also contributed to an essentialist perspective that framed women as victims, in effect trading one reductionism (sex) for another (gender) (Cousins 1980). As Walklate (1995: 40) acknowledges, the view that 'all men are potential rapists' stems from an assumption that 'to be female is intrinsically good and to be male is intrinsically bad.' In other words, it is a position that 'reflects the view that there are immutable differences between males and females and that we explain male and female behaviour by reference to these differences' (ibid.). The understanding of gender evoked by such a focus is implicitly static and deterministic. Jefferson (1996: 339) notes: 'whether the ultimate root of male dominance was seen as biology or culture, there seemed little possibility of escape from either, anatomical destiny or the "iron cage" of sex-role socialisation.'

The problem with explanations of violence which focus exclusively on gender oppression is that they ignore or minimise violence perpetrated by women, and in doing so fail to address how 'race,' gender identity, sexuality, body size, skin colour, age, ability, and class factor in such violence (Batacharya 2000, 2004; Maher 1997). An overriding concern with male-female difference gives rise to assertions that categorise the behaviour of all men and all women (Jefferson 1996). Yet violence is not an exclusively male activity and the victims of violence are not exclusively female (Mezey and King 1992; Newburn and Stanko 1994; Stanko and Hobdell 1993). Nor is gender the only form of structural power that exists in society. The analysis of women solely as victims emphasises their dependence and vulnerability and in doing so prohibits a critical analysis of women's power, agency and choice (Day et al. 2003; Downs 1996; Kruttschnitt and Carbone-Lopez 2006; Miller 2001; Morrissey 2003; Motz 2001).

Women as offenders/victims

Compared to the wealth of literature on women's victimisation, feminist attention to women who offend has been slow to develop (Chesney-Lind 2006), and analyses of violent women have been predominantly concerned with women in abusive relationships who kill their abuser (Morrissey 2003). Unsurprisingly, such studies have sought to link women's violence with the oppressive domestic and familial situations in which they 'find themselves.' In this model of understanding, the 'violent woman' is reconstructed as the 'abused woman' and women's violence is framed as a response to an abusive situation or past abusive experiences.

A prominent theme in feminist theorising in the 1980s and 90s was of 'blurred boundaries' between victimisation and offending (Gilfus 1992; Gaarder and Belknap 2002). In the UK this theme was used to explain the progression of girls and young women from local authority care to adult custody (Carlen 1987, 1988),¹⁸ while in the US it was applied to the criminalisation of girls who ran away from backgrounds of abuse (Chesney-Lind 1989; Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez 1983; Chesney-Lind and Sheldon 1992; Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Gilfus 1992; Owen and Bloom 1995; Moore 1991; Pollock 1998; Widom 1989). Chesney-Lind and Rodriguez (1983) described the existence of a systematic process of criminalisation unique to women that magnifies the relationship between ongoing societal victimisation and eventual entrapment within the criminal justice system. Widom (1989) found that women who were adjudicated abused or neglected as children had higher arrest rates as adults than women who had not suffered maltreatment as children. Robinson (1994) reported that girls' experience of sexual abuse and early sexualisation produced increasing isolation and alienation from normative juvenile experiences and, hence, contributed to later criminal activities.

US research also demonstrated that serious family problems contribute to girls' gang involvement. Family factors cited by Moore (1991) include: childhood abuse and neglect, domestic abuse between parents, family drug and alcohol

¹⁸ Pat Carlen (1987), in 'Out of Care into Custody,' writes that those who end up in care are often there because of existing mental health problems: 'Families are often too poor financially to pay for alternative ways of coping with illness, bereavement, single parenthood, homelessness.'

addiction, witnessing the arrest of a family member, having a family member who is chronically ill, and experiencing death in the family during childhood. Joe and Chesney-Lind (1995) observed that the girl gang members in their study had parents who worked long hours or who were under- or un- employed. These circumstances, they claimed, affected both girls' supervision and the quality of family relationships. Young women in Miller's (2001) study were significantly more likely than non-gang girls to have witnessed physical violence between adults in their homes and to have been abused by family members. In addition, they were more likely to report familial drug use. Most significantly, however, they were much more likely to have experienced multiple family problems – with 60 per cent (vs. 24%) describing three or more of the following problems: being the victim of abuse, witnessing physical violence between adults, alcohol abuse within the family, familial drug abuse, and the incarceration of a family member. More than two-fifths (44%, vs. 20% of non-gang girls) had experience of four or more difficulties.

As Daly (1992) acknowledges, the concept of 'blurred boundaries' is an important contribution to the criminological literature, particularly, it would seem, in relation to female offenders. However, a major limitation of this work is that it does not explain *how* the effects of early childhood experiences may influence a young woman to adopt violent behaviours herself. As Daly puts it: 'feminist accounts of lawbreaking have created an unexplained "black box" between women's experiences growing up and their lawbreaking as adults' (1992/1998: 150). It also glosses over crucial questions of agency and responsibility:

[W]here does victimisation end and responsibility for acts that harm others begin? How do we characterise women when they do things that are wrong? A seamless web of victimisation and criminalisation tends to produce accounts that focus on victimisation and leave little agency, responsibility or meaning to women's lawbreaking. (Ibid.: 149-150)

Hence denying or avoiding consideration of women's use of violence does them a great disservice (Allen 1987; Burbank 1987, 1994; Campbell 1993; Downs 1996; Miller 2001; Morrissey 2003; Motz 2001). It contributes to the falsehood that women

who commit violent crimes are in some way abnormal or bizarre; it denies women any agency or choice in their lives; and it leaves us with little understanding of (or guidance as to how we should react to) violence perpetrated by female offenders. Not all violent acts by women are in response to abusive relationships. As we shall see in the following section, it also encourages a 'backlash' (Chesney-Lind 2006) whereby some commentators feel challenged to 'prove' that women are just as violent as men.

Female violence as a result of women's liberation – equal opportunity offending

The final explanatory model that I would like to highlight draws on ideas of equal opportunity and gender neutrality. In its crudest form, this framework argues that 'If women can be engineers, then they can be violent offenders too.' It originally found expression in Freda Adler's (1975a) much-publicised book, *Sisters in Crime*, which argued that as women became more liberated within society they would become more 'masculinised' and thus more prone to crime. Rita Simon's (1975) *Women and Crime* came to a similar conclusion, suggesting that women's increased share of arrests could be explained by increased opportunity in the workplace. Together these works are referred to as the 'emancipation' or the 'liberation' hypothesis.

The liberation hypothesis

Contrary to previous works on female criminality, Adler and Simon did not view women as passive beings; quite the contrary, they depicted them as autonomous actors, actively engaged in a number of spheres, including crime. 'In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in the fields of legitimate endeavour,' Adler claimed, 'a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes' (1975b: 42). Through their participation in traditionally 'non-feminine' activities, women were believed to be coming to adopt an 'imitative male machismo competitiveness' (Adler 1975a: 98) that was linked to violent crime:

The phenomenon on female criminality is but one wave in ... [the] rising tide of female assertiveness – a wave that has not yet crested and may even be seeking its level uncomfortably close to the high-water mark set by male violence ... [Females are now] robbing banks single-handedly, committing assorted armed robberies, muggings, loan-sharking operations, extortions, murders, and a wide variety of other aggressive violence-orientated crime. (Ibid.: 1, 14)

This, Adler claimed, was the 'darker side' of women's liberation (ibid.: 13). No longer confined by their domestic role to lesser crimes, a 'new female criminal' had emerged.

A number of studies in the 1980s set out to test Adler's theory (see, for example, Balthazar and Cook 1984; Robertson et al. 1987), but none were able to confirm any association between psychological masculinisation or non-traditional economic opportunity and violent crime (Shaw and Dubois 1995). Where increases in female crime rates were discovered, they were located in non-violent property crimes, such as shoplifting and forgery (Steffensmeier et al. 1979), crimes that are often regarded as stereotypically feminine. Drawing on self-report data, James and Thornton (1980) investigated the relationship between female high school students' attitudes towards feminism and involvement in offending behaviour, and discovered no evidence of a link between pro-feminist attitudes and increased offending. On the contrary, they found a statistically significant relationship in the opposite direction:

First of all, we do find evidence that girls' attitudes towards feminism directly link to their involvement in property and aggressive delinquency. We do not, however, report that girls who are approving of feminism in terms of fighting for equal rights and advocating change in traditional gender roles are more likely to engage in delinquency than are girls who support more traditional positions. The opposite appears to be true: favourable attitudes towards feminism inhibit involvement in property and aggressive offences. (James and Thornton 1980: 243)

Chesney-Lind's (1986) review came to a similar conclusion, making the important point that offending women are not liberated women, but rather they are 'minority

women drawn from backgrounds of profound poverty who [have] committed "traditionally female" crimes such as petty theft or prostitution' (Chesney-Lind 1986: 81). In other words, the majority of female offenders are motivated by need not greed (Box 1987; Box and Hale 1983; Carlen 1988; Naffine 1987).¹⁹

Enduring images of the post-feminist criminal

Despite being largely discredited, stereotypes of the liberated female offender have refused to go away (Worrall 2000). As both Lisa Maher (1997) and Jody Miller (2001) discuss, much of the recent research on the US inner city is in this vein. Baskin and Sommers (1998), for example, suggest that women's crime is increasing more rapidly than men's crime and that women make up an increasing share of serious offenders. According to Baskin et al. (1993), 'Women in inner-city neighbourhoods are being pulled toward violent crime by the same [economic and social deprivation] forces that have been found to affect their male counterparts' (1993: 413). They conclude that 'women's roles and prominence have changed in transformed neighborhoods' (ibid.: 415), such that there exist 'new dynamics of crime where gender is a far less salient factor (ibid.: 417). Taylor (1993) agrees. He claims that African American women in Detroit gangs have 'moved into more serious modes of independence and operation' as a result of the socio-economic consequences of deindustrialisation. 'The influence of the drug commerce', he claims, 'has played a key role in black female emancipation' (1993: 23). According to Bourgois:

Greater female involvement in crack reflects in a rather straightforward manner the growing emancipation of women throughout all aspects of inner-city life, culture and economy. Women – especially the emerging generation, which is most at risk for crack addiction – are no longer obliged to stay at home and maintain the family

¹⁹ Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) argue that the changes in female offending vis-a-vis changes in male offending between 1935 and 1990 are small and not substantively important for most offenses. However, they do report substantial changes in larceny, embezzlement and fraud. Based on these patterns, they maintain that changes in female offending have been modest and are limited mainly to property offences.

as they were a generation ago. They are no longer so ready to sacrifice public life or forgo independent opportunities to generate personally disposable income ... To a certain extent, the emancipation of women has taken place at a faster rate on inner city streets than it has in middle-class suburbs. (Bourgois 1989: 643-4)

Feminist researchers have also paid attention to changes in the structural inequalities that shape women's offending, however – unlike Baskin and Sommers, Taylor, and Bourgois – they insist on the continued salience of gender (Miller 2001).

Maier's research, for example, demonstrates that 'while crack has clearly prompted shifts in the gender regimes which structure social and economic life in and around the street-level drug and sex markets, these shifts have not necessarily strengthened the position of women' (1997: 17). With the exception of sex work, Maier argues, most opportunities for income generation in the street-level economy remain closed to women:

[I]t cannot be emphasized enough that the advent of crack cocaine and the concomitant expansion of the drug economy can in no way be read as 'emancipatory' for women drug users. The conditions of street-level sexwork have been adversely affected by shifts in social and economic relations produced by widespread crack use in low-income minority neighborhoods ... The sex market became flooded with novitiates, the going rates for sexual transactions plummeted, and deviant sexual expectations by dates increased, as did levels of violence and victimization. (Maier 1997: 196)

Analyses which maintain that gender inequality is declining in significance, Maier concludes, confuse individual agency with freedom (*ibid.*: 17). There remains overwhelming evidence that patterns of offending and drug use within minority inner-city communities remain firmly demarcated by gender and reflect increasing female dependency on the state, rather than a newly gained independence and equality.

The rise of the new ‘mean girl’

At the turn of the century public concerns relating to the problem of violence among working-class (and, in North America, minority) young women gave way to a more general and insidious moral panic about the problem of ‘ordinary’ girls’ increased use of so-called ‘relational’ or ‘indirect’ aggression (Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2004; Ringrose 2006). As Hill and Hellmore reported in the *Observer* in 2002:

Relational aggression is fast becoming a globally recognised phenomenon with a slew of publications, including Rachel Simmons’s *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls*, Emily White’s *Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes* and Phyllis Chesler’s *Woman’s Inhumanity to Woman*,²⁰ agreeing that girl-on-girl cruelty is reaching new extremes of carefully modulated and controlled viciousness. (Hill and Hellmore 2002)

The article went on to cite Hereward Harrison, policy research and development director for ChildLine:

The bullying tactics chosen by boys haven’t changed for decades, but girl-on-girl cruelty evolves all the time, taking on the opportunities afforded to them by new technologies, such as text messaging, and building on the tricks they learn as they go ... Girl bullies are very creative and inventive in the way they carry out their torture. (Hereward Harrison, in Hill and Hellmore 2002)

As another so-called expert, explains:

Quite simply, girls have a superior social intelligence ... Both genders bully, but girls are better at it; they are more switched on to the nuances of social interaction and use psychological forms that are harder to detect and easier to deny, and they can do it with a smile. (Tim Fields, co-author of *Bullycide: Death at playtime*, in Hill and Hellmore 2002)

²⁰ Rosalind Wiseman’s (2002) book, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*, was published in the same year, and provided the basis for the 2004 film, *Mean Girls*.

The stereotype of the 'mean girl', then, incorporates elements of the liberation thesis (this 'new' form of female aggression is 'modulated' and 'inventive,' 'evolving,' 'taking on new opportunities,' 'reaching new extremes'), but also redefines aggression as part of the natural feminine condition (girls have 'a superior social intelligence' and are better able to hide their 'vicious' behaviour behind a smile). Again we see the emergence of an essentialist understanding of gender that views young women as essentially different from young men – where boys fight physically, girls 'manipulate.'

These sensationalist accounts of girls' aggression are rooted in bona fide research in the field of developmental psychology, which focuses on differences between boys' and girls' aggression. Work by Björkqvist and Nimela (1992), Björkqvist et al. (1992) and Rys and Bear (1997) in the early/mid nineties extended traditional understandings of 'aggression' to include what is termed 'indirect aggression,' which involves 'social manipulation' (e.g. talking about people behind their backs, spreading rumours, purposively excluding people from the peer group, writing nasty notes in class). This form of behaviour, the authors claimed, was more often reported for girls and young women. From this basis, Crick and Grotpeter (Crick 1996; Crick and Grotpeter 1995) began using the term 'relational aggression' to examine young girls' use of relationships to hurt and psychologically injure those they are close to. Like indirect aggression, relational aggression is behaviour specifically intended to hurt another person's friendships or feelings of inclusion in a peer group. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) claim relational aggression is engaged in with much higher levels by girls than boys because of the centrality of friendships to girls' lives.

As Ringrose (2006) acknowledges, this new discourse of girls' aggression can be read as a response to earlier feminist critiques of 'malestream' psychological theories. In her groundbreaking book, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Jean Baker Miller (1976) challenged the assumption, proffered by male-biased developmental models (such as Erikson's stage theory of emotional development), that human development was a process of separation, from dependence to

independence. This notion of the self, she argued, did not fit women's experience. Rather, they defined themselves in a context of human relationships, i.e. via connection rather than separation. Nancy Chodorow (1978) extended Miller's work by proposing that female relationality was a result of parenting practices in which mothers care for their male and female children differently. Whereas mothers treat sons as separate (and so boys come to identify themselves as differentiated from other people), daughters are regarded as projections of the mother and thus come to define themselves as connected to (or continuous with) the world. The sense of self that emerges is characterised by an 'ongoing capacity to consider one's actions in light of other people's needs, feelings, and perceptions' (Surrey 1987: 6, cited in Weskott 1989). Building on this work, Carol Gilligan (1982) proposed that women have a different moral voice from men:

The moral imperative that emerges repeatedly in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognizable trouble' of this world. For men, the moral imperative appears rather as an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights of life and self-fulfillment. (Gilligan 1982: 100)

In contrast to the traditional view of the moral agent as autonomous, then, Gilligan argued that the female relational disposition resulted in an 'ethic of care.' While Gilligan herself never said it directly, many read into her account an assertion of women's moral superiority over men (see, for example, Pollitt 1992). According to Ringrose, it is this perceived 'reversal' which provides the context for the (counter) claim that girls are *as* aggressive, if not more so, than boys:

Gilligan's feminist *reversal* sets the backdrop for the swing we are witnessing now, toward the universalization of a counter story that girls actually are aggressive, but this research incorporates and shifts Gilligan's claims about girls' nature, maintaining that it is girls' very caring and nurturing emotional relationships (through which their difference from boys is secured) that are used to wound other girls ... the novel discovery of relationally aggressive girls arises out of prior

monolithic feminist representations of girls' moral goodness, nurturing, sacrifice, silence, victimization and vulnerability. (Ringrose 2006, in press)

The equal-opportunity-violence discourse is intent on proving that young women are bad, or as bad as young men are (Holmes and Ristock 1998, cited in Batacharya 2000). The vital point is 'to convey a message that when feminists go on about male violence they are simply airing political prejudices with no firm basis in fact' (Cameron 1996b: 44). Referring to media coverage of the Cromwell Street murders, Cameron argues that Rose West gave people something they wanted:

At this point in the history of ideas about gender, which is also of course the history of feminist political struggle, a large number of people are desperate to believe in equal opportunity sex, violence and murder ... they felt vindicated by the *existence* of Rosemary West. The only way that they can cope with feminism is to take literally the feminist axiom of women's equality – preferably by pouncing on any sign that women are no better than men ... Misogyny being what it is, this quickly leads to the conclusion that women are even worse than men. But above all, it triumphantly proves that feminists are in the wrong ... the thesis of equal opportunity sex and violence is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. The vigour with which that thesis is pursued in the teeth of all evidence is indicative of deep-rooted anti-feminism and misogyny. (Cameron 1996a: 28)

No doubt as part of an exercise in damage limitation, one of Gilligan's colleagues, Lyn Mikel Brown (1998, 2005), took up the notion of relational aggression in the late 1990s, linking it explicitly with a patriarchal culture which, in her view, cultivates girls' cruelty to one another:

[G]irls' increased anger and assertiveness at eleven and twelve reflects their emerging comprehension of the culture they are about to enter and their place as young women in it ... Early adolescence, in other words, disposes girls to see the cultural framework, and girls and women's subordinate place in it, for the first time. (Brown 1998: 15)

In *Meeting at the Crossroads*, Brown and Gilligan (1992) conclude that, for girls, the journey into adolescence is one of silence and disconnection. Young women, they claim, voluntarily learn to suppress their feelings (including their anger) in an attempt to preserve what is most important to them, i.e. their relationships. The open conflict and free speaking that was socially sanctioned for them as a child thus gives way to more covert means of self-expression, such as self-harm and relational aggression. Brown notes that in a society that celebrates anything male,

girls simply find it easier and safer to take out their fears and anxieties and anger on other girls rather than on boys or on a culture that denigrates, idealizes, or eroticizes qualities associated with femininity. Girlfighting is not a biological necessity, a developmental state, or a rite of passage. It is a protective strategy and an avenue to power learned and nurtured in early childhood and perfected over time. (2005: 5-6)

In other words, girls and young women engage in relational aggression because it is the safest and easiest outlet for girls' outrage and frustration. Instead of challenging their gender oppression and males, they take their frustrations out on other girls. This notion of 'horizontal violence' is further developed in Artz's (1998) study of 'the violent schoolgirl.'

Like Brown, Artz claims that violence committed by schoolgirls in Canada is a result of the patriarchal violence they are subjected to. Akin to the 'blurred boundaries' literature reported previously, Artz's research found that 'violent girls' reported significantly greater rates of victimization and abuse than their non-violent counterparts, and that the girls who were violent reported greater fear of sexual assault, especially from boyfriends. So-called 'violent girls' were twice as likely to report physical abuse at home than 'violent boys' (20% versus 10% respectively). Approximately one quarter had been sexually abused, compared to one in 10 non-violent girls. Follow-up interviews with a small group of 'violent girls' found that they had learned at home that 'men are far more important and far more powerful than women, and that men's ... power resides for the most part in physical force' (1998: 171). These two messages, Artz argues, lead young women to engage in

'horizontal violence' (i.e. violence directed at other powerless girls) in an attempt to gain a measure of self-esteem and power. Such behaviour is a form of what Roberts (1983, after Friere 1971) refers to as 'oppressed group behaviour,' which demands that 'those who suffer at the hands of the dominant group turn upon members of their own kind when they behave in ways that are deemed as unacceptable to the dominant group' (Artz 1998: 178-9). This highlights the rule governed, instrumental nature of many girls' violence:

Violence is not chiefly a matter of lashing out at the heat of the moment. Instead, it is a rule-bound and purposeful activity engaged in to redress the intolerable injustices they perceive in their largely hierarchical social world. An imbalance usually arises when the rules, which form a kind of code of conduct, have been broken. For example, when ... a girl has entered a territory that is not her turf but is the turf of another girl (perhaps a 'gang' girl); she looks the other over (or worse yet, looks at the girl's boyfriend) in a manner that is deemed provocative. Or, a girl has talked to other girls about her interest in a boy; she may now be called a 'slut' and may receive a beating from her peers. (Ibid.: 183)

The strength of Artz's argument is that it portrays girls as capable of making a rational decision to commit violence. They do so, however, because they are caught in a cycle that compels them to as a means of resistance or out of a lack of other options. This again highlights the distinction between agency and autonomy, an issue that will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Summary

This review has explored the various ways in which academic discourse has made sense of women's violence. The frameworks outlined are not intended as a fixed typology, by which I mean they are not neatly circumscribed or even internally coherent: each contains its own inconsistencies and there is considerable overlap between them. As the discussion of 'mean girls' and their use of 'indirect' or 'relational' aggression demonstrated, different discourses come to the fore in

different socio-historical contexts, and 'new' discourses often incorporate elements of older ones. That said, each of the accounts is framed in an essentialist discourse of gender. The fact that violence perpetrated by young women is considered worthy of attention at all is related to the fact that normative femininity is commonly perceived as passive, non-aggressive, and non-violent. Young women's violence challenges dominant gender codes and as a result is regarded as a 'problem,' a threat to the moral fabric of society, and something about which something 'must be done.' In order to keep existing models of femininity intact, female violence is portrayed as an aberration (masculinised, pathologised), or redefined as *part of* the natural feminine condition (irrational, out of control). Alternatively, it is blamed on masculinity and patriarchy (victim feminism). Where young women's agency *is* depicted this is blamed on an erosion of traditional femininity, in turn attributed to feminism and women's liberation (backlash).

As we have seen, feminist analyses have often been just as ready as traditional, malestream accounts to deny the responsibility, culpability and even the agency of violent female offenders. Most notably, they share the underlying predisposition to view violent women as 'more victims than aggressors, more sinned against than sinning, more to be pitied than blamed' (Allen 1987: 92-93). This type of oppositional discourse leaves little room for complexity, ambiguity or contextualisation. Just as Gilligan's (1982) negation of the male generic did little to challenge gender-differentiated epistemologies rooted in classical developmental psychology (Fraser and Nicholson 1990: 33), contemporary accounts of 'battered women' and 'mean girls' merely reproduce a bifurcated, universalising, essentialist construction of feminine and masculine. Building upon the anti-essentialist approaches of Bosworth (1999), Carlen (1983, 1985, 1988), and Worrall (1990), the next chapter will provide a theoretical framework in which to locate offending women's agency as they negotiate structural and systemic oppression.

Chapter Three

Charting the 'Middle Ground': Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Agency

The previous chapter established that discourses of violent young women tend to draw upon an essentialist framework underpinned by fixed dualisms of feminine/masculine, victim/agent. Women who offend are either depicted as passive and helpless victims – a portrayal that confuses victimisation with victim identity and thereby denies women's agency, or they are cast as mean and menacing 'bad girls' – active, autonomous agents, freed from traditional ties of family and gender. This dualism reflects an artificial but ubiquitous dichotomy that has been central to the Western intellectual tradition, namely the agency-structure debate (Giddens 1979). Crudely, the term 'agency' is linked to Weberian (i.e. social action or interpretive) sociologies, which focus on the individual as a subject and which view social action as something purposively shaped by individuals within a context to which they have given meaning. This view is usually contrasted with structural-functionalist approaches, which favour the role and influence of social structures (e.g. class, gender, and ethnicity).²¹ Drawing on feminist re-readings of the work of French social theorists Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, the current chapter attempts to offer a more nuanced understanding of the 'dialectical' relationship between agents' agency and the constraints of broader social, economic, and cultural formations; what Lisa Maher refers to as the 'middle ground' (1997: 201).²²

²¹ This is, of course, an 'ideal type' classification which does not correspond to the variability and distinctiveness of 'real' theories. Most perspectives in sociology show some concern with both social action and social structure, but emphasize one more than the other.

²² Maher's 'middle ground' is similar to the concept of the 'black box' described by Kathleen Daly (see Chapter Two) in reference to the space between women's victimisation experiences and their lawbreaking behaviour (Daly 1992).

Foucault and feminism

The work of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has generated extensive debate amongst feminist social and political theorists. Some have found his work illuminating, for example drawing upon his notion of power as productive rather than repressive to challenge (radical feminist) accounts of gender which emphasize domination and victimisation. Others have been more wary, arguing that his view of subjectivity as constructed by power precludes the possibility of agency and thus condemns women to perpetual oppression. These varying readings can be partly explained according to which period of Foucault's writing they take as their main focus: his early analysis of the effects of power upon the body, his agonistic model of power and resistance, or his later elaboration of a notion of the 'self' dependent upon practices and techniques of 'subjectification.' This section will argue that Foucault's redefinition of power – as something that is *exercised* rather than possessed – permits a more sophisticated approach to examining the role of power in young women's everyday lives than that proffered by 'victim feminism,' but that certain difficulties remain, in particular his failure to differentiate between those aspects of subjectivity that are amenable to self-fashioning and those that are less so.

The 'docile bodies' thesis

Foucault's analysis of the way in which the body is subjected to power is set out in his book, *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Central to this work is the recognition that power is not a unitary force possessed by any one particular group or class of people, nor does it operate merely from top to bottom, through repression and denial. Foucault claims instead that traditional sovereign forms of power have been superseded (but not totally eclipsed) by 'disciplinary power,' a form of social control that is exercised on the body and soul of individuals. Unlike a 'juridico-discursive' model of power, which locates power in a centralized source such as the law, the economy or the state, Foucault's theory focuses on the mobilization of norms at the

everyday level of social relations. Disciplinary power, he argues, regulates the body by setting particular standards of human conduct and ‘assuring the ordering of human multiplicities’ (Foucault 1977: 218). In other words, it operates indirectly by constituting the subjectivity of individuals through the ‘power of the Norm’:

[N]ormalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age. For the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced – or at least supplemented – by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body, but also playing part in classification, hierarchization, and the distribution of rank. In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. (Ibid.: 184)

Hence categories such as ‘violent female offender’ or ‘heroin addict’ establish divisions between the normal and the abnormal, the legal and the illegal, and situate the subject within a set of normalizing assumptions. This highlights, for Foucault, the inevitable and inescapable connection between systems of knowledge and regimes of power. On the one hand, all knowledge is the product of specific systems of power; on the other, power emanates from forms of knowledge that inform all social relations: ‘there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (ibid.: 27). This lack of autonomy from dominant power relations means that knowledge is never normatively neutral or ‘objective.’

Feminist responses to *Discipline and Punish* extended Foucault’s analysis to demonstrate the gendered nature of disciplinary power and to explain how women may become complicit with their own subjugation. With disciplinary power, each person disciplines him or herself. Drawing on Jeremy Bentham’s model of the Panopticon – the infamous prison design where the guards can see inside each cell, but the prisoners cannot tell whether or not they are being watched at any given moment – Foucault illustrates how subjects can be regulated by the use of surveillance:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Ibid.: 202)

Sandra Lee Bartky draws on this notion of panopticism to explain how (white, middle-class) women's bodies are controlled and ordered within contemporary disciplinary regimes of femininity: 'In contemporary patriarchal culture,' she avers, 'a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women' (Bartky 1988: 72). Because disciplinary power is everywhere and nowhere, it cannot be easily identified or dismantled: 'The absence of a formal institutional structure and of authorities invested with the power to carry out institutional directives creates the impression that the production of femininity is either entirely voluntary or natural' (ibid.: 75). Hence women – even educated, pro-feminist women – when questioned about why they wear make-up, for example, will often state that it is their *choice*, that no one makes them do it, and that it makes them feel better, but they cannot explain why.

One of the key strengths of Bartky's argument, then, is that she recognises that technologies of femininity subjugate women not simply by taking power away, but by developing a set of competencies that enhance and augment women's sense of self-discipline and self-efficacy.²³ This exemplifies a Foucauldian understanding of power as an essentially *positive* force, producing meanings, desires, behaviours, practices and so on. An example drawn from the criminological literature can be found in Pat Carlen's (1988) work, *Women, Crime and Poverty*. In the book, Carlen applies social control theory to explain why women are less criminal than males. She argues that working-class women make a 'class deal' and a 'gender deal.' Under the

²³ Susan Bordo (1993) uses the same model in her analysis of eating disorders, which she depicts as offering young women an 'intoxicating feeling of accomplishment and control' (Bordo 1993: 149). Such a sense of power is, Bordo claims, 'deeply and dangerously illusory' (1993: 179). In reality, anorexics adhere to what are essentially conventional norms of femininity and are involved in a process of self-regulation and self-policing. They not only punish themselves for failing to meet the standards that are set for them, but also those that they set for themselves. In short, they are docile bodies, focused on 'self-modification' rather than social and political transformation.

class deal women receive material rewards, which stem from gainful employment. Under the gender deal women receive both emotional and material rewards, which come from their partner's income and love. Both these types of reward result in the behaviour of women being controlled. Carlen argues that if these rewards are not on offer, for whatever reason, women are more likely to commit crime.

After its publication in English, *Discipline and Punish* was subjected to a wide-ranging critique, with many commentators focusing on Foucault's rendering of the individual as a 'docile' and 'subjected' body. Detractors argued that the model of power put forward by Foucault lacked a concept of subjectivity and, therefore, appeared to preclude the possibility of agency. The subject in *Discipline and Punish* was seen as entirely constructed by the imposition of power relations, as the 'effect' of discourse. The problem with this view of subjectivity for feminist critics was that it appeared to preclude the possibility of resistance. As Aurelia Armstrong explains,

without the assumption of a subject or individual that pre-exists its construction by technologies of power, it becomes difficult to explain who resists power. If there are no ready-made individuals with interests that are defined prior to their construction by power, then what is the source of our resistance? (Armstrong 2003)

In response, Foucault sought to remedy the limitations of his earlier work in two interrelated ways: first, by establishing an agonistic model of power, in which resistance was regarded as the inherent corollary of discipline, and second, by suggesting the idea of 'technologies of the self,' understood as the practices and techniques through which individuals actively resist 'technologies of domination.'

'Where there is power, there is resistance'

In Volume One of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault explicitly rejects the paradigm of power as repression, arguing instead that 'Power comes from below' (1978: 94). Put another way, 'there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled,' but rather 'manifold relationships of force take shape [...] and come into

play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions' (ibid.). This emphasis, on the relational character of power relationships, opens up the possibility of resistance:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case? [...] This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance. (Ibid.: 95)

Resistance is possible, Foucault claims, because power is exercised between subjects of power, each with his or her own distinct capacity for action. The outcome of these individual struggles can never be predicted with any degree of certainty, because relations of power are unstable and shifting. It is this degree of unpredictability that distinguishes power from domination, defined as 'static, irreversible relationships of power' (McLaren 1997).

According to Jana Sawicki (1991) Foucault's understanding of resistance as internal to power challenges theories or movements that claim to offer total emancipation and reminds us of the importance of looking to 'subjugated knowledges,' such as the 'popular knowledge' of the hysteric or the imprisoned criminal. In Foucault's words, 'there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary,' but rather 'a plurality of resistances' (Foucault 1978: 96) and 'particular, local, regional knowledge[s]' (Foucault 1980: 82, quoted in Sawicki 1991: 26). This redefinition of power – as something that is *exercised* rather than possessed – challenges radical feminist accounts of gender relations which emphasize male domination and female victimization and encourages a more practical and sophisticated approach to examining the role of power in women's lives (Munro 2001).

Foucault's notion of resistance is useful for advancing our understanding of women in prison, for it enables us to appreciate how female offenders manage to

retain a *sense* of agency despite the significant constraints they face. As Bosworth notes,

Resistance illuminates small-scale attempts to disrupt power relations, by drawing attention to a variety of minor acts and rebellions which may otherwise escape notice. Verbal challenges, modes of dress and ethnic practices may all be seen in that light. Appreciating these subordinate acts as forms of critique demonstrates that power relations inside may not be as fixed or unchangeable as they first appear. (Bosworth 1999: 130)

Historically, women in prison have not engaged in collective acts of resistance to the same extent as incarcerated men (Mandaraka-Sheppard 1986). However, this does not mean that they are passive victims who simply submit to their own subjugation, but rather that their means of coping tend to be more individualised, more subtle and contradictory, and can involve endorsement rather than confrontation. Instead of challenging the discourses and practices of femininity promoted by the prison, the women in Bosworth's study, for example, would often knowingly adopt and adhere to them in order to 'get what they want.' For example, in one prison the inmates mobilised medicalized and pathologized images of women to win a dispute over toilet paper.²⁴ Other women negotiated the pains of imprisonment by drawing on their race-class-gender identity and their experiences of religion, ethnicity and sexuality (for example insisting on vegetarian meals or Halal or Kosher meat to avoid eating the food provided by the prison). In other words, they would 'resist the restrictions of imprisonment through enacting diverse images of femininity which, in their variety, subvert the dominant image of white, middle-class heterosexuality which is advocated by the prison and idealized in the community' (Bosworth 1999: 120).

²⁴ The replacement of ordinary toilet rolls with poor-quality, non-absorbent paper initially led the women to complain to staff and demand the return of the original paper. When this did not work, they used direct action as a means of protest, for example stealing the softer paper used in the staff toilets. These means again failed and the women eventually effected change by appealing to bodily aspects of femininity, informing the governor that the hard paper was unsuitable for women who were menstruating or who had medical conditions such as thrush.

Bosworth's notion of 'endorsement as resistance' is undoubtedly contentious. As she herself acknowledges, 'If women are drawing on similar images and identities by which they are oppressed, to what extent can they liberate themselves? ... Are they resisting, or merely trapping themselves further?' (ibid.: 150). Clearly one way of explaining women's endorsement of idealised images of femininity is to argue that they suffer from 'false consciousness,' that they promote and adhere to certain stereotypes of femininity because they are docile bodies that have internalised their own oppression. Yet, Bosworth argues, such an understanding not only demeans women's power and initiative, it fails to take seriously the views of the women themselves. This reiterates, I think, the elaborate and subtle nature of resistance, and again helps to explain some of the complexities and contradictions evident in the accounts of young women who offend. The importance of Foucault's work on resistance to the current analysis, then, is its ability to depict young women's agency in addition to their victimisation. It exposes the operation of power outside of the narrowly defined political realm (Armstrong 2003), drawing our attention instead to the everyday experiences of young women on the margins of social and economic power. In other words, it highlights the distinction between agency (defined as the act of making a reasonable choice) and autonomy (a condition in which an individual is able to make a choice outside those made available by the conditions of oppression thereby being able to 'refuse the choices oppression seems to make nearly irresistible' [Sherwin 1998: 32-33, cited in Pollack 2000: 42]). It thus allows us to take young women's views seriously and begin to appreciate multifarious ways in which they attempt to withstand the forces to which they are subjected.

Of course, Foucault's work on power and resistance has not been without criticism. One of the most common objections raised by feminist writers relates to his failure to outline a normative framework. Like other poststructuralists, Foucault is loath to articulate normative guidelines because in his view the laying down of norms inevitably has a normalising effect on the individual's freedom to act (McNay 1992: 8). As Nancy Fraser notes, this refusal sits awkwardly with his commitment to emancipatory social change:

Foucault calls in no uncertain terms for resistance to domination. But why? Why is struggle preferable to submission? Why ought domination to be resisted? Only with the introduction of normative notions could he begin to tell us what is wrong with the modern power/knowledge regime and why we ought to oppose it ... Because Foucault has no basis for distinguishing, for example, forms of power that involve domination from those that do not, he appears to endorse a one-sided, wholesale rejection of modernity as such. Furthermore, he appears to do so without any conception of what is to replace it. (Fraser 1989: 29-33)

In Fraser's view, then, Foucault's lack of an adequate normative stance limits the value of his work for feminists because it fails to provide the normative resources required to challenge unacceptable forms of power and thereby guide political practice. Echoing Fraser's criticism, Nancy Hartsock claims that Foucault's eradication of the subject undermines the feminist emancipatory project. 'Why,' she asks, 'is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced, began to demand the right to name ourselves and to act as a subject rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (1990: 163). According to Hartsock, Foucault's conception of power is too focused on how individuals experience power, making it difficult to locate domination. She claims that for Foucault, 'power is everywhere and ultimately nowhere' (ibid.: 170) and that his use of metaphors such as 'nets' and 'capillaries' to describe the dispersed yet ubiquitous distribution of power obscures the systematic nature of gender oppression. As a remedy, she calls for a reviewed and restructured theory of power that is capable of transformation rather than resistance. In her words, 'We need to recognize that we can be the makers of history as well as the objects of those who have made history' (ibid. 170-171).

These objections, while warranted, are directed at the second phase of Foucault's work. More recent analyses have argued that his final work – which revolves around three particular concepts, namely technologies of the self, hermeneutics of the self, and aesthetics of existence – goes some way to address these limitations. Feminist responses to the third phase of Foucault's work are discussed in the following section.

‘Technologies of the self’

In Volumes Two and Three of *The History of Sexuality* (*The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*) and various interviews and articles published in the 1980s, Foucault’s object of analysis shifts from the relations of power that produce subjects to the practices by which people actively subjectify themselves through the deployment of ‘technologies of the self.’ He defines these as:

techniques which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1988a: 18)

In short, the term encompasses the practices and means by which individuals make themselves subject to particular modes of being, moral codes, or aesthetic or ethical criteria.

All moralities, Foucault argues, involve moral codes, ethical practices and a particular relation to self: ‘There is no specific moral action that does not refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for the forming of oneself as an ethical subject; and no forming of oneself without ... the “practices of the self” that supports it’ (1985: 28). That said, different moralities give different emphasis to each. The transition from Antiquity to Christianity, for example, brought about a shift from moralities orientated towards ethics to moralities orientated towards codes:

With Christianity, there occurred a slow, gradual shift in relation to the moralities of Antiquity, which were essentially a practice, a style of liberty. Of course, there had been certain norms of behaviour that governed each individual’s behaviour. But the will to be a moral subject and the search for the aesthetics of existence were, in Antiquity, mainly an attempt to affirm one’s liberty and to give one’s own life a certain form ... whereas in Christianity, with the religion of the text, the idea of the

will of God, the principle of obedience, morality took on increasingly the form of a code of rules ... From Antiquity to Christianity, we pass from a morality that was essentially the search for a personal ethics to a morality as obedience to a system of rules. (Foucault 1988b: 49)

By the nineteenth century (and the rise of disciplinary power) these rigid moral codifications were less externally apparent but instead had become internalised by self-policing subjects. The dominant mode of relating to the self in contemporary Western societies, Foucault argued, had become 'a hermeneutics of the self' based on self understanding, on looking into the depths of oneself in order to uncover the essential truth of one's secret inner being. As he demonstrated in Volume One of *The History of Sexuality*, this endless process of self-examination did not lead to greater self-knowledge, but rather a more efficient regulation and normalisation (Foucault 1978: 60).

In an attempt to offer a way out of this impasse (and thereby address some of the problems with his earlier account of docile bodies), Foucault develops the notion of 'aesthetics of existence,' defined as,

those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [sic] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre, that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria. (1985: 10-11)

Foucault suggests that in order to transgress the limits imposed on us by society and others, we need to develop critical aesthetic strategies that problematize the apparently 'natural' and 'inevitable' aspects of our own identity. This new attitude involves an awareness of our historical limits as well as a commitment to transgressing these limits:

The critical ontology of ourselves must be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, or even a permanent body knowledge that is accumulating; it must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what

we are is at one and the same time a historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them. (Foucault 2005: 319)

[I]t will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think ... it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and as wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (Ibid.: 315-6)

Hence, unlike resistance, wherein freedom is understood as a negative condition (that is, as freedom *from* external constraints), the freedom entailed in making one's self a 'work of art' requires an active and positive arrogation of power (i.e. it involves the freedom *to* act in a particular way).

One advantage of Foucault's late aesthetics for feminism lies in his idea that the individual constitution of identity might be considered as a critical strategy. By formulating a critical or historical ontology of the self, individuals can creatively transform themselves and in so doing supplant the 'power of the norm' that operates in modern technologies of the self (Sawicki 1998: 105). One writer who has developed these ideas is 'queer theorist' Judith Butler. Eschewing the notion of 'woman' as a universal, essential category, Butler (1990, 1993) proposes a more fluid, variable understanding of gender, which acknowledges the historicity of dominant norms and thereby the possibility for individual agency. According to Butler, gender identity is a series of performances that have, over time, become rigidified and institutionalised – 'a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real' (1990: x). It is in this 'stylized repetition of acts' (ibid.: 140) that she locates the possibility of resistance or 'subversion':

Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration. As a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice, sex acquires its naturalized effect, and, yet, it is also by virtue of this reiteration that gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions, as that which escapes or exceeds the norm, as that which cannot

be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm. This instability is the deconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition, the power that undoes the very effects by which 'sex' is stabilized, the possibility to put the consolidation of the norms of 'sex' into a potentially productive crisis. (Butler 1993: 10)

Hence Butler proposes that we challenge dominant gender norms by exposing the contingent acts that produce the appearance of an underlying 'natural' gender identity:

This text continues as an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalised and reified notions of gender that support masculine power and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies of a figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity. (Butler 1990: 33-34)

Butler doesn't offer any concrete examples of how people should go about subverting ideas of gender identity, but an empirical example can be found, I would argue, in Anne Worrall's book (1990) *Offending Women*. Based on an analysis of the case records of 15 women and interviews with the professionals who work with them, Worrall's research focuses on the formation of knowledge about women who offend and how such women resist the constructions imposed upon them. Like Bosworth (1999), she argues that female lawbreakers often collude with attempts to minimise the consequences of their offending by allowing their actions to be represented using dominant discourses of femininity (i.e. domesticity, sexuality, and pathology). A small group of offenders, however, resist this 'gender contract' and Worrall terms these 'nondescript women.' They are the women 'who tend not to assert themselves or challenge openly, but who use a variety of subterfuges to sabotage attempts to observe, assess, classify, and change them' (1990: 32). Worrall argues that while much of this action is 'individualistic, inconsistent, and, in some senses, self-destructive,' it 'has the important effect of undermining the authority of official discourses and keeping open the possibility of the creation of new knowledge

about them – both as women and as law-breakers’ (ibid.: 163). In other words, their behaviour not only illuminates the limits that are placed on them as women (and as women who offend), it also tests these limits by creating ‘gaps’ in the dominant discourse. In Butler’s terms, nondescript women invoke a strong sense of ‘gender trouble’ by the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of identities.

Foucault’s work on technologies of the self has had a significant impact on feminist theories of identity as well as wider theories of reflexive modernisation. In spite of this impact, Lois McNay argues that his turn to a more active model of subjectivity still leaves crucial issues unresolved. In particular, she claims that,

Foucault’s stress on practices of the self as primarily an aesthetics of existence tends to gloss over the priority of different practices of the self. This is to say, by reducing the varying techniques of the self to the same level of self ‘stylisation,’ Foucault does not distinguish between practices that are merely ‘suggested’ to the individual and practices that are more or less ‘imposed’ in so far as they are heavily laden with cultural sanctions and taboos. It is important to make this kind of distinction of we are to assess to what degree individuals act autonomously and in an innovative fashion, or to what degree they merely reproduce dominant social structures and inequalities. (McNay 1992: 75)

This failure to distinguish between different techniques of self-formation is a particular problem in relation to the analysis of gender:

Embedded in the idea of a stylisation of the self is a notion of choice. Practices of the self are ‘intentional and voluntary actions’ by which individuals seek to understand and transform themselves in an active fashion. What this notion of aesthetic choice does not tackle very well, in relation to gender and sexuality, is the involuntary and biological dimensions to sexuality ... [There are] certain desires and biological phenomena which cannot be overcome or transformed simply through a conscious act of self-stylisation. This ... draws attention to the fact that in order to change certain aspects of sexuality, there must be a detailed examination of the network of deeply entrenched cultural norms in which our bodies are embedded. (Ibid.: 80)

The major limitation of Foucault's notion of an aesthetics of existence for McNay, then, is its failure to address the preconscious, emotional and embodied aspects of existence. To address this problem, she draws on Bourdieu's notions of 'habitus' and 'field' (McNay 1999, 2000).

Bourdieu's theory of habitus and social field

A professor of sociology at the Collège de France, Paris, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2004) was another leading social theorist of the late twentieth century. Bourdieu's distinctive contribution to the structure/agency debate centres on his concepts of field, capital and habitus, encapsulated in the 'formula': '[*(Habitus)* (*Capital*)] + Field = Practice' (Bourdieu 1984: 101). Reading across both subjectivist and objectivist approaches to the problem, Bourdieu sought to develop a 'structuralist constructivism' or 'constructivist structuralism' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 11), that is a sociology that uses the intellectual resources of structural analysis, but which approaches structures in terms of the ways in which they are produced and reproduced through the thoughts, decisions and actions of individual agents. Seemingly fixed objective structures, Bourdieu argues, have to be created and reproduced; apparently voluntary subjective actions depend on and are shaped by objective conditions and constraints.

A key concept in Bourdieu's theory is that of habitus, which he defines as a 'socialised subjectivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 126). As the word suggests, it is not something we are born or genetically programmed with, but rather something we acquire over time and through repetition, like a habit. It is a partly unconscious 'taking in' of rules, values and dispositions; something we know in our bodies not just our minds:

The process of acquisition [of habitus] – a practical *mimesis* (or mimeticism) which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an *imitation* that would presuppose a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an

utterance or an object or an object explicitly constituted as a model – and the process of reproduction – a practical reactivation that is opposed to both memory and knowledge – tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose ... [The body] does not represent what it performs, it does not memorise the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by the body’ is not something one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is. (Bourdieu 1990: 73)

As this quotation indicates, the habitus carries with it a sense of history, both personal and collective. Elsewhere, Bourdieu defines habitus as ‘the durably installed, generative principle of regulated improvisations ... [which produces] practices’ (Bourdieu 1977: 78). In other words, it is a system of values and dispositions gained from our cultural history that generally stay with us across contexts (i.e. it is both lasting and transposable). These values and dispositions allow us to respond to ‘unforeseen and ever-changing situations’ in a variety of ways (because they allow for improvisations), but our responses are always bound according to who we are and where we come from. It is not a uniformly imposed and fixed way of being, but a ‘generative structure’ formed in a dynamic relation with specific local contexts or ‘fields’ (McNay 1999).

Bourdieu characterizes the social world as a multi-dimensional ‘space,’ the axes of which are composed of the various areas in which power or capital is possessed. Bourdieu calls these differentiated, but overlapping areas ‘fields.’ Fields are networks of power and social relations which structure and shape conduct and orientations via a series of objectively defined institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities (Webb et al. 2002: 21-22). Examples include: the economic field, the political field, the legal field and so on. Understood as fluid and dynamic rather than static entities, fields are constituted by, or out of, the conflict that is involved when groups or individuals struggle to impose their definitions of what constitutes ‘authentic’ or ‘legitimate’ capital within that field and how such capital is to be distributed. The amount of power an individual (or group) has within a field

depends upon their relative position within the field, the overall amount of capital in their possession, and its composition (Bourdieu 1990: 231).

The definition of capital used by Bourdieu is broad and includes financial assets (economic capital),²⁵ culturally authorised knowledge, tastes and consumption patterns (cultural capital), social networks (social capital), and culturally significant but intangible attributes such as honour, prestige, status, authority, body stance, manners, speaking habits, and physical appearance (symbolic capital). In short, it refers to 'all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation' (Harker et al. 1990: 1). The key point about such capital is that it is recognised as having value and so can be exchanged for desired outcomes. Cultural capital (for example a PhD) can be converted into economic capital (an academic salary), as can symbolic capital and social capital. Similarly symbolic capital (physical strength or a 'hard' reputation) can be exchanged for social capital (gang membership); cultural capital can be exchanged for symbolic capital and so on. While economic capital is recognised as the most fluid form of capital (and therefore the most easily transferable), the status ascribed to forms of capital is not fixed but fluctuates across fields and over time.

It is the interaction between habitus, capital and field that produces the logic of practice. Social practice (competencies, know-how, dispositions, perceptions) possesses an unconscious practical mastery, or – to use one of Bourdieu's favourite phrases – a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1990: 61). This social sense is exemplified in a fight between young women from rival areas when a good fighter, aware of and responsive to the potential for violent behaviour among her enemies, and anticipating the actions of her mates, knows when to hit out, when to walk away. Viewed in this way, violent behaviour can be understood as a largely routinised aspect of everyday life which is guided by a practical logic. It is not produced out of purely consciously individual choice, but in a process of improvisation that is largely nonverbal, intuitive, and embodied, and which reflects both the practical resources and

²⁵ Unlike Marx, this includes very high incomes, not just money from stocks and shares.

constraints facing young women and what they have learned from experience, internalised as second nature, and forgotten.

Bourdieu calls the 'form of forgetting' that social agents are caught up in and produced by 'misrecognition.' He writes:

The agent engaged in practice knows the world ... too well, without objectifying distance, takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up with it; he inhabits it like [an old] garment ... he feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of the habitus. (Bourdieu 2000: 142-3)

Put another way, when we feel comfortable with our role (or 'position' in Bourdieu's language) in the social world, it seems like second nature to us and we forget how we have actually been produced as particular kinds of people. Misrecognition is not simply error; indeed, in a practical mode of engagement every recognition is also a misrecognition. This is because we cannot be objective and outside our own relations, we cannot see them from all possible angles. Which aspects we understand, and the *ways* in which we understand them, depend not only upon our own practical engagement in them but also on those discourses and activities that are deemed 'legitimate' by the dominant interests.

Misrecognition is the key to what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic violence,' that is, the violence which is exercised upon individuals in a symbolic, rather than a physical way. One of the many ways symbolic violence occurs is through oppressive discourses. Discourses are sets of symbols that we use to communicate who we are or who we think we are, the context in which our existence is located, and how we intend to be understood as well as how we understand: 'Discourse is more than talk and writing. To regulate discourse is to impose a set of formal or informal rules about what can be said, how it can be said, and who can say what to whom' (Schwalbe et al. 2000: 435). Dominant gender codes, for example, depict normative femininity as naturally passive, non-aggressive, and non-violent. It is for this reason that female violence is so often depicted as an aberration, or blamed on an erosion of traditional femininity, in turn attributed to feminism and women's liberation.

According to Bourdieu, the exercise of symbolic violence depends on the active – but not necessarily recognised or voluntary – complicity of those who submit to it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167). Agents misrecognise the symbolic violence to which they are subjected as ‘normal’ or ‘natural.’ Patriarchy, in this account, is understood not solely in terms of the coercion by one group (of men) of another (women). Rather, we can say male domination takes place because women misrecognise gender codes as the ‘natural order of things’ and as a consequence are complicit in the production of those things that work to reinscribe their domination (e.g. passivity). In other words, women are constrained not just by the external limits placed on them by men, but by their own internalisation of those limits.

Feminist re/readings of Bourdieu

Bourdieu’s work has been subjected to a number of interpretations. Sitting within the tradition of French structuralism and seeking to overcome its limitations inevitably leads to comparisons between Bourdieu and the tradition of poststructuralism. It is widely accepted that Bourdieu’s social theory has much more to say about social reproduction than social change and his work is often critiqued on the grounds that it is ultimately determinist. Judith Butler, for example, has characterised the relationship between habitus and field as one wherein habitus encounters the field and submits, dominated by the compelling objectivity and authority of the field (Butler 1999: 117). The relation is not, therefore, one of double conditioning (as Bourdieu suggests), but is instead a one-way correspondence, such that the effects of the field imprint the habitus. The field is a ‘pre-condition for habitus’ but there is no reciprocal effect upon the field: it is a ‘given.’

Bourdieu himself has argued against this reading of his work, claiming that social fields have their own conventions and ‘rules of the game’ the effects of which are uneven, producing continuity and change in habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant

1992: 96-115). In *Pascalian Meditations*, he suggests that in some circumstances habitus might have a more attenuated relationship to field:²⁶

The diversity of conditions, the corresponding diversity of habitus and the multiplicity of intra- and intergenerational movements of ascent or decline mean that habitus may, in many cases, be confronted with processes of actualisation different from those in which they were produced. (Bourdieu 2000: 160-1)

Put another way, the concordance of position and disposition is far from assured because of the complexity of relations within and across fields. Paradoxical relations may result in a 'tormented habitus' riven by the tension and contradictions of social marginalisation, which may, in turn, form the source of social transformation. According to this formulation the habitus is not necessarily adapted to its situation nor is it internally coherent.

Bourdieu's notion of an embodied, pre-reflexive foundation to agency provides a corrective to the voluntarist emphasis found in poststructuralist feminism and theories of reflexive transformation (see Chapter 5), which emphasise the fluidity and instability of subject positionings and identities. As McNay points out: 'Habitus suggests a layer of embodied experience that is not amenable to self-fashioning. On a pre-reflexive level, the actor is predisposed or orientated to behave in a certain way because of the "active presence" of the whole past embedded in the durable structures of the habitus' (McNay 1999: 102). Consequently it offers an explanation of the more enduring, deep-rooted aspects of identity, such as gender, which appear less amenable to emancipatory processes of refashioning:

While gender identity is not an immutable or essential horizon, there are many pre-reflexive aspects of masculine and feminine behaviour – sexual desire, maternal [and paternal] feelings – that call into question the process of identity formation highlighted by some theories of reflexivity. This is a result of the deeply entrenched nature of gender identity and also of the way in which gender as a primary symbolic distinction is used to play out other social tensions. (Ibid.: 103)

²⁶ He also said this in *Distinction* (1984).

According to McNay, 'Although Bourdieu acknowledges the destabilizing and potentially subversive effects that might arise from movements across fields ... he fails to extend this insight to his work on the construction of modern gender identity' (McNay 2000: 52-53). Put another way, 'the conceptual implications of the idea of the field are not brought to bear sufficiently on the idea of the gendered habitus' (ibid.: 53). This results in 'an over-emphasis on the alignment that the habitus establishes between subjective dispositions and the objective structure of the field with regard to gender identity' (ibid.: 54).

McNay attempts to develop an alternative feminist analysis of the relation between gender and field, and in doing so pays particular attention to the ways in which habitus works at the micro level of subjectivity. Instead of the metaphor of 'reflection' to describe the relation of field to habitus, McNay uses 'refraction' to emphasise the non-corresponding forms habitus can take. This is a crucial insight for developing an analysis of the paradoxical continuities and contradictions between young women's subordination and agency, conformity and resistance, victimisation and offending. Recognising the varying and even contradictory effects of the dispositions produced in diverse social fields offers a more nuanced account of gender than the 'invariant logic' of sexual division suggested by Bourdieu.

[A]s a relational concept the field yields an understanding of society as a differentiated and open structure the negotiation of which yields an active and determinate idea of agency beyond that of generalized notions of reflexivity and performativity. This in turn provides a framework in which to conceptualise the uneven and non-systematic ways in which subordination and autonomy are realised in women's lives. By construing intimate and domestic relations as overlapping but distinct fields of behaviour, their interconnection and relations with other fields of sociality can be thought not as implacable opposition but in terms of multiple disjunction, overlap and conflict. (Ibid.: 71-72)

As Worrall discovered, in her interviews with probationers, female offenders experience 'internal conflict' and a sense of self that is often 'contradictory,

inconsistent, and incoherent' (Worrall 1990: 7). Such issues are not easily acknowledged in Bourdieu's account because, as McNay argues, he develops a theory of unitary rather than multiple subjectivity.

Bourdieu significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine subject positions ... masculine and feminine identities are not unified configurations but a series of uneasily sutured, potentially conflictual subject positions. (McNay 2000: 54-56)

Hence McNay's account demonstrates the usefulness of combining the insights of Foucault *and* Bourdieu. A fully rounded theory of female violence needs to acknowledge the ambivalence of feminine identity, and (as far as possible) uncover women's unconscious drives. These must be, in turn, contextualised within the wider socio-political discourses which constrain women to be feminine. McNay's rethinking of Bourdieu's theory of social field and habitus, I would argue, goes a long way towards providing such a theory. By acknowledging that subordination and agency are simultaneously realised in specific local contexts, her approach allows us to transcend dominant representations of violent young women as either helpless victims or volitional agents in favour of a more complex understanding of processes of investment and negotiation. In acknowledging that agency can be conservative as well as radical, this understanding emphasises the importance of considering symbolic and small-scale acts of resistance in any analysis of power.

Summary

Discussions about gender and agency within feminist theory reflect the difficulties associated with depicting the constraints placed upon women's freedoms, while simultaneously revealing how women cope with, resist, and subvert these constraints (Pollack 2000: 31). As demonstrated in Chapter Two, in relation to violence, there has been a tendency to adopt a universalising approach, which categorises the behaviour of all men versus all women. This 'difference feminism' has been

critiqued by 'postmodernist' or 'poststructuralist' feminists, who have attempted to move away from the 'disabling vestiges of essentialism' (McNay 1992: 120) and account for the multiple and diverse experiences and perspectives of different groups of women (Fraser and Nicholson 1990). The current thesis adopts a version of subjectivity derived from feminist rereadings of the work of Foucault and Bourdieu. In doing so, it employs four related concepts: the performative subject; the non-essentialised subject; the pre-reflexive subject; and the embodied subject.

1. The performative subject. According to a Butlerian framework, gender is a daily achievement made up through self-reflection as discourses vie to imprint it with their dominant meanings. In other words, it is what you do at particular times, rather than being a universal *who you are*: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender – identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (Butler 1990: 25). However, whilst gender is not wholly determined, neither is it wholly arbitrary. It is not only a construct; it constructs us. Thus the self is regulated but not determined. Symbolically sets of meanings ascribed to male and female influence our identities. Gender differences are constituted in discourse and disciplinary practices, and as individuals (whether knowingly or not) we contribute to this process by turning ourselves into particular (gendered) subjects. So we come to think of ourselves, and interact with others, in ways that reflect dominant understandings of what it means to be *either* a man *or* a woman.
2. The non-essentialised subject. This presents us with a non-essentialised subject, as identities are constituted and reconstituted through the interplay of multiple discourses. For Foucauldian feminists, this has meant a move away from ahistorical theories of patriarchy and female subordination to present a more constructive notion of agency that recognises gender identity as robust yet not immutable (McNay 2000). By questioning the notion of fixed and stable gender identities, and the move away from meta-narratives, we open up new spaces for 'alternative voices, new forms of subjectivity, previously marginalized narratives and new interpretations, meanings and values' (Weedon 1999: 4). Thus we see a

shift of focus from presenting women and men as clear cut homogenous groups and the reduction of masculinity and femininity to a simple dualism, biologically determined. The deconstruction of categories of gender enables a multiplicity of individual experiences to be reflected on, therefore, and enables the move away from presenting women as subordinated by male dominance, failing to capture the complexities of agency.

3. The pre-reflexive subject. According to a Bourdieusian understanding of practice, patterns of thought and behaviour are produced, not out of purely consciously individual choice, but in a process of improvisation that is largely nonverbal, intuitive, and embodied, and which reflects practical resources and constraints as well as what we have learned from experience, internalised as second nature, and forgotten. Following this understanding of practice, reflexivity must be understood to involve reflection on unthought categories and shared meanings which themselves are the ontological foundations of self-conscious practice (Lash 1994: 154). These unthought categories, whilst not inaccessible to the conscious mind (in principle at least), are not easily accessible either. Ordinary social actors, therefore, though experts in their own daily lives who at a practical level know exactly what they are doing and what they must do, are not able to adequately reflect upon the principles which structure the social context within which they act.
4. The embodied subject. This notion of an embodied, pre-reflexive foundation to agency provides a corrective to the voluntarist emphasis found in Foucauldian feminism and offers an explanation of the more enduring, deep-rooted aspects of gender identity, such as sexual desire and maternal feelings, which appear less amenable to processes of refashioning. As we shall see, a central theme in the accounts of young women in the current study was a sense of self as protector and caretaker of others. The participants often drew on their identities as sisters, daughters, girlfriends or mothers to justify their acts and protecting kith and kin was often cited as a key reason for involvement in violent behaviour, and in some cases, offending more generally. This demonstrates that violence can be used as a means of 'doing' femininity, albeit a particular form of femininity.

By acknowledging that young women's experiences take place within structural inequalities, the study also acknowledges that young women's political agency – that is, their *actual* power to effect social and political change – is limited. In other words, while many young women emphasised their independence and autonomy, the choices they made occurred within a context of social and economic inequality. This is reflected in their frequent references to the 'need' to stand up for oneself, or the protection of kith and kin as something that 'had to be done.' It is important, therefore, that we distinguish between active participation (i.e. agency) and free choice (or freedom), as Lisa Maher (1997) suggests. Such an understanding allows for a construction of women's agency that moves beyond simple dichotomies to considering the impact of oppression on *subjective* agency. For example, the current data show that, unlike men, who tend to retrospectively redefine violence as an expression of exhilaration and omnipotence, young women are more likely to feel ambivalent, for example looking upon their behaviour as irrational and therefore feeling guilty about what they have done. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, this is not the same as saying that their behaviour is in actual fact 'a loss of control.' Quite the contrary: for many it can be the most integrative and self-preserving *choice*, albeit from a very limited field of options. Young women are perhaps more tightly regulated than any other social group. As young people, adults control nearly every aspect of their lives and they rarely, if ever, have the chance for 'genuinely free, creative, exciting, self-directed behaviour' (Miller 2005). As women, they are also subject to powerful disciplinary discourses of domesticity, sexuality and pathological 'otherness' (Carlen and Worrall 1987). In particular, they are acculturated from an early age not to express anger, to avoid risk and thereby to prevent their own violent victimisation. By challenging dominant discourses of femininity, young women's violence is thus an important source of 'gender trouble' (Butler 1990).

Chapter Four

‘What’s a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?’: Researching Young Women in Prison

The main empirical data on which the thesis is based are 21 in-depth oral-history interviews with young women detained in prison. This data was supplemented with documentary analysis (of social work reports, trial judge reports, prison narratives, programme records, etc.) and interviews with prison staff. The following chapter describes the chosen strategy, as well as the various theoretical and methodological issues arising from it. It also includes a brief overview of the sample characteristics.

Methodological concerns

As outlined in Chapter One, the research was designed to explore young women’s understandings and experiences of violent crime. A key aim was to investigate how young women accounted for their *own* involvement in violence, and in particular the ways in which victimisation and agency featured in their accounts. This focus led to the use of a qualitative methodology. Put broadly, ‘qualitative’ research refers to research that focuses on how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced and produced by social actors (Mason 2002). Qualitative research in sociology has its roots in the ethnographic studies of the ‘Chicago School,’ which emphasised the need to familiarise oneself with the context within which people interact (and thereby construct meaning) using participant observation and life history interviews. Classic observational studies in this tradition include Anderson’s (1923) ethnography of *The Hobo*, Thrasher’s (1927) *The Gang*, and William Foote Whyte’s (1943) celebrated *Street Corner Society*. A classic example of the life history approach is Shaw’s (1930) *The Jack Roller*, the story of Stanley, a young offender incarcerated for

mugging drunks.²⁷ In each of these accounts, valid descriptions and explanations were sought by reference to the everyday meanings and definitions given by the individuals being studied; in other words, informants were considered 'the prime source of theories about their actions and thoughts' (Harré 1980). This 'discovery-based approach' was in stark contrast to much positivist, quantitative research, whose aim it was to find 'hard' evidence to support or refute hypotheses drawn up in advance (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Alongside the ethnographic influences of the Chicago School, the research was also shaped by feminist methodological concerns and a desire to 'give voice' to those on the margins of society. A key imperative of feminist research is to produce knowledge that provides 'understanding of [women's] experience as they understand it, interpretation of their experience in the light of feminist conceptions of gendered relationships, and a critical understanding of the research process' (Ramazanoglu 1989: 435). Additionally, there is an emphasis on the significance of reflexivity on the part of the researcher – the writing of self into, the locating of self within, the research process. In contrast to a natural science epistemology, which emphasises distance and objectivity in the researcher-researched relationship, feminist approaches place the researcher and the researched on the same critical plane (Harding 1987: 9). Through reciprocal sharing of knowing, the researched become active collaborators in the research project. Personal involvement is therefore deemed necessary and inevitable; necessary because the researcher must and does identify with the women she is researching, inevitable because she is part of what is being researched. Thus feminist research moves beyond legitimising reflexivity to demanding this as an inevitability, that should not only be recognised but seen as a positive input to the research procedure.²⁸

²⁷ The book depicts Stanley's early upbringing, his experience of institutionalisation, life on the streets and ensuing criminal career. Shaw took six years to complete the process of data collection, which proceeded in a number of different stages: first, Stanley was issued with details of his criminal activities, around which he was requested to narrate his life story; second, the verbatim account of this history was re-presented to Stanley, who developed it in greater detail. One of a series of case studies, the story led Shaw to develop research into the relationships between known criminals and others, and on the ways in which criminal attitudes and values were relayed. In doing so, he permitted respondents to construct meanings valid to them within their social context.

²⁸ Feminists are not alone in making this connection. For example, C. Wright Mills (1959: 204) argues that, 'The social scientist is not some autonomous being standing outside society. No-one is outside

Oral-history method

Whilst no research method is explicitly feminist, and recent years have witnessed a softening of attitude amongst feminists towards quantitative research,²⁹ generally speaking feminist researchers have tended to favour face-to-face in-depth interviews with a small sample, observation, and the recording of life-histories as the most appropriate means by which to produce data on women's lives (Abbott et al. 2005; Littlewood 2004). As Ramazanoglu (2002) notes, this stance was initially adopted in opposition to a specific positivist methodological position that assumed that only quantitative data could best represent 'reality.' Early feminist researchers viewed the subjects of quantitative methods as having been treated as 'objects,' studied in order to serve (male) researchers' demands (Mies 1983). The use of abstract research procedures and practice, it was argued, made it impossible to ask meaningful questions or get proper answers about women's lives.³⁰ By contrast, qualitative research methods were viewed as more capable of avoiding an exploitative and hierarchical relationship between interviewer and interviewee, giving voice to those previously silenced, and raising new topics as potential subjects of inquiry (Oakley 1981). Pat Carlen's edited collection, *Criminal Women* (Carlen et al. 1985), is indicative of this approach. Arranged around the autobiographical accounts of four officially defined 'criminal women,' the study recounts the women's endeavour to become individuals of their own making and their subsequent embroilment in the criminal justice system. The emphasis throughout is upon the subjects' active resistance to the traditional female role, and their techniques of physical and

society, the question is where he [sic] stands within it. Further, Becker asserts that it is impossible 'to do research which is uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies ... therefore ... the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side are we on' (Becker 1967: 239).

²⁹ As a number of feminists have come to realise, there is nothing inherently oppressive about quantitative methodology and indeed if it were not for the collection and analysis of statistics (on income, economic growth, length of employment, household involvement and so on) many of the worse excesses of discrimination against women may not have come to light (Oakley 1998; see also Maynard 1994).

³⁰ A good example of this was Hilary Graham's (1983) article, 'Do her answers fit his questions?' Highlighting the subjectivity involved in composing questions for a survey, Graham argued that the use of predetermined categories produce results that confirm the researchers' assumptions rather than illuminating the views and experiences of the respondents. This point is reiterated by Kelly et al.

psychological survival in a hostile environment. Their descriptions provide alternative accounts to those contained in traditional interpretations, and establish that women commit crime for a variety of reasons and in the context of a variety of material circumstances (Carlen et al. 1985: 8-9). Thus, Carlen adopts the life history approach to facilitate an exploration of the interplay between structure *and* agency, grounded in the worlds of interviewee's personal experiences and subjective understandings. Indeed, one of the common threads running throughout the book is that explanations for women's entry into crime are not just ideological, but they are also structural and centre upon a multitude of factors, which include both gender and class.

Rather than the term 'life history,' I prefer the term 'oral history' to describe the method employed in the current research. The former is generally associated with the life history method, where it is backed up with intensive observation of the subject's life, interviews with friends and perusal of documentary evidence, letters and photographs (Bryman 2001). This chronological presentation is generally precluded in studies with incarcerated populations, where restrictions are placed upon access (see below). As Carlen (1988: 175) has noted, it would be wrong to claim to have obtained a 'life history' in an interview lasting between one and two hours. There are alternatives, however, such as using aspects or dimensions of a person's life; the principle 'turnings' in their life, and their life conditions between them; and their characteristic means of adaptation (Mandlebaum 1973). In practical terms, this means replacing the conventionally biographical 'Can you tell me about the story of your life?' with the more manageable 'Tell me about the place where you grew up/your current offence/being in prison' and so on. The approach is designed to elicit narrative and focuses on the interviewee's interpretation of events deemed significant to them (Denzin 1989).

The main limitation of the oral history interview method is the possibility of bias introduced by memory lapses and distortions (Grole 1998). Because the version of events recounted by any individual in an interview setting is rhetorically constituted, it cannot be read simply as a route to knowledge of social 'reality.' This

(1992), who demonstrate that asking survey respondents whether they have ever been 'raped' will

was a concern raised time and time again by prison staff in the current project, many of whom claimed that young women ‘couldn’t be trusted’ and were likely to tell me ‘a pack of lies.’ Yet, as I attempted to explain, these concerns were displaced by the theoretical perspective and protocols for analysis adopted in this project wherein the assumption that respondents’ accounts are potentially ‘true’ pictures of ‘reality’ is abandoned (see ‘Analytical considerations,’ below).

The research process

The following section describes the research design and the interview techniques applied.

Physical access

All of the young women interviewed as part of the study were serving custodial sentences at HMPYOI Cornton Vale, which houses nearly all female prisoners and young offenders in Scotland.³¹ In order to gain access to Cornton Vale, I approached the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) for approval (see Appendix 1). This involved submitting an up-to-date copy of the research proposal to their Research Access and Ethics Committee, outlining full details of the research, its aims and objectives, proposed methodology, access requirements, and eventual destination and purpose of my results. Also included in my application were my CV, a letter of support from my supervisor, and copies of the references used to support my ESRC studentship application. Access was granted in July 2000 and fieldwork took place in July/August 2001.

While a small number of restrictions were placed on the research – I was not allowed to conduct follow-up interviews with prisoners, for example, nor record

produce different responses from asking them if they have ever been ‘forced to have sex.’

³¹ The prisons at Dumfries, Inverness, Aberdeen and Gretnock also hold female offenders and remand prisoners, but only in small numbers and for relatively short periods of time (maximum sentence length one year or less).

observational data whilst hanging around the units³² – I found the process of access surprisingly straightforward. The problems of ‘courting approval’ documented by Cohen and Taylor (1972), Leibling (1992), and others, were probably eased by a number of factors. First and foremost, having a supervisor with a good track record of research for The Scottish Office and the Scottish Executive proved an effective ‘gatekeeper to the gatekeepers’ (Smith and Wincup 2000: 336). Prior to returning to academia, I too worked for The Scottish Office for a short period, and it is likely that this helped persuade those at SPS that I was ‘a safe pair of hands.’ As King (2000) acknowledges, prison officials probably consider PhD research to be the least threatening. Drawing on my previous experience as a Research Officer, I designed my proposal carefully, emphasising that the focus was on young women’s violence and not the prison regime, although I would consider violence within prison in order to assist in the development of policy and practice. The initial request for access also emphasised the increasing number of young women sentenced to custody, for violent offences in particular, and the lack of information available on female offenders in Scotland more generally. As such, it is likely that the research was considered timely and useful (not to mention cheap!), and that access to Cornton Vale was granted on this basis.

Social access

As Noaks and Wincup (2004: 63) recognise, ‘Physical access is a prerequisite for social access but does not guarantee it.’ They define social access as, ‘the process of “getting along” through establishing a research role, building up rapport with participants and securing their trust’ (ibid.). One of my greatest fears on entering the prison was that the young women would take one look at me and refuse to take part; after all, it is not just powerful, elite groups who can deny a researcher access. This

³² As Maher’s (1997) ethnographic research with women drug users demonstrates, repeated interviews mean that ‘lies’ and ‘cultural silences’ can be ‘explored, discussed and subsequently addressed as a crucial part of the analysis.’ Within the institutional setting, the recording of observational data on staff /inmates interaction would have permitted me to consider what types of situation create tension in the prison and when these tensions escalate into violent encounters.

fear was reinforced early on in the fieldwork period, when I undertook my first 'tour' of the prison. The incident was recorded in my field notes:

Went on my first tour round the houses with [the Governor]. Introduced myself to staff and told them about the research. Good to actually get out and about round the prison – have been hiding in the office block for too long! That said, felt very nervous/exposed/awkward. Too scared to speak to prisoners! ... At one point, and without warning, the Unit Manager approached a young woman whom he described as 'a perfect candidate for your study, very violent' and asked her whether she would take part. She looked me up and down (I wish I wasn't wearing a flowery skirt, sandals and cardigan!) and simply said 'Nut.'

What I learned from this experience was the importance of impression management (Goffman 1959), not only in terms of what I wore, but also in terms of how and by whom I was introduced. For the remainder of the fieldwork, I deliberately chose to wear more informal clothes when going about the prison, and also made sure that I approached potential interviewees on my own, once they had had an opportunity to look over the consent material (see below, also Appendices 3 and 4). I also sought to overcome any possible pathologising of the young women by explicitly stating that I was interested in their violent *behaviour*, rather than 'violent young women' per se.

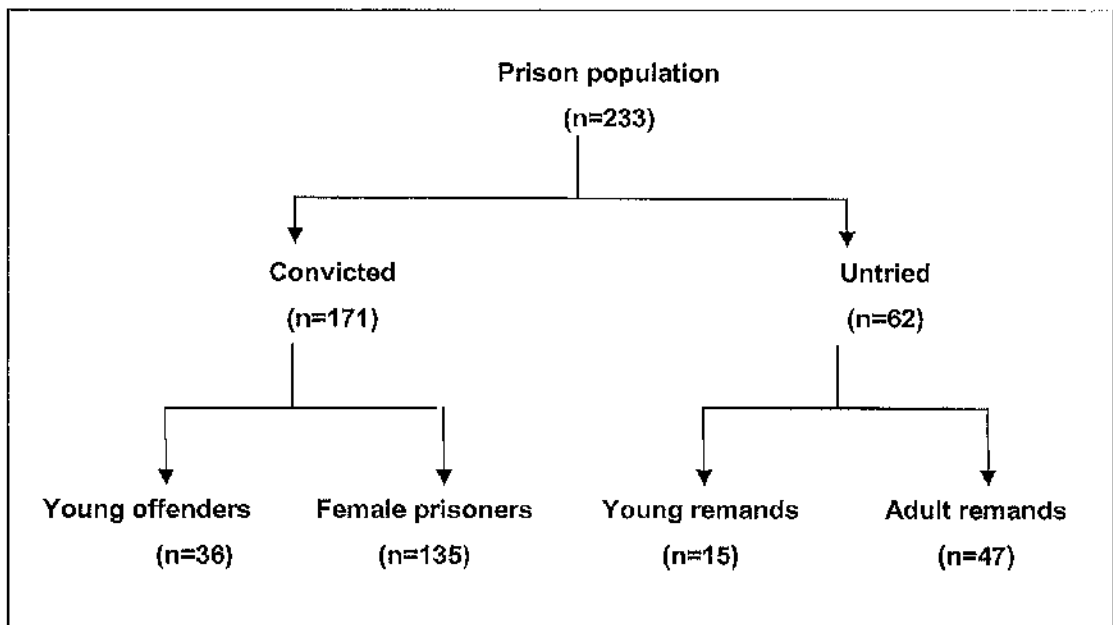
Many writers have proposed that it is good practice to discuss the life- or oral-history interview with informants prior to formal interview (see, for example, Plummer 1983). In order to recruit young women to the study, I put up notices in all of the units giving details of who I was and what I was doing, and explaining that I would be writing personally to all young women serving sentences for one or more violent offences (see Appendix 2). I also spent time 'hanging about' in the units to tell interested prisoners more about the research. Throughout the access period I emphasised my interest in the *young women's views* and my role as an independent, *student* researcher. The advantage of this approach was that it allowed the young women to 'suss me out' before deciding whether or not to take part. They asked questions not only about the research, but about my background, experiences of violence, drug use, leisure activities, whether I had any children and so on. A few

young women agreed to take part immediately, and then, once I had earned a reputation as being 'alright,' others followed. As Irwin (1972) found, having a significant member of a community vouch for you can guarantee your standing. However, there were cases where young women elected to be involved in the study because they distrusted one or other of the initial respondents and wanted to 'set the record straight,' or at least find out what their co-accused had told me about them.

Selecting a sample

When I drew my sample on 31 July 2001, the population at Cornton Vale had reached 233.³³ Of these, 62 were untried prisoners and 171 were convicted, including 15 'young remands' and 36 'young offenders' aged under 21. This information is presented visually in Figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1: Prison population on 31 July 2001



In order to include young women serving sentences for violent offences committed in their late teens and early 20s, I extended the age range of my sample beyond the

³³ On 12 May 2006 the prison held 362 women, despite only having places for 330 (SCCCJ 2006).

normal cut-off point of 21 years to 25 years and under. As illustrated in Figure 4.2 (see page 79), there were 38 convicted prisoners in this category. Not all were *currently* serving a sentence relating to a violent offence, but all had at least one previous conviction for violence. As outlined above, each of these young women was sent a letter by myself asking if they would be interested in participating in the research (see Appendix 3). I then went to speak to each of the young women in person, to ask them if they would like to be involved. Twenty-four young women agreed, seven declined, and a further seven were released before I was able to speak with them directly.³⁴ Of the 24 young women who agreed to participate in the study, 21 were eventually interviewed.³⁵ Of the remaining three, one was 'libbed' before I was able to interview her, while the other two were unable to attend because of work party duties and an unannounced agent visit. Unfortunately I was unable to reschedule these interviews before the end of the fieldwork period.³⁶

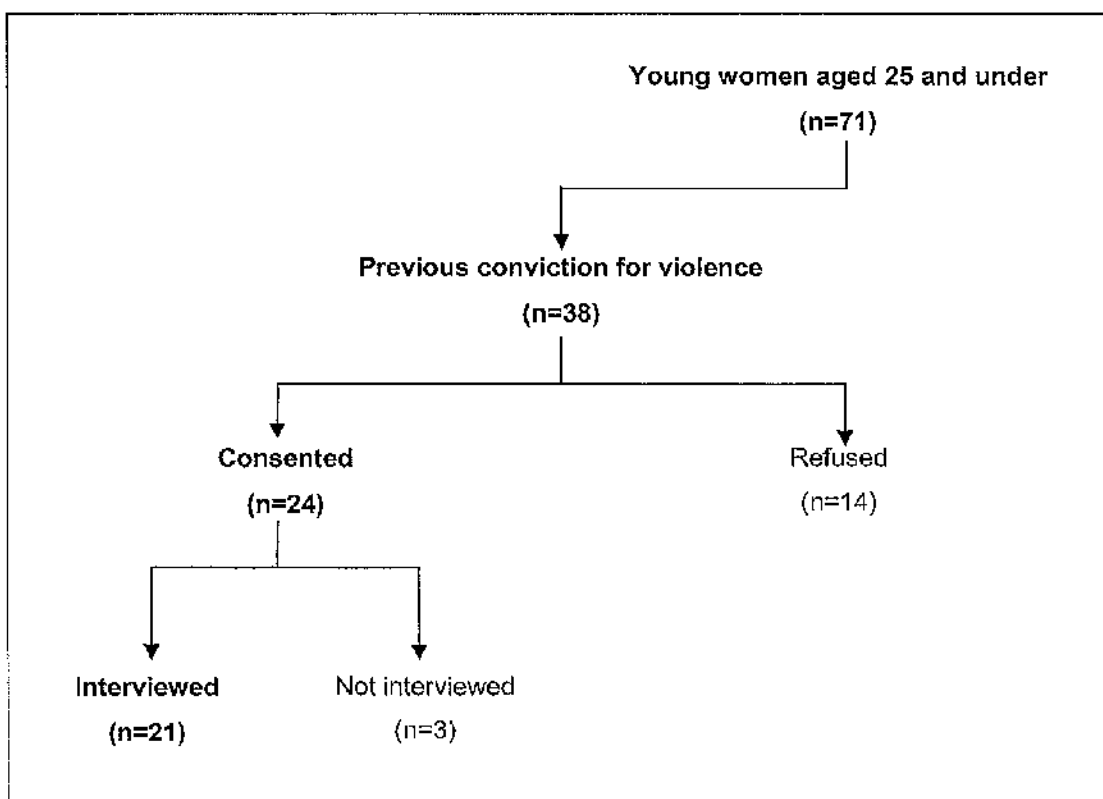
There are several limitations to my study resulting from sampling. First is the problem of relying on interviews with young women in prison. Violence may have different meanings for young women in custody compared to young women in the community. For instance, experiencing sanctions for violent offending might alter young women's perceptions about the positive features of violent behaviour, or violence may take on a special significance as a means of fitting in. Secondly, the sample is relatively small. That said, my goal here is not to generalize about young women and violence, but to provide a rich analysis of a specific group of 'violent' female offenders.

³⁴ Excluding this last group, this reflects a response rate of around 77 percent.

³⁵ Tables comparing the characteristics of the interview sample and the wider sample can be found in Appendix 4.

³⁶ I also interviewed one young woman identified by staff as violent in prison (but who did not have a history of violent offending) and one non-violent offender/prisoner. Both of these young women have been excluded from the analysis that follows.

Figure 4.2: The sample



The interview guide

For the interviews I prepared a list of key themes (see Appendix 5), devised according to the principles laid down by Merton et al. (1956). These themes were as follows: 'personal history and family background,' 'experiences with and/or involvement in violence,' 'experiences of the criminal justice system,' 'views on the social acceptability of violence,' and 'self and identity.' The purpose of the interview was to explore what young women perceived as important in their personal experience, how they understood it, how they described it, how they made sense of it in retrospect, what aspirations and plans they had for the future and how this was related to their involvement in violent behaviour. Before undertaking any interviews, I examined the available background data on individual cases in order to inform discussion. Case files and prison records were consulted for information on the offender's current conviction(s), family background, and history of social work

and/or criminal justice involvement.³⁷ Basic demographic information was collected for the entire sample using SPIN (Scottish Prisons Information Network),³⁸ and this was supplemented by information gleaned from the prisoners' Programme Needs Assessment forms (which included information on the offender's background, education and employment, expressed attitude towards her offence, addictions etc.).³⁹ Where young women were serving sentences of four years or more, I took copies of their Trial Judge Report and I also consulted (consenting) young women's prison Narratives and Social Enquiry Reports.

The interview schedule was also informed by my reading of the literature relating to women and violence (see Chapter Two). While the main purpose of the interview was to listen to what the young women had to say, and I encouraged the respondents to lead the discussion as far as possible, there were specific points that I wanted to cover in each interview in order to address the research aims, and also to test the claims of existing research (for example, Anne Campbell's [1993] notion that women experience aggression as a loss of control). I tried to balance these somewhat competing objectives by beginning the discussion with open-ended as opposed to closed questions and then following these up with more targeted queries, for example exploring motives and feelings. I also utilised a warm-down questionnaire at the end of each interview to probe general attitudes towards violence, as well as sense of self and self-efficacy (see Appendix 6).

Conduct of the interview

At the beginning of the interview, I reiterated the goals and purposes of the study, and the uses to which the young women's accounts would be put. Once the young

³⁷ Case files and prison records were also an important source of data on professional and lay perspectives, formal processes of decision-making, organisational practices and inter-agency involvement.

³⁸ SPIN is a networked computer system that includes information on individual prisoners' date of birth, address, religious background, marital status, employment status, psychiatric history, offence(s), previous convictions, custodial periods served, date of arrival, estimated date of liberation, and length of sentence.

³⁹ I was also given access to the entire sample's 'psychometrics' (Alcohol-Dependency Scale, Barrett Impulsivity Scale, Drug Abuse Screening Test, Novaco Anger Scale, Self-Esteem Scale etc.), although these were not routinely collected on all prisoners.

women's queries were addressed and informed consent was confirmed, the tape-recorder was switched on.

The interviews themselves ranged in length from one to two hours, and were usually conducted in communal dining/sitting room areas, and occasionally in prisoners' rooms. These locations not only made tape-recording and transcription difficult, they also raised issues of confidentiality and anonymity. By their very nature, prisons are noisy places, with inmates and officers shouting at one another, doors being slammed, and so on. This noise was amplified in large, empty dining rooms, and contrasted sharply with many of the young women's soft, sometimes slurred, speech. Using the dining/sitting room also meant that interviews were occasionally interrupted, for example by prison officers offering me cups of tea, or inmates looking for a light/a fag/the ironing board/or whatever.⁴⁰ While I would pause the interview during these intrusions, to make sure that conversations would not be overheard, it is likely that they had an impact on what the young women felt comfortable discussing. That said, most respondents appeared to speak freely, and I was often surprised at the amount of information that was disclosed in regards to past abuse, past offences, substance abuse and self-harm. As the research progressed, it became clear to me that some (but not all) of the young women were very familiar with being interviewed, having discussed their offending histories with a series of prison officers, panel members, police officers, social workers, solicitors, psychologists, and in some cases, researchers and/or journalists. These previous experiences meant that certain interviewees, particularly those with a long history of social work involvement, had a pretty good idea of what it was that I was 'looking for,' and dutifully detailed their 'social backgrounds' without much reflection, and very little prompting. Others appeared unable or at least reluctant to reflect upon specific events or periods in their past in any great length,⁴¹ raising important

⁴⁰ The location and timing of the interviews also meant that some interviews had to end abruptly, without appropriate cool-down activities, due to prisoner returning from work duties/meals being served etc.

⁴¹ As I discuss in the chapters that follow, the young women's difficulty in narrativizing their lives can be linked to the impact of abuse and other trauma, the use of drugs and alcohol, and a cultural imperative that encouraged them to live life in the moment.

questions about the politics as well as the efficacy of conducting oral-history interviews with women in the prison setting.⁴²

Interviews with key professionals

Professional and lay perspectives on young women and violence were ascertained via semi-structured interviews with 12 members of the prison staff: five prison officers, two programmes officers, Head of Programmes, one senior social worker, one governor, one prison psychologist, and one nurse. These interviews were conducted at an agreed and convenient time and ranged in length from 20 minutes to over an hour. Interview schedules for key professionals were circulated to SPS in advance, and included questions that elicited information about concrete practice as well as official policy. Staff were interviewed about their roles vis-à-vis 'violent' young women, professional and personal conceptualisations of 'violent women,' the perceived degree of 'fit' between competing discourses, whether young women and violence was considered a 'problem,' what could or should be 'done,' and perceptions of the benefit, or otherwise, of incarceration.

*Ethical issues and dilemmas*⁴³

In their introduction to *The British Journal of Criminology* special issue on methodological dilemmas in research, Liebling and Stanko (2001) identify two key questions that confront criminological researchers: allegiance (i.e. the need to maintain ethical standards) and ambivalence (assuring that data are analytically objective):

⁴² Finch (1984) asserts that there is a need to consider whether women make suitable interviewees, as they are subjected to more frequent questioning about their lives than men, while McRobbie (2000: 134) also makes the point that 'women are often such good research subjects because of their willingness to talk, which is in itself an index of their powerlessness.' These issues are magnified for women in prison.

Ethical research is typically defined as that which safeguards the rights and feelings of those who are being researched. Assuring confidentiality, minimizing the impact of recalling and reporting stressful events, and avoiding deception are three components of any ethical expectation for social science researchers. The value of objective analysis is the reliability and validity of its findings. The assumption is, despite several decades of critique of this position, that such objectivity is achievable. But the nature of violence, its definitions and its meanings are continuously contested. Those who choose to research violence will always be walking on shaky (i.e. socially and politically constructed) ground. (Liebling and Stanko 2001: 424)

These questions are discussed in the context of the current research, below. The section explores the role of the research in the social and moral context of a prison setting and examines the impact that researching sensitive topics in prisons can have on both the participants and the researcher.

Researching sensitive issues in prison

The nature of the prison setting is summarised by Sparks:

Prisons have a number of features that mark them out as unique amongst contemporary social institutions ... [They] confine people under conditions not of their own choosing, in close proximity to others whose company they may not desire, attended by custodians who are formally empowered to attend to their lives in intimate detail ... They assume a high degree of power over the lives of their inmates, and that power is in the last instance buttressed by the right to use sanctions, including physical force, to secure prisoners' compliance. (Sparks 2001: 208-210)

⁴³ The British Sociological Association and British Society of Criminology ethical codes provided the principal basis for the research (BSA 2002; BSC 2006).

As 'total institutions,' prisons strip inmates of agency (Goffman 1961), making it difficult for them to walk away or refuse to take part in research. On the one hand, fellow prisoners may consider a young woman to be a 'grass' for participating in research relating to violence or bullying within the prison; on the other, she may be perceived as uncooperative by prison staff if she refuses to take part. Further, those who have experienced violence may find it difficult to discuss traumatic incidents and therefore not want to co-operate with research, whereas others may volunteer too readily (see Liebling 1992). Such circumstances demand a sensitive approach, where special attention is given to ensuring informed consent.

As described above, I initially approached the young women by letter, and provided them with a written description of the research. I then spoke to each young woman in person, explaining the project verbally. During our initial discussions, and indeed during the interviews themselves, informants were assured that they were not bound to discuss any issues with which they did not feel comfortable, and that they could opt out of the research at any time.⁴⁴ It was also made clear that a decision not to take part, or to withdraw participation, would not affect their sentence in any way.⁴⁵

The consent material also acknowledged the limits of confidentiality and, where relevant, anonymity. As the quote from Liebling and Stanko (2001) highlighted (see above), the most fundamental rule of social research – and of prison research in particular – is not to identify vulnerable respondents (King 2000). In the current study this was less easy than supposed because of the small number of women proceeded against for violent offences in Scotland, and the fact that there is only one female prison. Changing the names of respondents is not enough in this context. As a result, in addition to employing pseudonyms, I did not report demographic information or individual details that might in any way compromise participants. Completed interviews and case files were kept in a locked filing cabinet,

⁴⁴ Young women were not asked directly about experiences of abuse, but they were asked whether they had ever been the victim of violence and whether they would describe their family backgrounds as violent.

⁴⁵ While I took along cans of fizzy drinks and mini bars of chocolate for the young women to consume during the interview (as an ice-breaker), they were not offered any other form of remuneration. I did

and all electronic data was password protected and stored anonymously. With regard to confidentiality, participants were advised that if they disclosed information that clearly revealed danger to themselves and/or others I would need to act on this material. Fortunately no such incidents occurred.

The consent material also made clear that I did not have a counselling role. Institutional sources of support were established in advance of the fieldwork and information about these and other accessible resources (e.g. SACRO, CRUISE, Rape Crisis etc.) were made available. 'Cool down' questions were used at the end of each interview in an attempt to shift the mood of our discussion onto something more positive.

Moral talk: the social construction of 'violence'

'Violence' is arguably one of the most confused, emotive and subjective terms in our moral and social language (Norman 1995). It has very powerful connotations, yet is used to denote a wide range of acts, consequences and practices. In seeking a definition, one could resort to categories of violence enshrined within criminal statutes – ranging from homicide to common assault. These specify that force, or threat of force, are located within physical or sexual harm. However, as research by feminist writers has pointed out, these legal definitions often do not incorporate the experiences that many people have which they perceive as violent, but which are not officially counted as crimes (Hammer and Saunders 1984; Stanko 1985; Wise and Stanley 1987). Kelly (1988), for example, has shown not only the extent to which the threat or fear of violence is a part of women's everyday lives, but also the 'continuum' of activities included in their definitions of violence (receiving obscene phone calls, for example, or being followed, touched up, or sexually harassed in public space). Likewise, the 'View from the Girls' study found that girls' ideas about 'what counts' as violence did not correspond with adult or legal views (Batchelor et al. 2001; Burman 2004; Burman et al. 2001, 2003). While a common understanding

not inform the young women that I would be providing them with snacks prior to the interview, although it is possible that a couple of the later participants were told this by fellow inmates.

of violence is of an intentionally harmful, interpersonal physical act such as punching or kicking, the young women in Burman et al.'s research maintained that verbal behaviours (such as name-calling, threats and intimidation) were often intended and experienced as potentially *more* hurtful and damaging.⁴⁶

Clearly, then, an objective definition of violence simply does not exist. Its meaning and impact vary for different people. As a result, violence researchers must confront the dilemmas of engaging with a field where their research findings become part of a popular discourse that has a special moral mission (Sasson 1995; Sparks 1992):

This moral discourse is steeped in contradictory notions of what kind of crime and violence are normal, acceptable, illegal and abnormal. As researchers we are often in situations where we are to make judgements about behaviour, and decide whether such behaviour is worthy of note. (Leibling and Stanko 2001: 426)

One of the dangers of researching particular subjects is that by acknowledging their very existence we may contribute to their problematisation. The publicity generated by research on 'violent' young women may lead to the perception that young women's violence is a growing problem, or that young women are just as bad as, if not worse than, young men (Batchelor 2001; Tisdall 2003). It is for this reason that feminists have traditionally ignored female violence, fearing the potentially negative political and social costs for the feminist movement more generally (see Campbell 1993; Day et al. 2003). After all, if energy and resources are expended on addressing *female* violence, the hard won acknowledgement that sexual and physical violence are gendered crimes may be lost within a 'women blaming' backlash. Hence while the current research spoke to young women publicly labelled as criminally violent, it

⁴⁶ The official focus on interpersonal violence perpetrated by individual offenders also overlooks institutional or state-sanctioned violence. Using a legal framework to define violence essentially means a tacit acceptance that the law's violence (or use of legitimate violence by the state) is not as problematical as violence by individuals, yet a very fine line divides the legitimate use of force from illegitimate violence, particularly in relation to violence within prisons (Leibling and Stanko 2001: 425). In other words, prisons are by their very nature violent places. Prison officers routinely use verbal abuse to control, manage and discipline inmates and have a range of 'restraining techniques' for

also acknowledged the social, material and gendered circumstances of their lives, thereby addressing their experiences of 'everyday violence' (Stanko 1990).

Allegiances and empathy

One of the most rewarding and most troublesome aspects of the fieldwork related to my interactions and identifications with the young women themselves. As Grills (1998) illustrates, the pleasure and burden of reflexive research is that it involves the whole person: 'Our relationships with those we study are not mediated by text or quantitative reconstructions. Rather, the world of the researcher is engaged with an intensity that involves the researcher as an emotional, ethical, and committed actor' (Grills 1998: 164). Engaging and building rapport with the young women in the study was, on the whole, a surprisingly easy and enjoyable experience. While no two research participants were the same, they were all easy to get along with in a one-to-one situation and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to express their views.⁴⁷ If they asked me something about myself, I answered honestly. As a result, a number of the transcripts read more like conversations than formal interviews and some digressed to the point where I felt as if the young women were interviewing me as much as the other way round!

Oakley (1981) calls the idea of women interviewing women 'a contradiction in terms' since, she claims, women are more likely to turn an interview into a social occasion due to their propensity for 'talk.' In a text that has become something of a sociological classic, she argues that 'A feminist interviewing women is by definition both "inside" the culture and participating in that which she is observing.' In other words, because she shares the social characteristic of being a woman, the researcher can identify with the women she interviews and the women come to identify with her. Yet such an assumption ignores the fact that women differ in social class, age, ethnicity, and so forth, all of which may hinder mutual understanding and friendly

dealing with difficult prisoners. Yet current SPS monitoring practises, which record serious assaults by prisoners (on staff and other prisoners), do not keep details on assaults by staff

⁴⁷ For example, several women thanked me for doing research about young women's views, while others were just grateful for the break from prison routine.

and/or open communication (Phoenix 1994). In the current study, for example, there were significant class differences between the participants and myself. As the literature discussed in Chapters One and Two predicted, the majority of the young women interviewed came from backgrounds characterised by poverty, abuse, addiction, and experience of local authority care. As 'a student,' I was identified as 'other:' middle-class, educated, and from a stable family background.

Of course that is not to say we had no common reference points. I was 26 when I conducted the fieldwork and therefore only a few years older than many of the research participants. Having grown up in a large town in central Scotland, I left school aged 16, before moving to Glasgow at age 18. Despite our different social circumstances, then, the young women and I shared a number of common *cultural* experiences. Karen, for example, grew up in the same locality as me and was returning to live there at the end of her sentence. She had also been accepted onto a course at the college I attended on leaving school. Zoë lived in the same neighbourhood as me currently, and discussed the merits of the local schools, as well as what bus number she thought was most reliable. Pauline and I discovered that we used to go clubbing at the same city centre venue and, consequently, that we had acquaintances in common. These shared experiences were quite distinct to the biographics of other prison researchers who warn that 'academic researchers do not have a great deal in common with either prisoners or prison staff' (King 2000: 302). In my teenage years I had hung about with such girls: skiving school with them, fighting them in the school toilets, drinking mixies with them up the park, going to the dancing with them and, perhaps most significantly, taking drugs with them. As the following comment from Pauline illustrates, talking openly about these experiences allowed the young women to 'place' me and in doing so 'relate' to me in a way they could not have done had I maintained the stance of an objective, impartial 'observer':

[I could tell that] you werenae a total daftie ... you knew the score ... there's people that's came in here in the past, like students and that, and I just find that – Ah'm no being cheeky or that – but Ah just find that you students are jist more up yourself. No you personally, but a lot o' them. And I just think, "Well, fuck yous. I'm no

daein' your studies!" But Ah found when Ah came in and talked to you last week, whenever, Ah thought, "She seems quite down to earth. Ah think she's all right."
(Pauline)

According to the literature, one of the key problems faced by reflexive researchers is over-identifying with their participants and thereby ignoring or minimising the differences between them. In terms of the current research I was both insider and outsider, and this at times facilitated closeness, at others strangeness.

Analytical considerations

As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) acknowledge, after their first year of research, PhD students have varying degrees of certainty about their data. The uncertain researcher feels s/he is 'drowning in data' and asks: 'I've collected all this data and now what should I do?' The other, more confident, student states: 'I've collected all my data, now I am going to analyse it and write it up.' I fell into the former category.

Beginning data analysis

I approached the initial data analysis by following the guidelines set down by Plummer (1983). These involved transcribing the recorded data, making notes, and then reading various sources regarding analysis. From Glaser and Strauss (1967) I employed the techniques of the 'long soak' and 'constant comparisons.' This involved reading and re-reading the text, and sampling the items that emerged as theoretically relevant until recurrent patterns could be identified. Analysis began by producing a summary of each interview, in effect distilling up to 50 pages of typed transcription into a short paper organised horizontally around a set of themes. These themes derived from categories that emerged during the data collection and analysis, as well as those arising both from both the literature review and my own previous research.

Transcribing almost 1,000 pages of interview data turned out to be a long and arduous process, not least because I had a baby whilst in the midst of it. Fortunately, however, I kept a journal throughout the project, in which I summarised the key literature, noted down any potentially relevant and/or interesting points, undertook manual analysis of data, highlighted key propositions and/or findings, and summarised the process of my analysis over time. This turned out to be a lifesaver. The first thing that struck me on re-reading the transcripts was the level of contradiction contained within each of the young women's accounts. These initially threatened to overwhelm me until I realised that it was precisely these ambiguities and tensions that were the major theme of the research. Making sense of such chaos called for a keen understanding of the processes by which social actors are constituted as subjects and come to experience themselves. It was at this point I turned my attention to theoretical perspectives on gender and agency, and in particular the work of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu.

Developing new protocols

As stated in Chapters One and Three, the thesis draws upon a feminist social constructionist perspective, and is particularly influenced by feminist re-readings of Foucault and Bourdieu. This was a body of literature that I had some (limited) familiarity with as a result of my undergraduate degree, but which did not inform my initial research design, nor my data collection (both of which professed a more generalised 'feminist' perspective). During the process of data analysis, however, it became apparent that if I was to make sense of what, from a realist standpoint, appeared to be senseless data, I needed to adopt a framework which could accommodate contradiction and chaos. From Foucauldian feminists, then, I adopted the notion of the non-essentialised, performative subject and from feminists working within a Bourdieusian framework I adopted the notion of the pre-reflexive, embodied subject. According to Foucault, social actors are composed not of one but of several, sometimes contradictory, identities because they have been subjected to and formed as subjects by a variety of discourses located in a range of social spaces. This

understanding shifts our focus from differences between women and men, to the differences between and *within* women. According to Bourdieu, subjectivity is not something we are born or genetically programmed with, but rather something we acquire over time and through repetition; something we know in our bodies and our minds. This helps explain the more deep-rooted aspects of gender identity, and the contradictions that sometimes exist between what young women consciously know and what they emotionally crave. Both approaches raise the important methodological question of whether the 'reality' is discernable via interviewee's accounts.

In his *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, David Silverman (2001) highlights the difficulties faced by qualitative researchers in making sense of interview data. On the one hand, they can treat respondents' answers as giving access to some objective 'reality' (e.g. facts, events) or direct 'experience' (e.g. feelings, meanings). On the other, they can treat interview data as accessing actively constructed 'stories' or 'narratives' through which people describe their world (see Holstein and Gubrium 1995). A key advantage of the latter approach for the current research is that, by abandoning the attempt to treat respondents' accounts as potentially 'true' pictures of 'reality,' we open up for analysis the culturally rich ways in which interviewees learn to accommodate contradictions and tensions in their narratives about themselves (cf. Phoenix 1997, 1999; Worrall 1990). As Anne Campbell acknowledges, in her study *The Girls in the Gang* (1984: 143), 'social representations of acts or beliefs constitute a legitimate focus of research in their own right.' When young women talk about their experiences of violence, they are doing several things at once: first, they are giving a descriptive report of what they have done; second, they are presenting an account to another person that is sayable and convincing; and third, they are conveying information on their sense of themselves as young women. In other words, their stories are 'part of a living, if in some respects fleeting, social relationship: between teller and listener, past and present' (Bertaux 1982: 97):

Stories about the past are told from the present, from a situation that may have changed over the years and defines a new relationship to the past. It is this relationship which underlies the whole story, defines the meaning which it is supposed to convey: for one never tells a story in itself, but in order to convey some

meaning. Telling a story about the past is a way of expressing indirectly a meaning about the present; in most cases this – often unconscious – goal of meaning construction prevails over the faithful reconstruction of the past. (ibid.: 98)

Hence, the meaning ascribed to that experience inevitably incurs selectivity and interpretation, and ultimately reflects the validity of a particular cultural story, or representation of self. In this sense, reality is not the unitary, rational entity assumed by traditional social scientific research. Rather, the discourses in which interviewees position themselves are the result of complex interaction, between unconscious desires, conscious rationality and available subject positions in a multiplicity of discourses (Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

One way to utilise a narrative approach, then, is to think about how respondents use culturally available resources in order to construct their accounts. This involves examining what stories are told and how and where they are (re)produced (Silverman 2005). As illustrated in Chapters Seven and Eight, young women in the current study attempted to make their actions understandable in two ways: (a) they challenged the definition of their behaviour as violent by drawing on (sub)cultural norms and values to demonstrate the normalcy of their activities, or (b) they challenged the notion that they themselves were violent by drawing on dominant discourses of female offending (which attribute violence to experiences of victimisation and the intoxicating effects of drugs and/or alcohol).

Twenty-one young women

This final section provides an overview of the range of circumstances of each respondent at interview, including a summary of their current offences. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of each of young woman.

The sample

All of the young women in the interview sample were single and all were white, and – as is indicated in Table 4.1 (below) – ages ranged from 16 to 24 years.⁴⁸

Table 4.1: Age of interview sample (years)

Age on 1 st January 2001	Number of young women (n=21)
16 years	1
17 years	1
18 years	4
19 years	5
20 years	4
21 years	1
22 years	2
23 years	1
24 years	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>21</i>

Table 4.2 gives the housing situation of the respondents prior to custody, from which it can be seen that almost half were living with parents (all of whom rented properties from the local authority). A significant minority (Pauline, Joanne, Carol, Kim, Jay, and Karen) resided in hostel, supported accommodation, or were formally homeless. Only one young woman was employed prior to custody, but even she was reliant on benefits, because she worked part-time (Diane). The only respondent who did not claim benefits was still at school and therefore financially supported by her mother (Samantha).

⁴⁸ In February 2005, minority ethnic groups made up five percent of the female prison population in Scotland (SPS, personal correspondence, 24/02/05). In the general population of Scotland, 98% is white. The disproportionate number of ethnic minority women in prison in Scotland is therefore much lower than in England and Wales, where minority ethnic groups make up 26 percent of the female average population (compared to six percent of the population at large).

Table 4.2: Housing situation of respondents

	Number of young women (n=21)
Living with parent(s)	10
Living with partner	1
Living alone	4
Living in a hostel	3
Homeless	3
<i>Total</i>	21

All of the young women were unmarried, though one lived with her boyfriend prior to custody (Fiona) and two more had current partners (Jay, Gillian). Six of the young women were mothers, one of whom (Gillian) had her baby in prison. The remainder of the young women's children were cared for by maternal grandparents (Jane, Lesley), foster parents (Jay), or adoptive parents (Annie, Pauline).

The offences

The various violent offence types committed by the young women are listed in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Violent offence types (SPIN data)

Violent offence classification as recorded in SPIN	Number of young women (n=21)
Assault	6
Carrying a Knife	1
Assault and Attempted Robbery	1
Assault and Robbery	1
Assault to Severe Injury	1
Abduction, Assault to Severe Injury and Robbery	1
Assault to Severe Injury and Permanent Disfigurement	3
Assault to Severe Injury and Permanent Disfigurement and Attempted Robbery	2
Assault to Danger of Life	1
Abduction, Assault and Robbery, and Attempted Murder	1
Attempted Murder	2
Culpable Homicide	1
Total	21

Serious assault was the most common, closely followed by ‘petty’ assault.⁴⁹ Length of sentence ranged from three months (assault) to 12 years (attempted murder) and mean length of sentence was three years and three months. Four-fifths of the young women had previous convictions, not necessarily for violence, and just under half had served a previous custodial sentence.

According to narrative data from the interviews, serious assaults were generally alcohol-related, or drug-related and committed during the course of a robbery. Simple assaults were generally committed alongside acquisitive crimes such as shoplifting, for example when the offender was apprehended by security staff. The overwhelming majority of offences were related to drugs or alcohol in some way. Four-fifths were committed while the offender was intoxicated (six young women were under the influence of drugs, eight were under the influence of alcohol and

⁴⁹ According to the official classification of crimes and offences, an assault is recorded as serious if the victim sustains an injury resulting in detention in hospital as an in-patient, or any of the following injuries: fractures, concussion, internal injuries, crushing, severe cuts or lacerations or severe general shock (Recorded Crime in Scotland 2003).

three were under the influence of drugs and alcohol) and one third were committed alongside acquisitive crimes carried out to fund a drug addiction. Of the remaining two offences, one was related to a drug feud and the other to a family feud.

Victim characteristics varied according to violent offender typology: alcohol-related offences, which tended to be the result of interpersonal conflict, were committed against young women who were not known to the offender or older male victims known to the offender. Drug-related offences, on the other hand, tended to be perpetrated against shop assistants, security guards, police officers and members of the general public who were not known to the offender.⁵⁰ These findings run contrary to the view that women are more likely to commit offences of violence against persons they know, but may be explained by the age-range and offending profile of the sample. Whereas studies of violence by adult females suggest sexual partners (Rasche 1990) and infants (Morris and Wilczynski 1993) are the most likely victims, and research into girls' violence identifies siblings (Batchelor et al. 2001) and peers (Campbell 1986) as common targets, recent research into criminally violent young women acknowledges their role in assault and robbery offences, typically committed against persons unknown to the offender. This latter research, which identifies drugs and a prior history of prostitution as important factors in robberies committed by women (in the US), suggests attacks on strangers are most commonly related to predominantly poor areas in which young women are exposed to crime and violence on a daily basis (Baskin and Sommers 1998; Miller 1998, 2001) and where they learn to use violence as a means of survival (Maher 1997; Maher and Curtis 1992, 1995). This highlights the importance of understanding the context within which female offending takes place.

⁵⁰ The vast majority of offenders committed their last offence with one or more others within the locale of their current accommodation or in the city centre. Thirteen offences took place in a public place (i.e. in the street, or in a shop or shopping centre) and five within a private dwelling (usually the offender's flat, or the flat of a friend or acquaintance). Nine offences (mainly serious assaults and attempted murders) took place at night time/during the early hours of the morning, five took place in the afternoon (mainly assault and robberies and assaults associated with apprehension for shoplifting etc.), and two (both serious assault and robberies) took place in the evening.

The context

More than half of the young women did not grow up in an intact two-parent family and they experienced significant family disruption in terms of changes to their main caregiver. Almost three-quarters of the young women reported previous social work involvement and involvement in the children's hearing system (CHS) and more than half had been looked after by the local authority. The average age of first referral to the CHS was 11, most commonly for school non-attendance, followed by lack of parental care, being considered outwith parental control and offending behaviour. Whilst these findings support an analysis of Scottish Children's Reporters' Administration data showing that many offending girls originally come to the attention of the Reporter on non-offence grounds (Social Work Services and Prisons Inspectorate for Scotland 1998: 12), two-fifths of the young women were referred to the Panel on grounds relating to their own challenging or difficult behaviour (i.e. offending, truancy, or being considered outwith parental control).

Two-fifths of the young women said they had been sexually abused, usually by a member of their family. A significant amount of violence within the home was also reported, with two-fifths of the young women describing witnessing regular incidents of 'serious' physical violence between their parents, most of which were attributed to their father's (and sometimes their mother's) alcohol abuse. The young women also witnessed physical violence between and against their siblings ('beatings' sometimes involving the use of weapons, such as majorette batons, bricks, or belts), and two-fifths had been victimised themselves, usually by their parents, sometimes seriously.

Whilst these figures highlight the prevalence of past abuse in the lives of young women who commit violent offences, they are perhaps lower than might be expected when compared with research into the backgrounds and characteristics of female prisoners. Loucks's (1998) research, for example, revealed that the vast majority of women in Cornton Vale had been victims of physical (60 percent), sexual (47 percent) or emotional (71 percent) abuse. There are a number of reasons why the young women in my sample may have exhibited lower reported rates of abuse. Firstly, the data reported in Loucks's research relates to adult rather than young

offenders and the emotional and physical abuses reported were usually experienced during adulthood and from a partner. Because the age-range of my sample is lower (16-24 years), the abuses recounted were generally experienced during childhood. Another possible explanation is that the young women had not yet come to terms with their experiences, or perhaps did not recognize their experiences as abuse (see Batchelor et al. 2001). The difficulties associated with disclosing and/or discussing experiences of abuse also mean that the numbers reported are likely to be underestimates.⁵¹

The young women

The young women interviewed as part of the study are introduced below.

Diane was a 19-year-old young woman from Edinburgh, serving a four-month sentence for an assault to severe injury. The fourth child in a family of five, she experienced a reasonably happy childhood, however her parents had recently separated and continued to live in the same household. Diane was clearly distressed by these difficult home circumstances, but was unable to move out due to her limited financial income. Upon leaving school at the age of 17, she gained an NVQ in Business Studies, before finding work as a part-time domestic assistant in the local hospital. She said that she would like to progress to working as a care assistant after her release.

Diane's offence occurred after a night out drinking in the city centre. She and a friend were looking for a taxi when they passed a couple, who (Diane claimed) made a disparaging remark about her as she walked past. After exchanging words with the girlfriend, Diane walked away, only to hear her call her 'a cow.' The pair continued to argue until the girlfriend grabbed Diane by the back of the head, at which point she retaliated physically. This was Diane's first custodial sentence,

⁵¹ As previously stated, interviewees were not asked directly about experiences of abuse, but they were asked whether they had ever been the victim of violence and whether they would describe their family backgrounds as violent.

although she had been convicted of three analogous offences (all breach of the peaces committed under the influence of alcohol).

Nineteen-year-old *Debbie* was a vulnerable and emotionally damaged young woman serving a 16-month sentence for assault and attempted robbery. Debbie had an extremely disruptive childhood, living with her maternal grandmother until the age of 11, during which time she was sexually abused by her grandfather (age 3-11 years). According to Debbie, her mother knew about the abuse but didn't tell anyone because she claimed to be too scared (she had also been abused as a child by the same man). Debbie despised her mother for not preventing the abuse and had an extremely problematic relationship with her as a result.

After her grandmother died, Debbie went to stay with her mother but was sent to a children's home at age 12 due to lack of parental care. Around this time she began using solvents and quickly progressed to alcohol. After being returned to her mother's care, she went to live with a friend's parent and, after this arrangement broke down, was again sent to a children's home. By the age of 14 she was using heroin, temazepam and diazepam. Her behaviour became increasingly aggressive and demanding and so she was moved from the home to a residential school, before being discharged into her father's care (due to lack of co-operation and persistent absconding). This arrangement did not last and Debbie soon moved back in with her mother, at which point she was placed on remand in a secure unit due to involvement in serious offending (assault and robbery). She was 16 years old. She remained in secure for 11 months and had been in and out of prison and psychiatric hospital ever since.

Co-accused with Kim, *Donna* was serving a two-year sentence for assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement and attempted robbery.

Donna lived most of her life in Fife and was the eldest of three girls and a stepbrother. Her parents separated when she was three and she was received into care when she was four, following allegations of parental neglect. She was returned to her mother's care after two months, but was subject to social work involvement

thereafter. When Donna was aged eight, her mother stated she was out with parental control. When she was 12, she appeared before a children's hearing on offence grounds, resulting in her being placed with Foster carers on a Supervision Order. After returning home the following year (aged 13), she moved around various friends' houses, sometimes staying with an aunt. Social work records note that her mother took no interest in her during this time. Within a couple of months she had committed another offence and her mother once more claimed that she was out with parental control. Donna was removed on a place of safety warrant and a detention warrant followed, but she was again returned home. Eventually she was excluded from school, committed another offence and was placed at in residential school (14 years) where she made good progress (achieving six 'S' Grades) before being excluded for bullying (aged 16 years).

Donna began drinking at the age of 13. Initially she drank only at weekends, but latterly had escalated to the point where she was drinking a bottle of Buckfast daily. On the day of her current offence she and her co-accused had drank three bottles of Buckfast between them. After visiting a friend in hospital, the two young women became involved in a verbal confrontation in the street. This was a common occurrence. According to Donna, Kim was having tantrum about her mobile phone and sat down on the pavement. Donna started slapping her and telling her to get up, when a female passer-by stopped to ask Kim if she was all right. The two girls assaulted the woman. Donna had little recollection of these events.

Carol, aged 18, was nearing the end of a 12-month sentence for assault and robbery. Involved in offending at an early age, Carol was looked after by the local authority from the age of 12, when she was sent to a children's home for being 'out with parental control.' Though she never said it directly, Carol implied that she had been abused by her mother. She started smoking heroin aged 14 and by the age of 15 had moved on to intravenous use. This was accompanied by an escalation in her offending (from shoplifting to housebreaking and robbery), mainly to fund her drug habit, but also, she said, because 'it seemed to make me feel better.' Prior to custody she was living in homeless accommodation with no support from her family.

Joanne was serving a three-month sentence for assaulting two men. She had been drinking for five days following the death of her uncle and had no memory of the incident.

Born and raised in a town on the East Coast, Joanne's parents separated when she was four years old. Initially she lived with her mother, and then, when her mother moved in with another man, with her mother's partner and their two children. She stated that she had a good relationship with her mother and partner, but spent most of the time living with maternal grandparents, who both passed away when she was 13. It was around the time of their death that Joanne started drinking, and by age 14 was using cannabis, amphetamines and acid. When she was 14, a children's panel put Joanne on a supervision order due to chronic school non-attendance and being out with parental control. Joanne explained that her relationship with her mother had deteriorated as a result of her mother's drinking and expectation that Joanne would look after her younger siblings. She was also physically abusive towards Joanne and her younger sister. Following another children's panel, Joanne was placed in the care of the local authority, initially staying at a children's home and then moving on to residential school. After leaving local authority care at age 16, Joanne began drinking on a daily basis and, depending on finance or availability through peers, started using Valium, heroin and dihydrocodeine. At the time of interview, she had had a heroin habit for approximately three years. She had no fixed address and resided with various friends and family.

Twenty-four-year-old *Pauline* was an only child, born and brought up in Glasgow. Her parents, whom she described as 'good working-class,' separated when she was five years old. Pauline initially lived with her mother, but was received into voluntary care at the age of seven. In her view, her mother did not want her: 'she was wantin' tae live her ain life, to go oot all the time, and she couldnae 'cause she had me.' Pauline remained in care (residential schools and foster care) throughout her childhood, with weekend access to her mother (who subsequently remarried). She left care aged 17 and without any formal qualifications. Soon after, she became

involved in prostitution, after seeing the amount of money the other girls in her hostel made.

Pauline had a significant number of previous convictions, many of which were related to soliciting, breach of the peace and violence. At the time of her last offence (assault to danger of life -- after getting done for a BOP, Pauline spat on officer and told him she had AIDS. She was sentenced for 12 months) her drug use had escalated to the point where she was using £75 worth of heroin and £100 of crack cocaine per day. Whilst she began using drugs recreationally around age 16 (acid, speed, ecstasy), she did not develop a serious habit until her daughter was placed for adoption (18 months prior to interview). She emphatically denied becoming involved in prostitution to fund a drug habit, but rather emphasised her own agency and choice throughout.

Stephanie (18 years) grew up in a family with a history of severe anti-social behaviour in council tenancies in Dundee. She had a strong attachment to her local area ('a rough area...a wild place') and the people who lived there ('wild...mad'), and claimed to be related to most of her neighbours. She had one sibling, an elder brother, who appeared to have been a significant influence on her violent and offending behaviour. Stephanie and her brother were first placed in local authority care when Stephanie was aged seven and after her mother suffered a nervous breakdown. They returned home after three months, but at ages 11 and 14 went to live with an aunt following the further health problems of their mother. Both children were, by this stage, totally out with parental control, for example coercing their mother into putting their father out the house, on account of his violent and abusive behaviour towards her. The pair were also centrally involved in the local gang culture, and spent much of their time hanging about the streets, smashing windows, spray painting, drinking and fighting. After their father left the family home, Stephanie (aged 13) was again received into care, where in her own words she 'started getting wilder and wilder and wilder,' taking drugs and picking up a series of convictions for BOP, shoplifting, assault and robbery. Most of Stephanie's offences were financially motivated to fund her drug use. Her current offence occurred when

she was apprehended by a male store detective, who approached her and asked her to hand over the stolen goods. She stated she handed over the bag and went to walk away, at which point he grabbed her and she assaulted him. She was sentenced for seven months.

An only child, 18-year-old *Jane* had a volatile relationship with her mother from an early age. She attributed this difficulty to her mother's interests out with the family and her commitment to work long, unsociable hours. Social work records confirm that inconsistent and conflicting parenting caused difficulties within the family and that as a result Jane spent various periods in residential care (between the ages of 13 and 16). When she was 14, Jane became pregnant as a result of a consenting relationship with an 18-year old young man. Her daughter, Kylie, was three years old at the time of interview, and living with Jane's mother. It was her hope to be reunited with her daughter when she left prison.

Jane's general demeanour was one of resignation rather than arrogance and she offered a very honest and stark representation of her current situation and future prospects, though appeared unrealistic in her expectations with regard to her daughter. Jane reported regular and excessive binge drinking from the age of about 13. This continued for about three years until she began using heroin, shortly after Kylie was removed from her care. Prior to her imprisonment, Jane was using on a daily basis, funded by her offending (shoplifting, fraud, reset, misuse of drugs, assault, BOP).

Eighteen-year-old *Karen* was serving a 12-month sentence for assault to severe injury and housebreaking. She also had a history of violence within the prison (against staff and other prisoners).

The eldest in a family of three children, Karen's upbringing was characterised by frequent moves due to her father's employment as a prison officer. Karen had a problematic relationship with both parents, claiming that her mother was emotionally distant and her father regularly beat her (Karen). According to her social enquiry report, social work initially became involved in Karen's life as a result of her non-

attendance at school and running away from home. According to Karen, she was referred to the department after a particularly brutal beating from her father where she received two broken ribs and a broken jaw (aged 15). Karen refused to return home after this incident and was placed with foster carers. She eventually ran away to England with her then boyfriend, before being picked up by the police.

Like most of the young women in my sample, Karen had a long history of drug and alcohol misuse. She said that she started consuming alcohol at 10 years old, and by age 11 was drinking sherry, vodka or strong cider on a daily basis. She first used cannabis at 11, smoked heroin aged 14, and by 16 was injecting intravenously. When her habit was at its most prolific she was spending approximately £150 per day. The motivation for her offending was to finance her use of heroin.

At the time of interview, 20-year-old *Cathy* was five years through a 12-year sentence for attempted murder. It was her first custodial sentence.

Cathy was born and brought up in a town in the West Coast of Scotland, along with two younger sisters. Her parents, both of whom were working, rented a flat from a local housing association. Cathy stated that she had a very close relationship with all members of her immediate family, but that she (along with a younger sister) was sexually abused between the ages of seven and 11 by her paternal grandfather. Following a fight with her father, Cathy was received into local authority care (aged 11 years). She stayed in care (a children's home) for six months before returning home, at which point she started experimenting with drugs (temazepam, ecstasy and cannabis). As her drug use escalated, Cathy began offending to get money for drugs and was eventually sent to a residential school (aged 14 years) after being caught stealing charity boxes. She remained in care until her 15th birthday and on supervision until after her 17th birthday.

Six months after her supervision order was terminated, Cathy was involved in a serious offence where she stabbed another young woman. Along with three of her co-accused, Cathy spent the evening prior to the offence imbibing a cocktail of drink (vodka and fortified wine) and drugs (cannabis, acid, ecstasy). After her boyfriend failed to return from an errand, Cathy went looking for him and ended up at the flat

where the offence took place. There she found him in bed with another girl. Later, another of the co-accused told Cathy that the victim was claiming to be pregnant to her boyfriend. She confronted the victim and started fighting with her, eventually stabbing her seven times.

My impression of Cathy was that she was quite naïve, more of a follower than a leader. She was very open during the interview and repeatedly sought my opinion on her behaviour and beliefs. She expressed remorse for her offence, describing herself as 'a fucked up wee lassie.'

Judy, aged 19, was serving an 18-month sentence for assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement. The younger of two sisters, Judy was raised by both parents until she was aged around 14 when her father left home. She described her parents' relationship as volatile, stating that her father was physically violent towards her mother when drunk. Shortly after her father left the family home, both he and Judy's older sister were killed in a car accident. Judy was particularly close to her sister, and her bereavement was a significant source of distress and trauma. She began drinking heavily after the accident, in her words 'to block things out.' It was during her weekend drinking binges, where she often 'blacked-out,' that Judy became involved in offending behaviour. Her present offence (she hit girl with a broken bottle after the dancing) stemmed from an argument between the victim and Judy's friend. Judy said she had no recollection of her actions, but was as ashamed by the severity of her behaviour.

Co-accused of Cathy, *Angela* (24 years) was serving a 12-year sentence for attempted murder, abduction, assault and robbery. When she was growing up, her father was in the armed forces and so the family (mother and younger brother) moved around a lot, the result being that Angela never really settled in one place. She found making friends difficult as she was always the new girl and was usually looked upon as an outsider. Aged 16 years she made a statement to the police against her great uncle, alleging sexual abuse over a 12-year period (age 4-16 years). He was convicted two years later of lewd and libidinous conduct towards her and her cousin.

Angela said she sometimes felt resentful towards her parents, especially her mother, who she thought might have had an idea the abuse was occurring. In her late teens Angela's relationship with her parents deteriorated and she moved out of the family home, staying variously with friends and family, before attaining her own local authority tenancy. She claimed to have been using cannabis, Ecstasy, speed, acid, Temazepam, Temgesic and heroin on a daily basis prior to her incarceration, spending approximately £1,000 per week. This was financed by car theft.

Kelly, 21 years, was serving a 15-month sentence for theft by shoplifting and assault committed on bail. Kelly had an unhappy and unsettled upbringing, marred by her father's physical abuse of her mother and her mother's subsequent alcohol abuse problems. Her parents separated when she was six years old and Kelly and her elder brother were taken to live with her father and stepmother. Kelly alleged that she experienced violence from her stepmother and therefore returned to live with her mother aged 15 years. She was made subject to a supervision requirement at this time due to non-attendance at school, drug use and offending (theft). By the age of 16 she had a serious alcohol and drug problem. Her current offending (shoplifting, robbery, assaulting shop assistants/store detectives) was linked to her heroin dependency.

Eighteen-year-old **Kim** was a repeat offender, having committed a number of serious violent offences. Co-accused with Donna (see above), she was sentenced to three years detention for offences of assault, breach of the peace, assault to severe injury and attempted robbery. Two months later she was sentenced for a further three months for another assault to severe injury.

Kim was an only child, brought up by her mother after her parents separated when she was two years old. (Her father served an 11-year sentence for culpable homicide and armed robbery.) She experienced a reasonably happy childhood, however said she was bullied at school for having ginger hair. This seemed to have had a significant impact on her, reflected in her desire to fit in (she described herself as a follower rather than a leader) and 'not take anybody's shite.' She stuck in at school until fourth year, when she 'got in wi a bad crowd,' started skiving,

shoplifting, running away from home and drinking. Most of Kim's offending was alcohol-related. Although she used cannabis on a regular basis and had experimented with Ecstasy and Valium, this did not appear to have affected her behaviour to such an extent as alcohol misuse. Before one of her current offences, for example, she and her co-accused had drunk three bottles of Buckfast and taken Valium. They became involved in a scuffle with each other when the victim of the offence intervened and they both proceeded to assault her. Another of her offences involved an altercation with a school acquaintance after the victim verbally abused her.

Twenty-one-year-old *Lesley* was serving a two-year sentence for perpetrating two assaults on vulnerable, elderly victims (a 75-year-old female and a 90-year-old male), both of which were committed during housebreakings to finance her drug habit. She was suffering from withdrawal at the time of both offences, was intoxicated after taking prescribed medication, and had little recollection of the events. She had no previous convictions for violence.

Lesley grew up in a small town with her parents, two sisters and a brother, but left home aged 16 due to increasing difficulties between her then boyfriend and her parents. She also found out she was pregnant. After a period in homeless accommodation, Lesley was given her own tenancy close to her family, where she stayed for over two years. Her relationship with her daughter's father did not last after he was sent to prison and she started going out with one of his friends. Her child's father later died of a drug overdose and, although their relationship was over, Lesley found his premature death very difficult to cope with.

At the time of interview, Lesley had had an ongoing problem with heroin addiction for a number of years, despite repeated attempts to stop using. During one attempt, she gave up her tenancy and moved to a new area, but within weeks of moving was burgled and her daughter's father died, so returned to live with her family. The move back was difficult and on a couple of occasions Lesley and her daughter were housed in homeless accommodation due to disagreements with her parents. Her use of heroin re-established itself as a cause for concern regarding Lesley's care for her daughter and the local social work department became formally

involved. She made repeated attempts to reduce her drug use in the months that followed, to varying degrees of success. Lesley had not used for a number of days prior to her current offence(s) in a further attempt to stop, and was therefore suffering from withdrawal. She made an appointment to see her GP and was prescribed 10 tablets of Valium. Feeling very ill, she took five tablets at once and then, when these had no immediate impact, took the remainder.

At the time of interview, *Zoë* was serving her third prison sentence (eight years) for a violent offence (assault to severe injury, assault, and attempted murder). At only 20 years old, she had considerable experience of detention, having spent time in secure accommodation prior to her imprisonment. She had a history of self-harm (cutting/overdoses) and previously attempted to hang herself whilst in prison.

Due to her parents' separation when she was only three years old, Zoë experienced considerable disruption in her early years including several moves of residence, carers and educational establishments. She and her elder sister spent three years being cared for by their father and their maternal grandmother, before moving in with their mother and their mother's new partner (aged 6). She attended four different primary schools and did not settle into secondary education, eventually attending Day Care. Zoë first came to the attention of her local social work department when she was 12, following relationship problems at home and an assault on another girl. She was received into care two years later where she was disruptive and violent towards staff and other young people. She spent time in several local authority establishments, including a secure unit, before serving her first custodial sentence aged 16. Zoë was regarded as extremely volatile and aggressive by prison staff and assaulted an officer during the fieldwork period. I found Zoë to be friendly, chatty, and eager to please. She clearly had a strong personality, but frequently sought my opinion on her views and her behaviour.

Zoë's current offence arose out of a long-standing feud between her family and the family of her victim. According to Zoë, the incident occurred at the instigation of the victim and his associates and she acted in order to defend her stepfather.

Jay was 23 and had been a drug addict for five years. When I interviewed her she was nine months into her second jail term for abduction, assault to severe injury and robbery. (Her first sentence was two-and-a-half years for abduction and robbery after she forced a woman to go to her bank for cash.) She and her partner were each given six years after luring three punters to their flat for sex. *The News Of The World* described Jay as a stunning blonde, ruthlessly stalking Glasgow's streets in search of prey but, in person, she was a sweet-faced young woman with a gentle manner and a sense of humour: 'The reporter must have had a white stick and a guide dog in court wi' 'im or he'd have called me a toothless blonde!'

Jay was the middle child of three daughters. Her father was in the army and so the family moved around a lot in her early life. Jay's parents separated when she was 13 as a consequence of her father's violence towards her mother. Her mother subsequently became involved with another violent partner, who assaulted and threatened Jay on several occasions and on one occasion broke into her tenancy and vandalised the property. Jay was received into care aged 13 and a half, following a breakdown in her relationship with mother (due to her mother's partner). She spent the majority of adolescence in children's homes. Aged 14, Jay began experimenting with recreational drugs such as cannabis, speed and acid. When she left care Jay returned to live with her mother who, by this time, had developed a heroin addiction. Jay had her first puff of heroin shortly after turning 16, when her mother used some of Jay's birthday money to buy an eighth. She 'dabbled' for the next 18-months, but didn't develop a habit until after her release from prison (she committed a robbery to pay off some of her mother's drug debts). She started working as a prostitute after her first prison sentence in order to fund drug habit at which point she met her current partner, with whom she had one child (currently looked after by foster carers).

Annie was 22 years old and a prolific re-offender, having served her first custodial sentence aged 16. When I interviewed her she was serving an 18-month sentence for carrying a knife (amongst other things) and had previous for shoplifting,

housebreaking, theft, attempted robbery, breach of the peace and assault. Most of her assaults were committed while she was being lifted for shoplifting/ housebreaking. Annie also disclosed that she had committed a number of assault and robberies, but had never been caught. She had been a drug addict for five years and the majority of her offending was drug-related.

Annie and her elder brother were adopted when Annie was four after their mother was sent to prison for shoplifting. Annie's natural father believed that Annie was not his child and physically abused her by hitting her and burning her with lit cigarettes. She remained with her adoptive parents until the age of 12 when she was received into local authority care following a breakdown in the placement. Annie claims that her adoptive mother, a schoolteacher, hit her with belts and told her that she didn't want her. Annie remained in care (a children's home and then secure) until the age of 16, when she became pregnant with her daughter, Crystal. Shortly before our interview Crystal was taken into local authority care due to concerns over her welfare and had recently been adopted.

After Annie left her adoptive family, she re-established contact with her (extended) natural family, who were notorious in the town in which she lived. Her grandmother had been convicted of drug dealing, along with other members of her extended family. Both of Annie's birth parents were dead following drugs-related illnesses.

At 16 years of age, *Samantha* was the youngest prisoner in my sample. A first offender, she was serving a two-and-a-half year sentence for assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement after stabbing a friend in school grounds. She was initially fined £2000 compensation and sentenced to three years probation and 200 hours community service. However, because she couldn't pay the compensation she was taken back to court, and that was classified as a breach of probation. Samantha was released on appeal shortly after interview.

Third in a family of four brothers and sisters, Samantha lived with her mother and stepfather until the age of 10, at which time her mother fled with the children after being the victim of domestic violence. Samantha claimed to have been sexually

abused by a neighbour when she was aged eight, but had been too scared to tell her parents for fear her step-father would 'take it out on' her mother. After they left, the family were initially housed in homeless accommodation, before attaining a tenancy in another local town.

Samantha became friendly with her victim, Dorothy, a few months prior to her offence. Dorothy introduced Samantha to heroin (aged 15), although she was already using recreational drugs such as cannabis and ecstasy and sleeping tablets (from age 13). The pair began to smoke heroin twice weekly at the Dorothy's mother's house. Over a period of time, Samantha began to experience feelings associated with withdrawal. She approached Dorothy seeking a sympathetic response, but claimed that Dorothy laughed at her. This led to a physical confrontation between the two girls, with Samantha being excluded from school for two days. Sometime later Samantha again visited Dorothy at her home to smoke heroin. The pair then travelled to another town so that they could obtain more heroin from a dealer there. Samantha remembers waking up on a bed in a house with a needle in her arm, being sick, asking for help, and being laughed at by Dorothy. The next morning she had to hitchhike home alone.

For a week following this incident Samantha claims she felt anxious and upset, was unable to sleep and experienced frightening thoughts. She did not feel well enough to attend school and asked her mother if she could stay off, but her mother did not agree. Prior to attending school she removed two knives from the cutlery drawer in her home and put them in her bag. At the mid-morning break she went to an area outside the school grounds where pupils congregated to smoke cigarettes. She confronted Dorothy, removed a knife from her school bag and proceeded to stab her four times on the head and body. Dorothy suffered a four-inch shoulder wound and a two-inch cut on her back.

Prior to her imprisonment Samantha was treated for depression by her GP. She had a history of cutting her wrists and shortly before her court date took an overdose and was subsequently hospitalised. During the fieldwork period she cut her arm with a coffee jar.

Twenty-year-old *Fiona* was a first offender who stabbed and killed an older male friend after he sexually assaulted her. She was cleared of murder, but sentenced to eight years for culpable homicide.

Fiona was a shy and quiet young woman, who had been the victim of emotional, physical and sexual abuse by men throughout her life. She was born and brought up in England by her mother and father, and had two older sisters. Her father was described as domineering, and Fiona said he constantly criticised and belittled her achievements. According to her social enquiry report, Fiona suffered from bed-wetting (aged 7-18 years), depression (from the age of 13 years), and had a history of self-harm (overdosing aged 13 and cutting her wrists). She attributed this to being physically bullied at school by a group of girls the same age. When she was 15, Fiona's brother-in-law started a sexual relationship with her. All her subsequent relationships were with men older than her.

When she was 18 she formed a relationship with John, a man more than twice her age. She and John lived together in England for a while, before moving to Woodside, a town in the West of Scotland known for its high levels of drug misuse, offending and other anti-social behaviour. Fiona did not know anyone in Woodside and the couple initially lived with Alec, a 44-year-old man who was an old friend of John's. John and Alec were heavy drinkers, and Fiona also began to drink heavily. John became increasingly violent towards her, with Fiona sustaining black eyes, a broken nose and having to seek shelter in a Woman's Refuge. She then stopped drinking, after getting into trouble with the police in connection with a disturbance when she was drunk. Eventually Fiona and John obtained their own accommodation. John had been unemployed for a long period, but eventually obtained work offshore. The day he left Fiona was invited to the pub for a drink with John's cousin. She met the Alec after leaving the pub and they bought more alcohol and returned to John and Fiona's flat. Fiona said that she invited Alec for the sake of company and that he was someone in whom she had complete trust. Back at the flat Fiona consumed more alcohol before falling asleep on the couch. Some time later, she awoke to find Alec sitting beside her, with his hand up her jumper fondling her breasts. Fiona was shocked and angry and hit Alec in the face with her hand. Alec denied that he had his

hand up Fiona's top, making her even angrier. She said she felt particularly upset because he had been a good friend, and the best friend of her boyfriend, someone she felt safe with. She then ran into the kitchen and picked up a knife. She tried to frighten Alec with it, in order to get him to leave. She chased him out of the flat and along the street, eventually catching up with him at a roundabout where she stabbed him 12 times in the face, chest and back. He died at the side of the road. Fiona dialled 999 for an ambulance and handed herself in to the police the following morning.

Twenty-year-old *Gillian* was serving a 12-month sentence for assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement. She had a previous charge for assault (admonished) and two convictions for breach of the peace.

Gillian was the youngest of three sisters. At the time of interview her parents were still together and she described a happy and settled family background. Gillian was identified as a child with special needs at primary school, and experienced some difficulties whilst at High School. Concerns were expressed regarding various aspects of her conduct, with one school report describing 'wild, uncontrolled behaviour and language in class.' Within this period Gillian was made subject to a supervision requirement, and eventually was excluded from school (aged 15 years). Her supervision requirement was terminated the following year, however, following positive progress.

Gillian met her current partner, and father of her baby, when she was 17. She described this as a positive relationship. Shortly before her current offence, Gillian moved into her own flat, but experienced financial difficulties which were exacerbated by her lodgers who, she claimed, owed her money. Matters came to a head following an argument during which Gillian and her boyfriend took steps to get the victim and his partner to leave the flat. A fight ensued during which the lodger punched Gillian in the face and she retaliated by stabbing him. She said she could remember very little of the incident as she was under the influence of alcohol at the time.

Summary

In summary, then, and as the literature on female violent offending and women in prison predicted, disruptive family backgrounds, histories of physical and sexual abuse, and childhood experiences of institutional care were common among these young women. The following chapter provides an account of the meaning of these circumstances according to the young women themselves.

Chapter Five

‘In Their Ain Wee World’: The Local Familial Context of Young Women’s Violence

Chapters Five through to Eight focus on the views and experiences of the respondents, interspersing their narratives with comparators from the literature described in earlier chapters.

This chapter explores the broader contexts in which young women become involved in violent offending, focusing in particular on the complexities, paradoxes and ambiguities of day-to-day relations between young women, their families, and other members of their communities. In line with the North American research (e.g. Baskin and Sommers 1998; Miller 2001; Ryder 2003), the quantitative data reported in the previous chapter suggested a pattern of violent female offending that began with economic marginalisation, family problems and experiences of abuse. The current chapter reveals that, while most of the young women grew up in poor neighbourhoods characterised by territorial violence and the defence of respect and reputation, for the most part they were initially exposed to violence within the family home. That said, most of the young women were fiercely loyal toward their family and their locality, and saw their relationships with kith and kin as central to their sense of self. These findings challenge theories of ever-increasing individualism and self-reflexivity (e.g. Beck 1992; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, 2002; Giddens 1991, 1992), which posit the decline of the role and importance of kinship.

Family, intimate relationships and late modernity

As highlighted in Chapter One, one of the key reasons ‘drunken and violent young women in our town centres’ elicit public concern and condemnation is because their presence is seen as symptomatic of the demise of the ‘traditional family.’ Within late

modernity, both popular and academic accounts propose that the family and kinship are in rapid decline (Mitchell and Green 2002). From a sociological perspective, these changes are attributed to post-industrialisation, which has led to the de-traditionalisation and individualisation of social life. Giddens (1991, 1992), for example, describes a post-traditional society in which men and women, progressively freed from their traditional ties of family, locality and social class, are compelled reflexively to create their selves through day-to-day decisions. This emphasis on actively selected or achieved social positions extends to personal relationships, which are evaluated and conducted from a position of reflexive self-awareness. According to Giddens, individuals increasingly seek personally fulfilling intimate relationships sustained on the basis of 'mutual self-disclosure,' trust and openness. Such 'pure relationships' are entered into for their own sake and are dependent upon commitment from both parties. In other words, they are interchangeable; only lasting as long each party continues to derive sufficient personal satisfaction.

Such a depiction has much in common with Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995, 2002) 'individualisation thesis.' Building on Beck's (1992) work on the 'risk society' and the transformation of the industrial mode of production, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue that, liberated from the rules and conventions which used to govern personal relationships, individuals are now faced with an endless series of choices as part of constructing, adjusting, improving or dissolving the connections they form with others. Yet while this process of 'individualisation' undermines traditional social ties of kinship and marriage, people's 'hunger for love' only intensifies: 'People marry for the sake of love and divorce for the sake of love' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995: 11); they engage in an endless cycle of hoping, regretting and trying again. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, this is because in a world of uncertainty and risk 'love becomes the central pivot giving meaning to their lives' (ibid: 170). Unfortunately, '[t]he trust that one invests in an intimate other can be severed at any time ... The "opening up" of oneself to another, therefore, is characterised by anxiety, ambivalence, and risk' (Lupton 1999: 80). In other words, at the same time as they hold out the promise of emotional security, intimate relationships can be the source of profound insecurity.

The premise of de-traditionalisation has been widely critiqued, with writers contesting both the extent to which expectations and certainties characterised the past *and* the degree to which traditions and long-standing beliefs have been shed in the present (Gillies 2003). For example, Lynn Jamieson's (1998, 1999) analysis of past and present empirical data exploring family life, love and gender relationships reveals that, in the last century, there were more people who lacked aid from relatives and who therefore were forced to end their lives in institutions than people commonly assume. Drawing on Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason's work on kinship in Britain (Finch and Mason 1993; Finch 1989), she demonstrates that family obligations were conditional on material circumstances and the quality of the relationship (those relatives that were liked were helped more than those who were not liked). This element of selectivity goes against the notion that in pre-modern times obligations used to accompany kinship in a simple way. Jamieson's book also reveals that close-knit, stable communities, where the spheres of work, leisure and family overlap, continue to exist. Consequently, her work demonstrates that 'it is not the case that once upon a time people gave unqualified automatic loyalty to kin and that this has been eroded by late modernity' (1998: 87). Relationships with kin were always qualified by personal preference and, as the empirical data that follows demonstrates, in particular communities, continue to be accorded profound significance.

'We're thegither and we stick in'

As discussed in Chapter Two, theories of women's psychological development propose that women cultivate a sense of self and self worth via their connection with others. Likewise, studies of women who offend highlight the impact of familial relationships on their current and future behaviour (Chesney-Lind 1997; Covington 1998; Ferraro and Moe 2003; Hunt et al. 2000; Joe 1996; Miller 1986). Female offenders who cite drug abuse as self-medication, for example, often discuss family problems as the source of their pain (Pollock 1998), while women who stop offending usually attribute their desistance to the assumption of parental

responsibilities (Jamieson et al. 1999; Rutter et al. 1998). These themes were reiterated in the current research.

Like the 'violent girls' described in Batchelor et al. (2001), most of the young women attached great importance to their family relationships and were very loyal towards family members. Similar to the informants in Artz's (1998) research, the young women regarded 'good' families as those where family members were 'close.' Closeness in this context was demonstrated by unconditional love and unquestioning loyalty:

Ma family's stood by me through everythin'. They have. Every single thing, ma family's stood by me. I couldnae ask for a better family [...] They've never wance asked me what happened, they've never expected nothing fae me. They're up at every visit; every fortnight they're up. And I get ma letters, I get everything fae them. I get all ma stuff, all ma bedding and all that. But most of all they've give me all their love and their support. (Cathy)

I've got a good family [...] We're no really a *cuddly* family, and stuff like that, but aye, I can talk to ma mum about most things. They were always there for me, and ma mum, she'd give me monee if I needed it, but she wouldnae give me too much, ken what I mean? A couple of times I did withdrawal and they helped me through it and that, but they knew as soon as I was back on it. But they never disowned me or let me get on wi' it or nothing. They were good, considering. What I've heard in here [i.e. in prison], they always tell them to get tae fuck and that's it. But mine never. They always took me in, helped me oot. They just wanted the best fer me, ken what I mean? I've got quite a good family. I'm lucky to have them. (Lesley)

Almost all of the young women reiterated the loyalty of the biological bond over and above other non-kin ties, remarking that 'blood is thicker than water.' Zoë, for example, explained that she would always put her sister before her friends, even though she had 'done [her] a few wrong turns': 'Ah'm loyal, loyal to ma family. Ah'll always be loyal tae ma family, no matter whit. Ah'm loyal to pals, but if it's ma pals and ma sister, it's ma sister Ah'll go behind' (Zoë). Hence the notion of families

being 'behind you' was often more important than the quality of the relationships they represented. Zoë said that, even though they 'argued all the time,' she would always come to her sister's aid if she needed her, because 'that's your flesh and blood. If somebody fucks wi' them, and they canna handle it theirsel, you've got tae do some'hin' about it.'

The respondents often also had strong ties to extended family, many of whom lived 'roond the corner' in the same neighbourhood, or even in the same street. They tended to have had regular contact with grandparents, aunts and uncles as they were growing up, and often spent significant periods being cared for by extended family members. Zoë's experience was again fairly typical in this regard:

Ma ma and da split up and Ah went to go and stay wi' ma da. Ah wis only a wee lassie, a wee wean. Ah wis only four, five. And, eh, Ah went to go and stay wi' ma da and ma granny. And Ah stayed wi' them fer a couple o' years and then Ah went to stay wi' ma other gran and granda, so Ah did. [...] And then, like Ah used to go and stay wi' ma ma and ma da, between ma ma's and da's at weekends. [...] Ma ma got a mortgage and that. When Ah wis about 10 Ah went tae go and stay wi' her and then- [Short pause] Ah don't know what happened. Ma wee granny took a heart attack and ma wanted tae get her hoose nearer ma granny, to keep a eye on ma wee granny and that. (Zoë)

Despite the considerable disruption she experienced as regards change of residence, and indeed the time she subsequently spent in local authority care, Zoë remained loyal to her 'schemie' roots.

Ah come fae Strathfield, the roughest part you could come fae. It's where all the junkies and a' the- Afore junkies were junkies, know whit Ah mean? The alichies and all that kind o.' That, that's where Ah came fae. Eh, ma ma and da split up and Ah went to go and stay wi' ma da. [...] Ah didnae want tae move fae Strathfield. Ah wis accustomed tae it, know whit Ah mean? Ah didnae want tae move. [...] Ah wis still a wee schemie, that's all Ah am. Even though Ah moved tae Clyde Hill, the first place Ah went to wis Strathfield, know whit Ah mean? 'To hang about wi' a'

the boys! [...] Cause like if ye- You don't forget your roots. If you come fae a scheme, you don't forget your roots. Ma sister did, know whit Ah mean? Ma sister thought she wis wan up, wan better 'cause ma ma had a bought house and they had the cars an' a' this patter. (Zoë)

Being a schemie, then, involved loyalty to one's kith and kin: being 'wan o' the troops' and remembering where you came from, sticking together, and helping one another out.

Stephanie expressed a similar sense of territorial affiliation. As a teenager she enjoyed regular social contact with other young people from the local area and was a member of her local 'young team.'

SB: So when you were hanging about, what sorts of things did you do?

Stephanie: Sit out, drink, go oot, look fer a fight, em, any'hing that came in wer mind, we used tae go and dae. [...] Everybody together. And just say like if the carnival or some'hing was here, we'd go to the carnival and fight wi' other schemes and ken 'hings like that. [...] I remember one time we were at the carnival, eh? And I walked- Ken, I walked oot the gates? And a' the family and that was there and they were a' fighting, eh? Next thing ma brother pulled an axe oot and starting hitting the boy over the heid wi' it and I was like that, trying to pull ma brother aff [...] an' the next minute a' the family, the rest o' them, just jumped up and started battering the boy wi' the hammers. It was mad.

The purpose of this quote is not to relay the extent of violence Stephanie's peer group was involved in (indeed, I did feel that there was an element of bravado in her account), but rather to highlight the importance she gave to 'the family' – i.e. kith and kin – sticking 'together.' Stephanie commonly referred to the other people in her area as 'family' and claimed to be related to most of her neighbours:

- SB: So you're related? A lot of your relations stay in-
- Stephanie: [Interrupts] Stay in the same street, eh? And if somebody comes fae a different scheme into our street, they get put out.
- SB: Do you mean people moving in? Like families?
- Stephanie: Mmm hmm. And they're no welcome in.
- SB: Why not?
- Stephanie: Just dinnae like them. They just hae their- They're fae a different scheme an' they come into our scheme. We don't- We dinnae want them in our scheme, so they get put back out our scheme. [...]
- See like the area I'm in? We're a' family, cousins an' things like that, eh? [...] Most of ma friends, we class them as cousins because we've been brought up since we were wee, eh? It's ma friend, but it's also ma cousin.
- SB: Right, so they really are friends that you call cousins-
- Stephanie: [Interrupts] I'll tell you a' ma cousins that's in the [local young team]. There's one, two, three- There's five o' them that's in that's ma blood cousins, eh? But the rest o' them's no, but we say that we are cousins because we've been brought up fae when we were wee ains, eh?
- SB: So you're really close, then?
- Stephanie: Aye. We're close close.

Being rooted in close, locally concentrated family and social networks gave both Zoë and Stephanie a sense of themselves as part of a group; a feeling that there were always 'someone there' for them who knew them in a fundamental way. Both young women gave an impression of a community in which time together is emphasised and private space de-emphasised, 'cousins' are chosen over friends from another area or social background, and where personal ambitions are subjugated to those of the group. Like the other young women in the study, they generally looked first to their

'blood family' for support, but with the knowledge that non-kin neighbours would help out if needed.

The significance of family and social networks in the day-to-day lives of working-class families was first explored in Young and Willmott's (1957) classic study, *Family and Kinship in East London*. When it was published, Young and Willmott's research was extremely influential because it challenged established views of the industrialised working class as fragmented and isolated from their wider family and kin and thereby focused academic attention on the role played by social networks, communities and kinship systems (Gillies 2003). While such topics eventually fell out of favour, they have recently been revived via the notion of 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993, 2000), a contested concept with a variety of inter-related definitions. According to Putnam (2000), 'bonding' social capital is based on the homogeneous ties of solidarity described by Zoë and Stephanie, above. It is a tie between 'folk like us,' inward-looking, reinforcing exclusive identities (e.g. as a schemie, a member of the local young team, and/or as a member of a certain family) and is restricted to enabling people 'get by' (attachment to the immediate group prevents experience of the wider world). 'Bridging' social capital, on the other hand, involves membership of more extensive and diverse social groups (e.g. clubs and associations) and therefore can link people across communities, and across structural groupings such as class, gender and ethnicity. Whereas bonding social capital is more commonly associated with traditional working-class communities, bridging social capital is characteristic of middle-class social networks and is said to facilitate social mobility ('getting on').

Bonding social capital can act as a barrier to social inclusion and social mobility in a number of ways. For example, as Stephanie's account alluded, in areas where there is considerable bonding social capital and too little bridging social capital, the result can be intra-community violence and the exclusion of outsiders. This is what Suttles (1972) terms 'the defended neighbourhood.' Defended neighbourhoods are generally small local areas possessing a group identity defined by mutual opposition to another local area. Within these spatial units insiders are defined as relatively trustworthy and outsiders are either superfluous or threatening.

Gang activity, the area's reputation and community groups all act as territorial defenders of the locality to keep non-residents out. Venturing outside one's 'turf' thus carries the risk of physical challenge or victimisation, and youth from other areas are regarded as potential enemies rather than potential allies (Harding 2005).

Bonding social capital can also lead to expectations and obligations regarding commitment, loyalty, and reciprocity that are enforced in an unwavering or disciplined way. An example, drawn from Jody Miller's (2001: 87) research, is where gang members are beaten out of the gang for dating someone from a rival area. The young women in the current study described a number of different rules, or codes of conduct, which they were expected to follow as a result of their familial or territorial ties (see Chapter Seven). Zoë, for example, highlighted the importance of sticking up for friends and family, and remembering your roots – hence her disapproval of her sister, who she regarded as a traitor for 'trying to kid on she wis a snob':

She started gettin' the cunt taken oot o' her because she wis kind o' snobbish, know, she talks dead polite, all the rest o' it. She stuck her nose up at people and all that, when they didnae have the right claites and that. Dead snooty. [...] Dacin' all that, know, when yer pals come tae the door and that, she's like that, '*For goodness sake!*' Just actin' it. Ah thought she wis actin' it, but she wasnae really, she did think she wis a cut above everybody. Em, and she started getting problems at school about it. [...] Everybody was takin' the cunt oot o' her. (Zoë)

Zoë's sister, then, was regarded as having gotten 'above her station' and having transgressed the rules of her peer group. She needed to be taught a lesson and thereby 'brought back down to size.'

Another potential disadvantage of being rooted in local communities characterised by bonding social capital is 'knowing and being known' by local family and social networks (MacDonald et al. 2005). While, on the one hand, there can be practical value in possessing a family reputation for criminality or violence, this status can in itself be restrictive:

The area that we were brought up in, it was like a rough wee place, but at the end of the day everybody got on. Everybody knew that ma uncle Mick and [my cousins] Jo and Gemma and that just werenae fer messing with

Mick, ma uncle, was wan o' the biggest hard men in Newton. And I was just- I had just been turning 16 at this point and I was a daft wee naïve lassie. I didnae have a clue aboot nothing. And I thought that, aww, I was a big hard woman because I was his wee niece and the rest o' it and I could dae this and I could dae that and naebody could touch me. I was invincible.

[My friend and I] We used tae bang intae people, take their drink aff them. And I honestly don't know why people let us dae that, because the two of us are the fucking size o' shit. We just- A reputation follows you. And naw a lot of people want tae stand up tae you. (Cathy)

Cathy's narrative demonstrates how criminal social capital, like any other form of capital, can be used to further a variety of goals. Whilst lacking in economic and cultural capital (e.g. job prospects, a good education), Cathy's relationship with her uncle afforded her access to the local drug market and associated criminal networks. She had a number of friends involved in shoplifting and low-level property offences, and with whom she went out 'on the rob.' Because she was known locally as a member of a violent family, people were afraid to stand up to her. Even the security guards in the local shopping centre were afraid to approach her. This initially made Cathy popular among her peers, who came to her to steal things for them, or sort out friendship disputes. Ultimately, however, she came to view her reputation as a burden:

See at first, I loved having a reputation, right? It was the best thing, because you are invincible and naebody done your nut in. See at end of it, man? Everybody's always running to ye fer this and running to ye fer that, expecting ye tae dae this and expecting ye tae dae that for them, when they're getting picked on and a' the rest o' it. And then you've got the other group o' lassies that 'hink they're wee hard wimmin and they're always wantin' tae fight wi' ye. So you're going oot and you're all done up, you're nice, and they're just wanting tae fight wi' you and just ruin

your hair and your make-up. So it really gets boring. It gets nippy after a while.
(Cathy)

Cathy's reputation as 'a wee hard woman' provided her with symbolic capital, which initially lead to material reward and local recognition. However, the effectiveness of symbolic capital depends on practices of communication and cannot be institutionalised, objectified or incorporated into the habitus. As Cathy herself acknowledged, her reputation existed only in the 'eyes of the others' and had to be continually defended and recognised. This was a fairly common experience:

When Ah went to high school Ah already got a bit of a name for masel'. Ah was fighting and stuff all the time, eh? And like Ah 'hink mair at high school it was just haeing to live up tae that. Just everybody expecting: "Aww, she can handle hersel'" or whatever. Or pals coming up and saying, "Aww, this one's hassling me. Gonna sort them oot." Just 'hings like that, eh? A lot o'- Sometimes Ah used to cause it for masel', but a lot o' the time Ah would be fighting for other people. People would be wanting to fight me cause they've heard that Ah have been fightin' wi' somebody else, ken 'hings like that. (Joanne)

Annie's story offers another example of the negative consequences of criminal social capital. Annie and her elder brother, John, were adopted when Annie was four, after their mother was sent to prison for shoplifting. After Annie left her adoptive family at the age of 12, she re-established contact with her natural family, the Smiths, who were notorious in the area in which she lived.⁵²

Aye, everybody knew the Smiths. It's meant to be wan o' the top fighting, drug-dealing families. Everybody was scared o' them. So I had heard of them. And then when I found out they were ma family, I gret for ages. I hated it. John thought it was brilliant, but. Instead of a gran that bakes cookies, it is a gran that bakes hash. Know what I mean? (Annie)

⁵² Her paternal grandmother was a convicted drug dealer and her father had served a custodial sentence for murder.

Growing up in a social world where drugs and violence were routine features, Annie found herself immersed in the drug economy from an early age:

I was jagging speed at 14. Because I had seen ma dad jagging. It was ma auntie that got me on it. She says, "Have you tried this?" I says, "Naw" and she give me a hit – speed – and I liked it and that was the only way I knew how to take ma drugs, was through a needle. So I started jagging it, swallowing tablets – Valium, DFs, jellies, anything. Drinking, smoking hash, then I had a habit at 16 and I moved onto kit at 17. (Annie)

Membership of a well-known criminal family didn't widen Annie's horizons it narrowed them, demonstrating how social networks can transmit anti-social as well as pro-social behaviour, thereby increasing the likelihood of exclusion rather than inclusion:

I hate it. You cannae get a job. [Sighs] People don't want to hang about wi' you because you're trouble, nobody wants to be seen wi' you because you're trouble, you go into a shop and you're followed or flung oot, even some doctors' surgeries don't even want to take you because of your name. (Annie)

Not all of the respondents came from housing schemes located in large cities. Indeed a significant minority (approximately one third) grew up in small towns where the mechanisms of informal social control (e.g. gossip, reputation, and labelling) were keenly felt. Samantha, for example, relayed a story about her the way her mother was treated after she left Samantha's stepfather:

I come fae a wee town called Burnbank. It is just a tiny wee town basically. But I was brought up in Neith – that is an even smaller town just a wee bit out fae Burnbank. A'body knows your business and a'body seems to be interbred, like. They're all related in some way. You cannae go doon the street without somebody going, "There's that Samantha Black."

They all *knew* that [my step-dad] was beating ma mum up and had always said, "Oh, you need to get away from him and that," but as soon as ma mum done that they turned queens on her and said "Dirty bitchy" and that. Ken what I mean? Just twistedness as fuck. That's how small towns are; they're total twisted. (Samantha)

This excerpt gives some indication of the informal sanctions that operate in close communities to discourage women (young and old) from engaging in improper behaviour (and depicted in gender-specific social control theory, see Carlen 1988, also Chapter 3 this volume). Lesley's account of growing up in Kirkcubbin highlighted similar themes.

Em, well, it's just a wee town. It's no very big, like, and there's no many people that get the jail there. It's where everybody knows everybody's business and stuff like that. I've been brought up there, lived there all ma life. That's about it, like, small-minded people. There wasnae- I'm a junkie and there wasnae very many of them when I left, but from what I hear it's got a lot worse, like. All the young folk are daein' it. But you didnae get looked upon very nicely before I left. [...] Growing up in Kirkcubbin, it was, I don't know- you didnae get to see much of life. It was an older person's toon; it's a farmers' toon. It just- I don't know. Once people in that place make up their mind about you, that's it it's made up. You just cannae change it fer them. (Lesley)

Once it became known that Lesley had engaged in drug crime, she became branded a 'junkie' and 'naebody would give [her] a chance.' As predicted by labelling theory (Becker 1963; Lemert 1951), Lesley then began to associate with other like-minded people and became involved in further, and more serious, criminal behaviour:

[They thought I was] Scum, scum of the earth, just no hope. That was it. Because I've no been a very good lassie all ma life, eh? I've always done daft 'hings and done wrong 'hings. And I 'hink they *expected* it from me really.

I started going out wi' this guy that was always in and out the jail a' the time. The only person that was ever in the jail fae where I come fae and ma mum and dad didnae approve; naebody else really approved either. Naebody would gie him a chance or anything and then I fell pregnant at 17.

Em, ma wee lassie's dad, he got about two year when she was five months old and I couldnae really cope by maself. I was on ma own. I didnac know how I was gonnae manage, stuff like that. I started going with this guy and he was a proper junkie and he was bringing me it all the time. By the Christmas I was jaggng it.
(Lesley)

The stories of Cathy, Lesley, Zoë, Stephanie, Joanne, Annie, and Samantha stand in stark contrast to the account of reflexive modernity proffered by Giddens (1991, 1992), Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995, 2002). Contrary to the postmodern emphasis on flux and individualism, their accounts suggest consistency in identity, especially kinship and place-based identities, and the continuing salience of the family and the community as sites of informal social control. They also, however, begin to illustrate the paradoxical role of the family, as both a safe haven and the source of significant danger and distress. As the following section demonstrates, not all young women experienced connection, caring and closeness to their families.

'We just let them get on and we got on'

While the young women often romanticised their relationship with their families, and in particular the nature of the blood bond, the notion that kin will 'come through' in times of hardship was not always borne out in practise. Many of the young women said that they did not feel 'wanted' at home or that their parents were emotionally distant or didn't pay them enough attention. Sometimes this lack of attention was attributed to parents working long, unsociable hours, but more often the young women blamed drug and/or alcohol abuse, or the impact of domestic violence.

Diane, a 19-year-old woman serving a four-month sentence for an Assault to Severe Injury, came from the former background (parents working unsociable hours). The fourth child in a family of five, she experienced a reasonably happy childhood until her parents' separation, when she was aged 13. Both parents continued to reside in the family home, but rarely talked to one another:

The hoose is just halved. [...] It is weird. Like my mum will cook all my dad's tea and all that and dae all the washin'. But they just dinnae communicate or that. If my dad wants some'hin' off my mum, like say the catalogue for instance, like the money, its me that's got to go through and ask for it. And mum will say, "Look I've no got it. I've no got change." I've got to back through and say, "Look, she's not got change." Back and forward like a Goddamn yo-yo.

I hae more arguments wi' my mum than I do my dad. Like I see my mum at my work. We work thegither, sort o.' And I dinnae see my dad a' day. [...] My mum's a domestic assistant and my dad's a janitor. My mum works from half four in the morning right through to seven at night. A double shift. My dad's the same. Half six he starts right through to sometimes seven or eight. (Diane)

Diane was clearly distressed by her difficult home circumstances, but was unable to move out due to her limited financial income. She coped by avoiding the family home when both of her parents were present and going out drinking with her friends. Unlike Zoë or Judy, she did not feel commitment or closeness to her family, nor did her relations enforce this. Despite sharing a room with her sister, Diane said they weren't intimate: 'When my wee sister's left in the hoose, like if she's no' at school, she just gets to me and I just scream! I am just like, "Oh, I need to get oot the hoose."' Likewise, whenever she tried to talk to her mum, she said 'we just end up arguing.' Family communication, then, appeared almost non-existent and focused on practical rather than emotional needs. Overall, I was left with an impression of a family that was physically present but emotionally removed.

Karen described a similar family culture, but this time characterised by her father's domineering behaviour and her mother's detachment:

I never got on with my dad. He is quite violent, so I ended up getting put into care. [...] I used to get beaten up with the baton⁵³ a lot, or the belt. [...] It was if he was in a bad mood, like if you put too much sugar in his coffee or something, or you made a noise when he was trying to watch the racing. Ken, *something stupid*.

I resented my mum for standing and watching it all happen and not doing anything. I still to this day don't understand why she done that. [...] She doesn't show any emotions of any kind. Even anger, she can't really be angry. When she is angry, she just goes quiet. Never ever in my whole life had she told me that she loves me. Never. Not once. (Karen)

Karen's father's violence wasn't directed at any of her other family members (she had two younger siblings) and no one came to Karen's aid when he beat her because 'they were feared of him.' As a result she felt lonely and abandoned by her family and increasingly sought the support of her peers within the community. Prior to the beating that prompted her removal into care aged 15, family interactions had deteriorated to the point where Karen 'wasn't talking to anyone anymore.' Her parents 'didn't hardly bother' with her, failing to wake her for school, for example, and not calling her when her dinner was ready.

Violent fathers

This pattern was reiterated again and again in the young women's accounts. They commonly described their step/fathers as 'obsessive' or 'controlling' and said that as children they had to 'creep about so's not tae annoy 'im.' As Lesley put it, 'It was like living with a volcano. You didn't know when he was going to erupt':

I'm not close to ma dad, but he works away, so I don't really see much of him. He's like Lord and Master when he comes home. I just never took to ma dad, like. He's only home once every two/three weeks or something, at the weekend, and when he came home the house had to revolve around him, kind of thing. (Lesley)

⁵³ As discussed in Chapter Seven, Karen's father was a prison officer.

Mothers generally responded to this situation by acquiescing to their partner's demands in an attempt to avoid further confrontation:

[My parents] seemed to be fightin' a lot more 'cause my dad had disowned my sisters at that time 'cause they had moved in with partners and like he's dead old fashioned and doesn't agree with that. And it just made things really difficult and like he wouldn't let my mum see my sisters and he wouldn't let me see them and it was just quite difficult. I don't think he really bullied her, it was just more or less, he was telling her what to do and she had to do it. See with my dad, it's whatever he thinks that's right and nobody can say different and my mum just goes along with him to stop arguments an' that. So it wasn't really a case of him bullying her. It was just him telling her, you know: "I don't want you to do this" and she wouldn't. (Fiona)

In households characterised by domestic violence, a common family dynamic was a controlling, physically abusive father, attended by an addicted, emotionally withdrawn mother.⁵⁴ Kelly's parents fell into this category:

Ma da used to batter ma ma all the time. She used to have to wear sunglasses everyday an' all that. Her eyes were black and blue. Me and ma big brother used to sit up the stair and greet. One night we tried to sneak out the hoose an' run up and get ma auntie. Ma dad caught us- an' he just started screaming an' went back up the stair an' he went back in and ma mum got it worse. I was seven when they split up.

When the two ay 'em was fightin' for custody, ma da was sayin' ma mum was alcoholic, she didnae feed us an' all that, when it was really ma dad was fuckin' off fer days an' not comin' back. An' when he was comin' back he was comin' back and batterin' ma ma.

Ah went up to stay wi' ma dad, but he was dead strict an' all that, so when I was comin through to stay at ma ma's for the holidays an' that I was just goin' wild 'cause I was wisnae used to freedom. An' when I was 15 I went back to stay there.

⁵⁴ Although some of the young women witnessed fighting between both parents, and one claimed that her mother battered her father (Zoë - see below), husbands and boyfriends perpetrated most domestic violence.

An' jist- done everything that I shouldn't have been doing. [...] Ah jist went wild when Ah come back from ma dad's. When Ah went to ma ma's, she never ever put one rule down once. She is too into herself. Jist letted me dae what Ah want, know what Ah mean? (Kelly)

While Kelly's mother wasn't abusive, she was negligent, failing to provide Kelly with necessary supervision, thereby leaving her feeling abandoned and unloved. That said, Kelly still felt very protective of her mother, saying: 'She never does any wrong to anybody, know what Ah mean? I pure love her to bits. If anybody was to say anything about her Ah would kill for ma ma.'

Male relatives were also responsible for the majority of sexual abuse. Debbie, who was abused for eight years by her maternal grandfather, said her mother ignored the abuse 'caus it had happened tae her as well and [...] she wis scared.' In most cases, however, the young women said that their parents did not know about the abuse. They said they were reluctant to disclose what was happening because they were fearful of male relations' reactions and wanted to protect female relations from further victimisation. Angela, for example, was abused by her uncle between the ages of four and 16. Initially, she did not want to report the case to the police because she knew it would involve telling her father. When she did eventually allow her mother to speak to her father on her behalf, he 'went mental' and smashed up the house:

When it all came oot, ma dad was off on the sick. Em, ma mum says, "We'll need to tell your dad" and I went, "Eh, I cannae. I *cannot* tell ma dad about this. It will *kill* him. It will break him." See I thought nothing breaks ma dad. I've seen ma dad greet wance and that was at his mother's funeral and that was it. I've never seen him greet since. And that day, ma mum's kitchen, there wasnae a kitchen, it was just a shell aifter ma dad was finished. And I thought, "What have *I* done?" I blamed *maself* fer it. And I thought to maself, "Maybe if I hadnae of said nothing, nane o' this would happen. Ma whole family would still be togither." (Angela)

Cathy's dad similarly 'lost it,' when he discovered she had been sexually abused by his father (Cathy's grandfather):

I had a lot o' crap stuff happen when I was a baby. I was sexually abused by my granda'. And it just really like set me right aff ma nut. And naebody could handle me. And ma dad's gret over me and gret over and he just couldnae handle me any mair. And I ended up having a fight with him and he *battered* me, so I ended up in *care*.

I don't 'hink ma dad could handle the fact of what his dad done to me -- well, me and ma wee sister. It happened to ma wee sister Raquel as well. And, I was just- just kind o' kicked me right aff the rails and I was runnin' about getting into all sorts of trouble, getting into trouble in school, getting intae trouble when I was at hame. Ma dad couldnae handle it any mair. He'd never had problems like that, wi' anybody. (Cathy)

In each of these accounts, fathers adhered to a normative model of masculinity emphasising toughness, aggression, power and control (Connell 1987, 1995). Anger was often the only the emotion the young women saw their fathers express and therefore was considered the inevitable response to disclosure.

As a result of their experiences, many of the young women in the study struggled to reconcile strong attachments to family members with incidences of violence and abuse:

Ma da use tac batter ma ma all the time [...] I mean he was ma dad at the end of the day and I couldnae say a bad word aboot him, because I still dae [do] love him and everything else. It's not like that, I dae [don't] hate him or nothing, but I hated him for what he done tac ma mam. (Judy)

Ma da is awfie violent, but he's a really nice man, but he used to stab ma ma and batter 'er aboot. A ma ma's boyfriends 've battered 'er. But, you couldnae meet a nicer man than ma da, but he always batters people, he always fights wi' people. He's got a really bad temper. Ah don't know how. He doesnae drink or no'hin', he's jis' like that a' the time. You make him a cup o' tea and if it's no got the right amount o' milk, he flings it aboot the place. But he's brilliant. Ah love 'im to

pieces. Ah don't know whit's wrang wi' 'im. Sometimes- Sometimes he's all right and the next minute he's crackin' up an' there's nae reason fer 'im tae dae it. (Debbie)

While young women reported difficult relationships with both parents, it was common to find greater anger directed towards mothers than fathers. A theme that emerged repeatedly during the interviews was the feeling of ambivalence daughters experienced in respect to their relationship with their mother. So, for example, Debbie, who described her (violent) father as 'a really nice man' (above), said of her relationship with her mother:

Ah like her, but Ah don't really. Ah hate her but Ah love her as well. Ah hate whit she done tae me, but Ah love her. My papa, her dad, when Ah stayed wi ma wee gran, eh, he wis abusing me. He abused me fae when Ah wis three 'til Ah wis 11. And ma ma knew all aboot it and didnae tell anyb'dy, cause it had happened tae her as well and she jist let it happen. And she says she wis scared and that's how, but Ah've goat two wee sisters and Ah *am* scared but Ah still wouldnae let anyb'dy dae that tae thacm. (Debbie)

Debbie's bitterness towards her mother, then, derived from a deep sense of abandonment, as well as from cultural beliefs about 'the mythical perfection of the mother-daughter bond' (Miller and Dwyer 1997: 195).

Unfit mothers

Much has been written about mothers and motherhood, in both the popular and academic literatures (e.g. Forna 1999; Friday 1977; Lawler 2000; Rich 1986; Richardson 1993). As Miller and Dwyer (1997: 194) acknowledge, these varying accounts share a common premise; that is, 'the complex ambiguity of the relationship between mothers and daughters,' defined as '[The polarisation] between a deeply satisfying and mutually enriching relationship on the one hand and an

aching divide with the capacity for terrifying destruction on the other.' This split has its roots in what Caplan (1989) calls 'Perfect mother' and 'Bad mother' myths, in which the 'perfect mother' represents selfless devotion to the child in all circumstances:

She must be completely devoted, not just to her children, but to her role. She must be the mother who understands her children, who is all-loving and, even more importantly, all-giving. She must be capable of enormous sacrifice ... We believe that she alone is the best caretaker for her children and they require her continual and exclusive presence. She must embody all the qualities traditionally associated with femininity, such as nurturing, intimacy and softness. That's how we want her to be. That's how we intend to make her. (Forna 1999: 3)

The 'bad' or 'unfit mother,' by contrast, puts her own needs and ambitions first. She lets others come between herself and her children and is unable to afford them adequate care and protection. Perhaps worst of all, the 'bad mother' passes on her own deviant behaviours and values (Murray 1984, 1990, 1994). As Ferraro and Moe (2003) acknowledge, this ideology 'reflects essentialist conceptions of women as inherently caring and self-sacrificing and reinforces distinctions among women based on race and class prejudices.' While the perfect mother myth may distort the aspirations and experiences of all women, white, heterosexual, married, middle-class women continue to represent the most desired mothers in popular culture and social policy (Roberts 1995).

Within the sample, idealised mothers were characterised as 'being there' for their children 'twenty-four/seven.' They were 'caring,' would 'sit doon and spend time' with their offspring, and 'stopped anybody hurtin' ye.' A small number of the young women said they had mothers who fell into this category. Judy, for example, said of her relationship with her mother:

She's like ma best pal, she's not that old, so we get on brilliant. I go oot wi' her and all that. She's guid so she is. She's bran' new with me. She doesn't like the idea of

me being in here, but she's stood by me. She is up every week tae see me [even though] It's a guid bit of travelling.

Ma da use tae batter ma ma all the time. She just took all the kickings herself, but soon as he turned on us, that was it. So I've got heavy respect for ma ma. (Judy)

But this description of a 'caring' mother was rare. Most young women viewed their mothers with a mixture of hurt and bitterness, often describing them as self-absorbed, irresponsible, or otherwise unavailable. For example:

Ah'm no that close to ma mum. Ma gran, Ah'm dead close to ma gran, but nae ma mum.

Ah don't know. Ah've always blamed ma mum fer puttin' me in tae care. Em, 'cause ma mum couldnae copc wi' me. She was wantin' tae live her ain life plus have me, you know, try to bring me up, but it didnae work so she jist put me intae care. (Pauline)

I never got on wi' ma mum. We just argued all the time and ma mam was never there fer me. [...] She was aye out working, she was oot working all the time. I only seen her about an hoor a day or something. (Jane)

Like the women in Lawler's (2000) research, Pauline and Jane were both aware of the 'right' way to mother (i.e. the perfect mother myth) and also knew that their own mothers failed to live up to this ideal (and were therefore, by definition, bad mothers). Both expressed a fear of turning out like their mother, an anxiety that had real resonance because both had had their children taken into care as a result of their own heroin addiction.

Carol expressed this fear of becoming like her mother very forcefully. Aged 18, and nearing the end of a 12-month sentence for assault and robbery, Carol had been looked after by the local authority from the age of 12, after being deemed

'outwith parental control.' Carol described a difficult relationship with her family, again characterised by a lack of affective ties:

Things were going on an' likes o' Ah got put intae care and every'hing, but they didn't want me neither, know what Ah mean? So it was kinda a mutual kinda 'hing. We just don't get on. So it was, "Right, fair enough, Ah'll go," know what Ah mean? (Carol)

Her connection with her mother was particularly problematic and, like Pauline and Jane, she expressed tremendous anxiety around identification between herself and her mother:

She didn't want me back in the house, know what Ah mean? She was going through stuff as well, know, an' it just got out o' hand, know what Ah mean? She was jist- Ah don't really know. Ah clicked on eventually that she was trying to commit suicide and 'hings like that, know whit Ah mean? So it was maybe better off that Ah wasn't born.

Ah don't bother wi' 'er any more. Ah used tae when Ah was younger, but Ah don't now. To be honest wi' ye, Ah would punch her in the jaw. Ah jist don't like her. Ah know that sounds terrible, know whit Ah mean? But Ah jist don't like her, Ah just don't get on wi' her, Ah'd just rather no even be in the same room as 'er. (Carol)

Ah've only got one fear, eh? That Ah turn out anything like ma mam. Know whit Ah mean? That's the only fear Ah've got [...] I get up in the morning and think, "God, I'm looking like her" and all that! I'm like that, "That's it, hair cut!" [Laughs] Honest, it really does scare me that.

Ah really don't like her that much where Ah hate even the thought- If somebody says to me, "You look like your ma," Ah'm like cracking up: "Ah fuckin' hate that cow!" But obviously Ah'm gonna [look like her], know what Ah mean? But Ah don't know, it makes me crack up. Ah'm like that, "Ah don't even want to

look like her, Ah don't even want to act like her" and some o' the things Ah do say Ah think, "Fucking hell!" (Carol)

This dread was not merely focused on becoming her mother, but more specifically becoming her *abusive* mother:

Ah don't think Ah could have kids or nothing the now, 'cause Ah've got no life tae gie them. And there's the side o' me that thought to masel', well- Ah know that Ah wouldn't *hurt* them, know what Ah mean, like intentionally, but what happens like one day Ah turned out like her, know what Ah mean, and Ah did eventually? Ah don't think Ah could cope with that. Ah would be like that, shiteing masel' to be honest wi' you! Ah'm feared to touch them, touching weans and that, feared to even go near them 'cause Ah think to masel' that Ah'm going to hurt them [...] 'Cause like ma granny she done it to ma and that and it'll end up where I end up doing some o' the things, know what Ah mean? Ah mean, Ah don't think Ah could live with masel'. (Carol)

Carol referred to her family as 'bad blood' and felt she would almost inevitably repeat the destructive parenting patterns passed down by her mother and her grandmother. The only way she could see to break free from this cycle was by avoiding having any children of her own.

Carol's narrative demonstrates that mothers were not just the passive victims or bystanders to young women's abuse. Sometimes they were actively involved in violence (along with stepmothers, female adoptive parents, sisters and aunts). Zoë's mother, for example, had two previous convictions for assault and, according to Zoë, had routinely assaulted her (birth) father:

Ma ma battered ma da! [Laughs] Ma da is a poof! Ma da is a wee pansy! Ma ma was dead nasty tae him. She's a bitch. Ma ma wis violent towards ma wee faither. Ma wee da wis a pushover compared tae ma ma. Ma da's a wee man tae stay at hame wi the weans and a that kind o' 'hing.

Ma ma's like me. She keeps hersel to hersel' until somebody steps on her toes. And that's it. She'll kill ye [...] She got done wi' assault years ago on two security guards in Butlin's, fer stickin' the head in them! [Laughs] Aye, she's been done fer assault a few times an' a few 'hings, but nuttin majorly serious or any'hin' like that. Couple o' year ago, years and years ago, em, they a' got charged wi' a murder. Ma ma and a few other people that wis in the hoose. But she got oot an a' that because it was foond it was a hit that had been put oot fer somebody. (Zoë)

Joanne's mother had a similar history of violence and routinely abused her two daughters when she was under the influence of alcohol:

Ma mum used tac beat the shit oot o' me all the time. Anything Ah used tac say, me and ma mum would hae an argument anyway, but talking back to her and stuff, she hated that and Ah would never shut up, obviously, Ah would just aye, "Aw fuck off – you're nothing but an old bitch!" and 'hings and she's just chase aifter me a' round the hoose and anything that's lying she used to just pick it up and just pure beat me up wi' it, ken, majorette batons and stuff – me and ma sister went to majorettes and mum would, like, lift up big batons and just pure beat me up wi' it. She's threw, em, a kettle o' hot water o'er me and she's threw, em, a wee telly wi' a tape and stuff on it, bounced that aff am heid and- Just done hunnerds of stuff, man. She's potty, like. (Joanne)

With young women frequently describing difficult relationships between themselves and their mothers, it could be argued that the source of their violent behaviour lies therein. The problem with this explanation, however, is that it endorses patriarchal views about mothers being solely responsible for the welfare, achievements and failings of their children, without attending to wider family dynamics that (as we have seen) are often characterised by socio-economic disadvantage and male violence against women. As Miller and Dwyer acknowledge, reflecting on their clinical work with father-daughter incest survivors, 'The relationship between the mother and the child cannot be seen independently from the relationship with the abuser' (Miller and Dwyer 1997: 197). As Samantha's story illustrates, distance

between mother and daughter is more likely the *result* of violence, rather than its source:

It was a pretty shitty upbringing because he used to beat her up all the time. Whenever I went into the house it would just be constant arguing all the time. Like if ma mum walked doon the street and she was five minutes longer than she usually was he used to go off his nut and start hitting her and ‘hings like that. If he thought that she was favouring one of us over one of the other girls then he used to go mental over ‘hings like that. It was just stupid ‘hings, he was just so obsessive over her and that. He was totally mental.

I didnac realise how serious it was, do you know what I mean, because I was that young. Ma dad, well ma step-dad, he used to buy us off by taking us swimming and that. And then if ma old dear tried to do anything like that he used to go mental and hit her. So it was like I always felt close to ma step dad, even although I knew he was daeing that to ma mum. D’you ken what I mean? And then when I started growing up I felt really bad for that. (Samantha)

Summary

The young women in the study had a series of complex, ambivalent and multifaceted relationships with their immediate and extended families. Some reported strong family ties; others described sexual and physical abuse; many discussed both. As outlined at the outset, familial change has been the subject of much academic theorising and popular debate in recent years, with concerns raised in relation to a supposed decline in obligations and commitments and concomitant rise in individualism and self-reflexivity. In line with Jamieson’s (1998, 1999) findings, the data presented here suggest a more complex picture. Family relationships, particularly ties to mothers, sisters, and extended female kin, were based on principles of ‘protection,’ ‘loyalty’ and ‘closeness,’ requiring reciprocal forms of emotional and practical support. These were in turn related to ideologies of motherhood and essentialist conceptions of women as inherently caring and self-

sacrificing. Like the homegirls reported in Hunt et al.'s (2000) study, the young women in the current research held important women in their lives to higher standards than they did men and when these women failed to live up to their standards they reacted with a sense of overwhelming betrayal. Yet at the same time as they expressed feelings of rage and hurt, the young women exhibited a desperate ache for their families (and especially their mother's) support and nurturance, and felt it was legitimate to call on them when they were in need. As Debbie explained, 'Ah hated whit she done tae me, but every time Ah used tae get full o' it, Ah always used tae go tae ma mum's fer claithes. Ah didnae want tae, but Ah knew Ah wid. Some'hin always took me back tae ma ma.' This theme, of the paradoxical role of the family as a source of support *and* distress, will be further developed in the chapters that follow. Chapter Six, for example, addresses the various forms of risk-seeking behaviour that young women engage in as means of coping with emotional pain and exerting control over lives experienced as out with control. In doing so, it begins to elaborate another central focus of the study; that is, the complexities of the relationship between victimisation and agency in the lives of young women who offend.

Another important criticism of theories of de-traditionalisation and individualisation is the lack of acknowledgement given to the continuing importance of wider structural inequalities. As Jamieson highlights, 'Personal relationships are not typically shaped in whatever way gives pleasure without the taint of practical, economic and other material circumstances' (1999: 482). The findings above suggest that young women's violent offending not only requires to be studied in the wider contexts of socio-economic disadvantage and male violence towards women, but also the specific local contexts in which offending women reside. As Chapter Seven will elaborate, in the current study, young women's identities remained closely intertwined with the everyday lived practices of the areas in which they lived.

Chapter Six

‘Getting Mad Wi’ It’: Risk-Seeking by Young Women

Risk-management and risk-taking are an important part of young people’s identity formation within late modernity (Mitchell et al. 2001). ‘Youth’ is contemporaneously constructed as a period of dangerousness and deficiency (Muncie 2004). That said, whereas young men are more likely to be referred to as ‘troublesome,’ young women are represented as ‘troubled’ (Green et al. 2000). In other words, young women are more often portrayed as the passive victims of risk rather than as active risk seekers. As we saw in Chapter Two, this is clearly demonstrated in the literature on women and violence, which tends to focus on women’s victimisation, or explains their offending as a response to an abusive situation or past abusive experiences. To recap, the problem with this approach is that ‘it ignores the complexities of gender identities and fails to see young women as active subjects and responsible human beings’ (Kruttschnitt and Carbone-Lopez 2006).

Chapter Five suggests that women’s involvement in risky behaviour, like men’s, has multiple motives and meanings in different contexts. In doing so points to the positive contribution risk-seeking behaviour can have in terms of young women’s sense of self and self-efficacy. As Lyng’s (1990) notion of ‘edgework’ acknowledges, voluntary risk-taking can be used to achieve a semblance of control in a life that is experienced as out with control. However, an important criticism of this work is that it has yielded conceptual models rooted in the experience of men (Miller 1991) and thereby fails to recognise the gendered nature of the edgework experience (Lois 2001). Through the use of direct quotations, the chapter will show that while young women are initially drawn to risk-seeking behaviour as a result of the shared adrenaline ‘rush’ or ‘buzz’ they experience, as their ‘risk pathways’ progress they increasingly come to rely on edgework as a means to *block out* powerful emotions. The data also show that, unlike men, who tend to retrospectively redefine their edgework experiences as an expression of exhilaration and omnipotence (Lyng

1990), young women are more likely to look upon their behaviour as irrational and therefore feel guilty about what they have done.

The sociology of risk seeking

The most oft-cited analysis of risk-seeking behaviour is Stephen Lyng's (1990) article on 'edgework.' Lyng's analysis, which is grounded in his empirical research with male skydivers (Lyng and Snow 1986), departs from previous (predominantly psychological) approaches by conceptualising risk taking from a sociological perspective and linking it to the alienated and oversocialized nature of the late modern period. According to Lyng, edgework activities involve 'a clearly observable threat to one's physical or mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence ... [and] the ability to maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos' (1990: 858-9).⁵⁵ In other words, he conceptualises risk taking as a form of 'boundary negotiation' in which the point is 'to get as close as possible to the edge without going over it' (ibid.: 862). Through the rational calibration of risk and skill, edgeworkers seek to push themselves to their mental and physical limits in order to encounter an intense sensory experience that gives them a feeling of agency and control. According to Lyng, individuals engaging in edgework 'experience themselves as instinctively acting entities ... with a purified and magnified sense of self' (ibid.: 154). Despite being largely illusory, this heightened sense of control is psychologically *necessary*, Lyng argues, because of the shared absence of control individuals experience at this particular historical moment:

The general tendency towards a 'deskilling' of work in economies dominated by mass production industries and authority structures means that workers at many different levels, ranging from service workers to certain types of professionals, may be forced to work under alienating conditions. (Lyng 1990: 876)

O'Malley and Mugford (1994) develop this idea further, arguing that edgeworkers seek excitement in response to controlled emotionality of the modern industrial experience:

The separation of reason from emotion, the identification of the former with the intellect and the latter with the body (carnality) was a crucial element of the Enlightenment project ... one of the key assumptions that formed the modern world-view [was] the identification of emotions as being within the body, and therefore as base and subordinated to reason. Culturally constructed in this fashion, emotions become controllable or manageable. Indeed, the idea is that they *must* be controlled ... (O'Malley and Mugford 1994: 197, emphasis added)

Thus, edgework can be seen as the 'flipside of modernity' (Lupton 1999: 156), a way of asserting control in the face of the alienating nature of work in the modern, rationalised age. Its seductiveness is linked both to the inherent thrill of the act and the feelings of 'self-realisation' and 'self-determination' to which the thrill gives rise.

One of the key criticisms of the edgework model has been that it draws on examples that are 'engaged in by white men with attachment to the labor force' (Miller 1991: 1531). Yet understandings and experiences of risk are different for different groups. There can be little question that class, gender and ethnicity impact upon both the opportunities for edgework and its underlying imperatives. Socially excluded and socio-economically disadvantaged young people, for example, have little connection with the world of work and typically lack access to pre-arranged excitements such as skydiving or base jumping. Rather, they spend much of their time 'bored,' hanging about street corners with their peers. As Lyng (2005) has himself recently acknowledged, within this context '*criminal* edgework is a much more relevant and accessible means to re-enchantment than the pursuit of leisure edgework or postmodern consumption' (Lyng 2005: 29, emphasis added).

⁵⁵ The classic edgework experience is one where 'the individual's failure to meet the challenge at hand will result in death or at the very least debilitating injury' (ibid.), for example bungee jumping, hang gliding, skydiving, or motorbike racing.

Risk pathways

The research identified four pathways to imprisonment for violent offending.⁵⁶

- (1) The *abused woman*, who attacks her abuser whilst under the influence of alcohol. The abused woman has no previous convictions and considers her actions to be in self-defence. (Rare in current sample due to age range, but more common in the wider female prison population.)
- (2) The *teenage fighter*, who drinks heavily and experiments with recreational drugs and/or prescription medication, often as a means to avoid problems at home. Her violent offence typically relates to a street fight that is initiated whilst the offender is under the influence of alcohol and where things 'get out of hand,' resulting in the victim receiving a severe injury. The (sub) cultural norms and values of this group promote pre-emptive violence and the defence of respect and victims are generally (but not solely) other young women.
- (3) The *drug offender*, who engages in property crime and/or prostitution as a means to support her drug habit. Her violent offence typically relates to an assault on a police officer/security guard/householder who has attempted to apprehend her. Often abused as a child, the drug offender relies on substance abuse to dull emotional pain. She is generally intoxicated at the time of the offence and considers her violent actions to be in self-defence.
- (4) The *hurt and hurting girl*, who assaults and robs unknown victims, often threatening them with a weapon. This group of offenders represent perhaps the most 'damaged' young women: they have extensive histories in care, poor family relationships and significant experience of physical and sexual abuse within the family. This small group of young women

⁵⁶ While it was developed independently, this classification has much in common with Daly's (1992) typology of women appearing at felony court. Daly identified five main groups: street women, harmed and harming women, battered women, drug-connected women, and economically motivated women.

experience overwhelming feelings of anger and rage and express these feelings by hurting other people.

As these pathways suggest, one of the central findings of the research was that young women's violent behaviour was motivated by a complex interaction involving active risk-seeking and risk management. Further, young women made a distinction between their motivations for starting and maintaining risk-seeking behaviour. As the sections that follow demonstrate, most of the young women initially became involved in violence and other forms of offending for nonpecuniary reasons: to have fun, to impress their mates, to stand up for themselves (Pathway 2). For the three-fifths whose substance use progressed to dependence, however, the importance of excitement sharply declined as drug addiction replaced peers as a central organising feature (Pathways 3 and 4). For this latter group of women, risk-taking behaviour principally became a way of managing emotional pain.

'Jist wan o' the troops'

The significance of the peer group as a source of identity and status is well documented. Young women in particular commonly describe their friendships as 'the most important thing' (Burman et al. 2003; Griffiths 1995; Hey 1997). Spending time with friends is a prime social activity for most young people and – according to the literature – young people often congregate in groups for a sense of belonging, as well as sociability. As Quicker (1983: 80) summarizes: 'To be in a gang is to be part of something. It means having a place to go, friends to talk with and parties to attend. It means recognition and respected status.' Research also points to the protective functions of 'gangs' (Seaman et al. 2006), especially for young women (Joe and Chesney-Lind 1995; Miller 2001). As we saw in Chapter Five, most of the young women in the current study came from families characterised by problems such as domestic violence and/or parental drug or alcohol abuse. As a result, the young women turned to their kin networks as a source of emotional and social support, spending much of their time away from the family home.

Most of the young women had been persistent truants whom spent their teenage years 'hanging round' drinking and taking drugs with friends. Four-fifths reported 'heavy' alcohol consumption during this period (drinking daily or partaking in regular binge drinking, for example) and a similar proportion reported experience of illicit drug use (initially 'recreational' drugs, such as cannabis, speed, acid, or ecstasy, along with tranquillisers and/or sleeping tablets). Joanne's experience was fairly typical:

Ah was a pure terror at school. Ah was ayeways getting into fights a' the time. Just being a pure little brat! [Laughs] Just ayeways arguing wi' ma teachers and stuff and never listening to anybody, just daein what Ah wanted, basically.

They started expelling me, throwing me oot. By the time Ah got tae fourth year, Ah ended up havin' to go to tae stay in a [children's] home. And then Ah eventually had to go to school there as well. But then they let me back for tae dae ma exams, but Ah never went 'cause Ah was runnin' away fae the polis and fae social workers and ma mum and everybody. If Ah went to school they would have got me there, eh, so it was just a case o', "Well, Ah'm no goin'."

'Cause Ah didnae get any guid grades fae school and because Ah wasnae settled anywhere, livin' rough, Ah just ended up hangin' about wi' the wrong people. Ken, people who obviously werenae workin' or goin' tae college or any'hin'? It was all people sittin' about, gettin' drunk, daein 'hings like that. Ah just thought it was cool tae be hangin' about wi' all the big boys.

Ah started drinkin' when Ah was 13 or some'hin. Like at nights after school, hanging round. That was just like bottles o' cider, 'hings like that, ken, a bottle o' Buckfast. Then it was like Ah was runnin' about wi' ma pals all during the day and drinkin' wi' these aulder folk. And they're drinkin' bottles o' vodka and Ah would drink it as well. And that's when Ah started offending real bad. Ah was drinkin', like 24 hours a day. Drinkin' fae when Ah opened ma eyes until Ah closed them, a' the time. Takin' vallies and jellies and stuff like that. (Joanne)

Unlike Joanne, Lesley managed to pass her examinations in spite of her truancy. Her account demonstrates the 'progression' many of the young women made from alcohol to recreational drug use at around age 14:

I never really went tae school, I always skived. Right fae high school. I just didn't like it. I was bored. I don't know what it was. I was just never interested. And it was no that I couldnae do it, because I could. Because I still passed all ma exams, even though I was hardly ever there. I just- I would rather do something else. I was bored, I 'hink. I would just climb back in the window and go back to bed. I didnae really do nothing.

As I got older and I got to the end of school I'd go oot and get stoned at the park and that. It was the same group o' us all the time, fae when I started high school really. There was quite a few o' us, lassics and boys. We just done under-age drinking and all that. At the weekend and stuff, just the usual underage. Aw, really drunk. Not being able to move, spewing and evcrything. Stuff like that [Laughs] Just the usual. But it never took much, not much at all! A bottle of cider or something and that would be it.

I started smoking hash when I was 11, but just noo and again. If somebody gave me a joint I would hae a couple o' draws on it. Then about 14 or something I took my first bag of speed. I never took ma first eccie until I was 15, because I was quite scared of them, because there was a lot of people dying off them and stuff. Em, I took acid, I really liked acid. I got quite addicted to acid fer about a year or something, I was taking a lot o' it. But that's when I was about 16 or something. It would be 13 when I took my first bag o' speed. And after that I just I didnae care about alcohol. (Lesley)

While both young women refuted the influence of 'peer pressure' (this was something that was seen affect other people), likc most of the other interviewees they spoke about not wanting to be 'left out' and said that they started drinking/taking drugs/offending because 'everyone else was doing it.'

Almost three-quarters of the young women in the study reported previous social work involvement and over half had experienced being looked after by the

local authority (e.g. in a children's unit). Powerful peer group cultures are a common feature of residential care (Renold and Barter 2003; Wade et al. 1998) and young people who spend time in care are often subject to multiple changes of placement (Triseliotis et al. 1995). Interviewees frequently remarked that they 'went along with' risky behaviours in order to 'fit in' with a new peer group and said that taking drugs, 'being pure cheeky tae the staff,' and/or offending, provided a way to instantly 'bond' with existing residents. Alternatively they would initiate violence, drug use or offending in an attempt to establish respect or status. Stephanie, who was placed in local authority care for a second time at age 13, gave the following account:

See since I got put in a home, that's when I started getting wilder and wilder and wilder. See the home I was in, I was wi' aulder people. So we were getting brought up wi' older people and I was watching them daein things and I was following along, ken just watching them taking drugs and going aboot mad wi' it, battering people, and I was going along wi' them, eh? You see them daein 'hings and you're like that, "Aww, I want tae dae what they're daein" and you just keep on going wi' them. (Stephanie)

Again Stephanie didn't feel *pressured* into offending, she 'followed along' because she looked up to, and wanted to emulate, her residential peers. Like a number of the young women, she suggested that while she 'learnt' to offend through the tutelage of older residents the *decision* to offend was ultimately her own: 'at the end of the day I know what I am daein.' I know I'm getting the jail, but I still dae it.'

This emphasis on personal responsibility was reflected in Pauline's account of her entry into prostitution. Pauline was an only child, born and brought up in a 'good working-class' area of Glasgow. After her parents' separation (when Pauline was five), she spent much of her childhood in and out of residential school. At age 17, she left care and moved into supported accommodation:

Ah was in flats run by the social work department. It was semi- It was less supportive, know what Ah'm talkin aboot? They will let you dae your own thing. 'Cause Ah wis growin' up, Ah wis gettin' aulder, so, that jist made me mature a bit,

'cause Ah started to fend for masel', basically. 'Cause Ah'd go, "Right, Ah've no got anybody to fend for me so I'll jist need tae," know what Ah mean? That's when Ah went into prostitution. Money. Curiosity. Ah was younger – Ah was about 17 – and two lassies that Ah was pally wi', Ah wondered where they were gettin' their money fae. Jealousy, basically. Ah was wonderin' "How the hell are they comin' in here wi' loads o' money and clothes?" Ah didnae know anything like that. And Ah spoke to the guy they were workin' wi' and that was it. Ah did it a couple o' times, liked the money, it was easy money and that was it. (Pauline)

Unlike Stephanie, Pauline's involvement in offending wasn't motivated by a desire to be the same but rather to *have* the same. Acknowledging her lack of educational qualifications and non-existent family support, she made what she saw as a pragmatic, intelligent and rational choice to become involved in prostitution:

SB: So you weren't forced-
Pauline: Naw.
SB: -to do it-
Pauline: Naw.
SB: -and it wasn't-
Pauline: Naw.
SB: -because you-
Pauline: Naw.
SB: -had to have the money-
Pauline: Naw, naw-
SB: -to feed a habit.
Pauline: Naw, nut. Ah jist wanted tae dae it. A job, basically. [Laughs]

Karen's account demonstrated a similar weighing of options. Karen initially became involved in shoplifting after moving to a new primary school. Like Pauline, she said her offences were driven by a desire to 'keep up with the Joneses' and show she was 'as good as' her new peers. As she grew older, however, her motives changed and she began using the skills gained to impress new peers:

I haven't lived in any one place for a long time. I have been everywhere basically but I was born in Forest. My mum and that stayed in Linnraig until I was five and then I lived in England. I spent nine years travelling England and then back up here to jump fae place to place for the past few years. My dad kept swapping jobs. His first job, it was right down south, it was Sootfield, eh? And then they decided it was too far, so he kept getting transfers further north and we worked our way up the country again until we got to Westwood, which is north east. We got to there and then we moved back up here when I was 13.

I had been like shoplifting since I was like seven or something, ken, *really* young. It was just because- See ma pals at school, we used to all walk to school thegither because it was a dead safe little town doon in England. It was dead posh. It was this little village and we used to all walk to school thegither. And they all used to get money for sweeties, but me and my sister didn't used to get any, we only had our milk money. We used to spend our milk money on sweets, but it was only like 10p or something. So I used to steal things as well. Like I used tae steal things for my wee sister, because she was only at nursery and I couldnae send her to school without sweeties because *everybody* had sweeties.

Up until I went to the high school when I was 11 I was top of the class. I was not a bad kid. I was a good kid. I was quite a loner, but I wasn't- [Exhales noisily] D'ye know what I mean? I wasn't a bad kid. When I went to high school, that was like – I don't know – for the first time in ma whole life it wasu't just me that was the new kid. *Everybody* was the new kid. I seemed to- I don't know, my personality just- and everybody respected me. I don't know. It just- I don't know, I changed a lot.

That's when I started shoplifting all the time. It started being like music. I *really, really* got into my music and I used to steal tapes and CDs and stuff. I didn't have a CD player, but I used to steal them for my pal and tape them off her. I used to steal all these tapes and toiletries and make-up and stuff and then clothes, just anything ma pals wanted. If any of ma pals needed stuff I would steal them for them. (Karen)

One explanation for young women's risk taking, then, is the desire to establish new and maintain existing peer relationships. As we have seen, theories of women's psychological development propose that women cultivate a sense of self and self worth via their connection with others (Chodorow 1978; Miller 1976; Gilligan 1982). For young women whose home experiences are characterised by disconnection and violation, peers offer an important source of social and self-identity.

'Daein it fer the buzz'

The thrill of transgression was another central theme. In line with the findings of Matza and Sykes (1961), along with work carried out under the rubric of 'cultural criminology' (for an overview, see Ferrell 1999), young women often cited the adrenaline 'rushes' involved in offending behaviour, stating that offending was 'fun, something to do.' As Annie put it, 'Ah wasnae wanting to hurt anybody, it was just *boredom*.' Likewise, Kelly said, 'Offending was jist some'hin tae break up ma day, it gied us something to pass the time.' She gave the following example:

When we was drinkin' we used to jist go to the Arch – that's a big bit in ma bit – jist tae cause a fight wi' somebody. Lassies that never even done nothing to us, for the sake ay it. Eh, one night it was me and one of ma pals, and there was this lassie sittin' on the grass, an' they were all like pushin' me an' sayin' like, "Go on, Go on!" 'cause they all used to do it, know what ah mean? An' makin' oot she'd took the cunt oot me an' all that when she hudnae, know what ah mean? So jist for the sake ay it ah went an' done it. Even though ah knew it was wrong, know what ah mean but? Ah jist went up an' battered her for nae reason. Nothin'. Jist fer some'hin tac dac. (Kelly)

Stephanie, one of the younger women in the study, expressed this quest for excitement more forcefully:

When we were a' drinking at the weekend, we just used to go mental and evcry'hing. It was mad. We'd sit out, drink, go oot, look fer a fight, em, any'hing that came in wer mind, we used tae go and dae. When I was 11 I started daein all-nighters and walking about the streets at night. If I seen a man come past and he was drunk, we used to go and batter 'im. Because we used to get a rush oot it. We used to get a giggle, a buzz. It was good. (Stephanie)

The excitement associated with violence was also emphasised by Zoë, who was currently serving her third prison sentence for a violent offence.⁵⁷

I get very excited. I get sick. I get- I take the bile I get that excited about it. See aifter I dae something in all, I always need a pee wi' excitement. That's terrible, innit? I get a buzz aff it. I get a buzz aff of being violent, *when I am violent*.

I'd love tae [bite someone's ear off]. I've thought about it. I've thought about- [Short pause] ripping it off, know what I mean? But I've naw. I don't know. With ma teeth [Laughing, embarrassed] Just imagining all the blood popping out. That's terrible innit? Aw naw! (Zoë, emphasis added)

Both Stephanie and Zoë took pleasure in remembering and describing their violent escapades, and became visibly agitated when recounting stories of fights between groups of young people. Such violence was considered deeply meaningful; it served to maintain group solidarity, reinforce kinship ties, affirm allegiances, and enhance personal status within the group (see also Burman et al. 2003).

Violence wasn't the only criminal activity that the young women referred to as exciting. Angela referred to 'the buzz' associated with stealing cars, for example, while Lesley discussed feelings of elation after a successful housebreaking:

⁵⁷ Unlike the majority of other young women in the study, Zoë used the present tense to describe her various experiences of violence. This is remarkable because she was one of the few respondents to describe herself as a 'violent person.' As Chapter Seven demonstrates, most interviewees made a distinction between *being* a violent person and having the *potential* for violence, and spoke more easily about feeling annoyed than being or acting aggressively or violently.

I used tae dae it fer the buzz! The buzz o' it. Because you were daein something you werenae supposed tae be daein and you thought, "Oh, if I get caught here I'll get a chase!" Everything starts running through your mind. You don't actually sit and think, "Well, if I take this car, this person's gonna be 'Ma car, ma insurance!'" You don't think o' how the person's gonna feel; you just think aboot how you're gonna feel inside yourself. (Angela)

Your adrenaline is going and stuff like that [...] Because you know that you could get caught or they could wake up and you're fucked. But it's a buzz. It's a good feeling. See when you come oot that hoose and you open up a purse or a bag and you see all this money, you're like that: "Oh my God, on ye go! It takes some people a week to earn that amount of money and I've just earned it in five minutes." So you don't think of the consequences or the hurt you're causing or anything like that. (Lesley)

For Karen, the value of the goods stolen was of less importance than the sense of euphoria and exhilaration associated with 'pulling a fast one' or 'putting one over' on someone:

I just went out one day and I lost my bottle for shoplifting. It got to the point I was going into a shop, I had been caught *loads* of times, I thought "I am going to get the jail," know what I mean? I was like "No way." I was only just gone 17 and I thought, "I'm no getting the jail at 17." One day instead of daeing that I put on a black hat and a black jacket and broke into a house. I found it dead easy. And adrenaline rush I got off it was *amazing*. It was much better than shoplifting. I used to *love* shoplifting. I still do. Even although I am feared tae dae it, I still love it. When you walk oot- When you're waiting fer somebody to grab you and then when they don't. It's like, [laughs] "Cool!" When you're breaking into a hoose it's- I don't know, it is even better cause it is like *dark* and I don't know, just the sneakiness o' it. I have no idea, but I just- I liked breaking into the houses better than I liked the money and the drugs. I actually enjoyed the thieving better than I enjoyed the takings. (Karen)

Thus offending presented some young women with a measure of self-esteem and self-efficacy; a sense that they had crossed the boundaries into someone else's world and 'gotten away with it':

See if Ah'm in somebody's house and Ah'm robbin' it, right? Ah'll sit there and Ah'll hae a bowl o' cornflakes and every'hing! [Laughs] Watch the telly, know whit Ah mean?! And Ah'll sit there and Ah'll 'hink to masel, "This is the life!" On the couch, watchin' the telly, know whit Ah mean? (Carol)

The status and sense of superiority young women said they felt was sometimes linked to the 'masculine' nature of the offences they committed. Karen, for example, took pride in her status as 'the only female housebreaker in Midvale,' while Zoë claimed to be one of the few prisoners 'that's been done fer car theft.' Committing traditionally 'male' offences made both women feel special or unique. It also afforded them respect amongst their male peers: 'All ma pals are boys and they're a' in the nick an' they're always oot on E. Me and Fi, ma friend, we're jist wan o' the troops, we're jist like wan o' the lads. Ah've always been like that a' ma days' (Zoë).

I think I am more like a guy. Some of the best fun I have had is being with my [male] friends doing what they do, ken? Like see on a Friday night at school, when a' the other lassies used tae get thegither, we used to get thegither at the park, ken, and get drunk. I used to be at the high school with five of my male pals, ken, there was six of us, and we used to wrestle. We used to have wrestling competitions. Like we would take it in turns and whoever wasn't wrestling was drinking, eh. It started off quite mild but by the end of the night we would have black eyes and we would basically be battered to death. And not one of them made an allowance for me being a female, not one of them. There was only two of them that could actually beat me. I don't know. I just preferred the company and liked the things that guys done better than the things that lassies done. (Karen)

Hence some young women initially engaged in offending, particularly violent offending, because it carried with it an excess of masculine meanings, and confronting expectations that women should not steal cars, break into houses, engage in violence and so on provided an additional source of excitement, pleasure, self-respect and status. As Stephanie put it, being 'hard' meant being 'somebody':

Tell you the truth, I've got a wee name fer maself, eh? In Woodford. I have. They go, "There's Stephanie Dobbin!" They come up, "Are you Stephanie Dobbin?" and blah, blah, blah. I do like it, but ken when people goes to their pals, ken other people go to their pals, "There's Stephanie Dobbin! She can fight like fuck" and this and that, eh? You do get a wee buzz out of it. (Stephanie)

'Just tae black oot'

Young women also engaged in risk-seeking behaviour as a means of managing negative feelings. Many of the young women expressed feelings of unresolved grief and rage, and said that these emotions contributed indirectly to their offending. As Chapter Two demonstrated, clear correlations exist between the victimisation of young women and high-risk behaviours such as substance misuse, suicide and self-harm (Acoca and Dedel 1998; Howard League 1997). One third of the sample were drinking daily and half described a pattern of regular binge drinking prior to their 'current' offence. Three-fifths of the young women were addicted to heroin. Most said that while they initially started drinking, or taking drugs, because it made them feel good, they soon came to rely on it as a way to avoid unpleasant memories. As Joanne explained,

When Ah started off taking everything it was just tae be the same as everybody else and fer tae ever'hin' and just fer the buzz. But then through time, as each year went on, Ah was taking mair and mair different 'hings and that was just to black oot, forget a' the stupid 'hings Ah'd obviously already done, eh? 'hings like that. (Joanne)

Similar themes pervaded Cathy's account. Cathy had been sexually abused by her paternal grandfather between the ages of seven and 11. Following a fight with her father, she was received into local authority care aged 11, at which point she started experimenting with drugs (temazepam, ecstasy, and cannabis). As her drug use escalated, Cathy became involved in offending to get money for drugs. She was eventually sent to residential school after being caught stealing charity boxes:

Wi' ma friends I would take, like, temazepam – jellies we call them – and eccie – ecstasy – and then when I was sitting on ma own, wherever I was, I would smoke hash. I done it to blank everything oot. But then when I woke up in the morning it was still there, so I just took drugs again. And again and again. And that's how I started getting intae committing crime. And the crimes that I were committing were shoplifting, thefts, just so I could get money, just tae get me them drugs, just tae forget fer a wee while. That's exactly what it was. Just to get money for drugs, because I just wanted to get oot ma face and forget aboot everything, just forget. I just was an existence ootside. I never had a life. All ma life revolved around drugs.

See at the start, it was a really positive thing. It was making me happy and it was making me forget and it was gieing me a laugh wi' ma pals and then it started to get beyond a joke. And I got caught stealing- Well, the guy I was wi', he was stealing charity boxes oot o' shops and we got caught wi' the charity boxes and that's when I got took to a children's panel and put in residential school. (Cathy)

As their drug use progressed, then, the young women's offending pattern altered. Offences that were initially engaged in alongside peers for the buzz or a shared sense of experience became financially motivated – driven by the need to fund escalating drug problems. When the young women attempted to reduce their consumption, in an effort to regain some degree of control, negative feelings resurfaced and were often compounded by guilt and shame arising from their own behaviours (hurting others, for example, or allowing their children to be put up for adoption). This became a self-perpetuating cycle, as Angela, who was sexually abused by her uncle over a 12-year period, explained:

When I took drugs I didnae have the thoughts, I didnae have the nightmares, or the flashbacks. So I was free. And then for a while I wasnae able to get drugs, em, I was working. I'd got masel a job and I wasnae able to get the drugs. And that's when it started coming back and I couldnae handle it.

If I took the drugs the abuse was gone, and if I didnae have the drugs the abuse was there. And I thought, "If I take these drugs, and I keep taking them, I'll no need to think about it and it will no be in ma mind." (Angela)

Debbie had an analogous experience. Sexually abused over a nine-year period by her grandfather, Debbie had overwhelming feelings of anger and rage, which she attempted to 'block' through substance misuse:

When Ah wis 12 Ah used tae buzz glue and nail varnish and all that crap. Ah didnae start takin' smack 'til Ah wis about 14. Ah used tae take jellies and Valium and they're the problem. They're the wans that made me want tae kill people, ma ma and ma papa and that.

Ah came oot o' here and Ah wis like that, "Ah'm gaun tae come off o' drugs, I'm gaun tae come off." 'Cause- Ah jist had tae. Ah've goat two wee sisters and ma ma cannae really look after theym, no very good anyway, so- Ah wis aff drugs for a few month, but- Ah *preferred* being on drugs. It wis the worse time o' ma life. Ah wisnae rattlin' or nothin' 'cause Ah hud came oot o' here. But it wis horrible. And Ah ended up losin' it. Thinking all the time. My mind wis jist racing constantly. Ah used tae lie in ma bed and look oot the windae and Ah thought Ah wis gaun aff ma heid. (Debbie)

A major draw of drugs, then, was that they prevented conscious thought and provided temporary relief from intense feelings. In contrast to the reflexive actors depicted by Giddens (1990, 1991) and Beck (1992, 1994) (discussed in Chapter Six), the majority of young women in the current study gave little thought to the past, or

indeed the future, preferring instead to take themselves out of themselves, living their lives in the moment, focusing on the next hit.⁵⁸

Self-injury was another common method of blocking out emotional pain (see Motz 2001). Twelve young women had deliberately injured themselves (by cutting) on at least one occasion and six said they self-harmed in this way regularly. For this latter group of young women, self-harm acted as 'time out' or a 'distraction' from their problems. They would play and replay images of the act over and over again in their head, and often 'obsessed' over planning their next 'cut.' In addition, the physical pain evoked by self-injury diminished emotional pain: 'It made me feel. I had that much anger and hurt inside me it made me feel, [exhales noisily] "Thanks fuck for that." It was as if it was over wi'. The [emotional] pain was over wi'' (Annie).

'A way to make you feel'

Some of the young women said that they felt emotionally 'numb' much of the time and no longer experienced 'natural' or 'normal' feelings. Joanne's account was typical of this group:

Through drugs Ah've become totally immune. Ah don't feel the way normal folk feel. Ah've just lost every bit o' confidence and every'hin. Like the last time Ah was in here and that, even all the lassies that ken me from ma last sentences and the last times Ah've been in, they're always saying, "You've totally changed." Ah'm like, "Well, how?" But Ah have. Ah've just started tae notice it masel. Ah'm all withdrawn fae everybody and that. Ah'll no sit wi' anybody and that, Ah'll just sit masel and 'hings like that, eh? Ah 'hink that's just like wi' havin' heroin, because Ah've been that used tae it. (Joanne)

⁵⁸ In this sense, they can be characterised as 'reflexivity losers' (Tash 1994).

Carol, too, said she felt 'detached.' She spoke about 'closing down' emotionally so that no one could hurt her, and of no longer knowing how to react appropriately to someone else's distress:

It just doesn't hurt anymore. It's like, Ah don't know, Ah used tae be dead, dead quiet and just used to never bother, know whit Ah mean, and then Ah just got sick o' it, know whit Ah mean? You just think to yersel', "Awff, what else can anybody else do tae ye?" So you just start getting immune tae things. I'll be honest, see when Ah see people crying in here, Ah laugh. [Laughs] But it's not because Ah'm thinking they're pure pathetic, know whit Ah mean, it's just Ah dae ken what tae dae.

When folk cry Ah can't sit in the same room as them, know whit Ah mean? Ah've got to walk away fae them, know whit Ah mean? Like say they start crying and that, Ah just cannae- And Ah want tae talk to them, know whit Ah mean, but Ah *can't*, know whit Ah mean? Ah've just got to go and find somebody else. [Laughs] That is, that is me. Ah mean, Ah'm like that, "Ah cannae cope with that." And Ah'm off, know whit Ah mean, that's me. (Carol)

Risk seeking, in this context, was understood as 'a way to make you feel' and reminded young women that they were 'alive.'

Self-harm was again a relatively popular method of *expressing* negative emotions. In much the same way that Karen and Lesley talked about housebreaking in order to experience the 'buzz' or 'rush' that comes with a successful theft, young women who self-harmed said it gave them a 'release,' a sense of omnipotence and self-control. Others engaged in violence for the same reasons:

To be honest wi' you Ah like rollin' about wi folk, know what Ah mean?! [Laughs] If it's- Ah don't know, it's like seeing how much Ah can tolerate, if you know what Ah mean? Like say in here, I mean say in here there's been fuckin' times when they've like jumped on me, know what Ah mean? Prison officers, they jumped me right - not this jail, the jail that Ah was in - and it is bloody sore, know what Ah mean? And your mind just goes intae somewhere else so that you're tolerating it,

know what Ah mean? And it makes them worse because you are tolerating it, know what Ah mean? They're like that, "Why the fuck is she no squealing?" know what Ah mean? Ah just sit there and smile, but it fucking hurts, know what Ah mean, you're like that, "Mmm." But it's like seeing how much Ah can tolerate if you know what Ah mean? (Carol)

For certain young women, then, violence (whether directed at the self or at others) was motivated by a desire to feel physical pain, and the ability to endure physical pain was in turn understood as an assertion of power and control.

Another means of expressing negative emotions was hurting others. All three of the young women convicted of robbery, for example, cited vengeance as a basis of their actions. Debbie said she liked 'robbin' boys' as a way of exacting retribution on her abuser:

Ah robbed somebody. And it *wisnae* for money cause Ah *had*- It wis kind o' sick. Ah had money, Ah had every'hin' Ah needed. Ah kind o' *liked* robbin' people. Ah used tae 'hink- It wis kind o' selfish. Ah used tae like hurtin' other people. Ah liked other people tae be hurtin' as well. Quite strange.

There's times Ah have robbed people cause Ah need money. But, see, the first time Ah *didnae*. Ah don't know, maybe it wis 'cause Ah wis full o' it, Ah don't know. But see aifter it, Ah *liked* the feelin. Ah felt, Ah don't know, weird. Aye, Ah felt, kinda, relieved.

Ah liked robbin boys. Ah don't like boys. Or men. Ah wouldnae rob auld men, cause they're aulder, but Ah don't like auld men either. Ah *hate* auld men. Ah hate all kind of boys. I'm no so bad now. Ah've goat few boy pals and all that, but Ah used tae hate them. Ah couldnae sit in thair company. But Ah liked robbin boys.

Ah wanted people tae hurt. 'Cause Ah wis hurtin. Selfish. [Short pause] Ah think it wis tae get some o' ma anger oot. Like [when] some people cut thairsels, sort o' hing. (Debbie)

Carol talked about 'getting back at anybody' she could:

It was just one o' they things that seemed to make me feel better, know what Ah mean? Something to occupy ma time wi.' It's like Ah'm hurting somebody else, just like Ah've been hurt. Just getting back at anybody Ah can. Ah know that sounds terrible, but it makes me feel better after Ah've done it

Ah don't know, it's like- Have you ever had that feeling that you're just really, really sick o' every'hin'? You've just had enough and then you go and dae some'hin- Ah don't know, some folk go to the gym, some folk do whatever. Ma 'hing is just offending. It's like you get it out you, know whit Ah mean? Like see if you wrecked a hoose or some'hin while you're in there, you wrecked the house, you know Ah feel better after 'hings like that. Ah feel a lot better.

Ah do it to just get it out me. It makes me feel better after Ah've done it.
(Carol)

Both of these accounts support Katz's (1988) theory of robbery as learned. Katz argues that those who persistently engage in robbery are making a choice to continue involvement in a form of behaviour they have previously discovered to be instrumentally and expressively useful. Against structural explanations and cost-benefit analyses, both of which regard monetary gain as the robber's prime motivation, Katz argues that most robberies result in relatively low levels of financial recompense and, further, have a comparatively high rate of detection. Put another way, if the offender's aim is the rational pursuit of cash, then there are easier, safer and more lucrative ways to make a living, both legal (working in McDonalds, for example – see Goode 1990: 8) and illegal (e.g. burglary). Both Debbie's and Carol's offences were largely prompted by anger. Their primary aim was to attack 'somebody ... anybody' and the level of violence utilized often exceeded that which was required.

Summary

As the preceding data have hopefully made clear, young women in the current study employed risk-seeking behaviour in a deliberate attempt to exert control over lives

that were experienced as out with control. However, unlike Lyng's (1990) edgeworkers, who engaged in voluntary risk taking in response to the dehumanising, alienating nature of work in the post-industrial era, they cited families as the source of their estrangement and disaffection. This is unsurprising considering that 'emphasised femininity' is associated with the intimate emotionality of family rather than the competitive rationality of work (Connell 1987). As we have seen, disruptive family backgrounds, histories of physical and sexual abuse, and childhood experiences of institutional care were common among the young women interviewed, and many claimed that they did not feel 'wanted' at home or that their parents were emotionally distant or didn't pay them enough attention. Consequently they turned to their peers for an enhanced sense of sociability and belonging. Risk seeking, in this context, permitted the young women to construct an enhanced sense of self and self-efficacy, 'a realisation of immediacy and a reassertion of identity and ontology' (Hayward and Young 2004: 267). As their risk pathways progressed, however, risk seeking became a coping mechanism to manage overwhelming emotions.

This raises an important question of how we should understand the term 'voluntary' in relation to young women's risk-seeking behaviour. According to Lyng's (1990) definition, edgework involves the *active* pursuit of risky situations, rather than these situations being forced on the individual. As Miller (1991) acknowledges, women's ability to make choices is bounded by structural constraints and so it could be argued that they are not entirely free to engage in risk taking voluntarily. This means that 'We have to be very careful ... about what we mean when we say risk so that we do not confound this concept a priori with simply being male' (Chan and Rigakos, 2002: 750). Chan and Rigakos (2002) argue that women are required to engage in *instrumental* risk in the course of their daily activities, where they are exposed to risks such as harassment, intimidation and/or assault on a routine basis. Voluntary (i.e. non-instrumental) risks, Chan and Rigakos claim, are almost exclusively 'the purview of the privileged' (i.e. white middle-class males). That said, there was undoubtedly some evidence of young women in the study pursuing especially risky situations, above and beyond the level necessitated by their

social position: deliberately offending in front of security cameras, for example, or electing to engage in robbery as opposed to shoplifting. These young women clearly took pride in their ability to 'push the edge' and in doing so to *act* like 'wan o' the lads.' That is not to say, however, that were trying to *be* (or were actually *becoming*) just like men. As Chapter Seven demonstrates, in many respects young women's risky behaviour, including their violent behaviour, validates rather than repudiates traditional gender norms.

In her influential work on aggression, Anne Campbell (1993) demonstrates that whereas for men aggression is often regarded as 'a means of exerting control over other people when they feel the need to reclaim power or self-esteem,' women typically describe aggression as 'a temporary loss of control caused by overwhelming pressure and resulting in guilt' (Campbell 1993: viii). On the basis of these findings, Campbell claims that men's aggression is 'instrumental' and that women's is 'expressive,' emerging as a release only after they can no longer control their pent-up frustration and anger. Not only does this construction – of the relationship between gender and aggression as a duality – reinforce an essentialist conception of women's true nature as irrational, emotional, out of control and so on (see Chapter Two), it oversimplifies what is in fact a complex issue. Whilst my own data would seem to support Campbell's assertions about the sense of guilt and humiliation some women feel after perpetrating a violent act, the young women's remarks about the relationship between control and aggression were more contradictory. For example, in the warm down questionnaire, 13 of the 21 young women said that feeling or doing something aggressive made them feel guilty, while 12 said that it made them feel better. Twelve reported feeling 'out of control,' nine reported feeling 'in control,' and seven said that feeling or doing something aggressive made them feel both 'in' and 'out of control,' depending on the time frame. This last group of young women usually clarified their responses by explaining that they felt in control during the violent act, but out of control when they looked back at what they had done. Some of the young women were also able to distinguish between different forms of violence, i.e. violence that was controlled (usually pre-meditated, for example against someone perceived to be a deserving victim – see Chapter 7 on the rules of

violence) and violence that was out of control (or committed 'in the heat of the moment'). Negative feelings (guilt, remorse etc.) were usually attributed to events in the latter category, because the young women felt that they had 'gone too far' and couldn't explain or sometimes even remember what had actually happened. Conversely, 'controlled' violence, which was generally violence that was regarded by the interviewees as justified, was more likely to be described as enjoyable.

The significance of 'retrospective interpretation' to the experience of edgework is explored by Jennifer Lois (2003) in her work on search and rescue volunteers. Lois demonstrates that, while edgeworkers are often drawn to risk-seeking behaviour as a result of the adrenaline 'rush' or 'buzz' it affords, the prominent 'emotional culture' of edgework is emotional suppression, what Lois terms 'emotional cool':

Edgework challenges individuals' ability to retain self-control by invoking intense, life threatening emotions that *must* be suppressed. Failing this, the consequences are dire. Thus, it appears that edgework is the ultimate test of emotional cool ... (Lois 2003: 181)

Lois's analysis offers a four-stage model through which rescuers prepare for and experience their work. During preparations for and performance of their mission, volunteers share the belief that all emotions (but especially negative emotions) should be suppressed. Pent-up stress is released in the third stage by laughing, joking, drinking, or crying. On the one hand, rescuers feel energized, and this is generally associated with positive feelings of control and competence. On the other hand, they may experience negative emotions such as fear or alarm, or have to deal with emotionally disturbing memories of dead or maimed bodies. In order to safeguard their future edgework ability, these negative feelings have to be redefined, thus in the fourth and final stage of edgework rescuers engage in what Hochschild (1983) calls 'deep acting,' deliberately visualizing a substantial portion of reality in a different way.

One of Lois's key findings was that men and women interpreted and managed the emotions associated with edgework differently. For example, she found that while male rescuers thrived on the 'excitement' of missions, interpreting adrenaline rushes as urgency, female rescuers were more likely to express trepidation, interpreting heightened arousal as fear or anxiety (gender appropriate, but socially devalued emotions). Cultural norms in Western societies make strong distinctions between the ways in which men and women are permitted to express emotions. Masculinity norms dictate that men are 'emotionless' and may only display 'powerful' emotions such as anger, excitement or thrill – hence their proclivity for edgework, which allows them to act out their emotions in a socially acceptable context. Feminine gender norms, on the other hand, encourage women to be 'emotional' and to express such emotions as grief, anxiety or fear but not anger or aggression. Women internalise these standards, which in turn impact upon their tastes for risk, likelihood of shame, level of self-control, and assessment of the costs and benefits associated with 'risking it.' As Lois's work demonstrates, although female rescuers actually perform edgework competently (i.e. they manage their anxiety in a relatively effective way during their missions), they still come to believe that they are 'emotional deviants,' viewing their lack of confidence as problematic and declining tasks they think might overwhelm them.

Lois's work sheds light on the current findings in two important ways. Firstly, she shows that while edgeworkers initially seek situations of risk for a sense of danger and excitement, during the experience itself 'they narrow their focus so dramatically that they lose awareness of everything extraneous to the risk activity itself' (2001: 393). It is precisely this sense of dissociation that the young women in the current study come to learn as expressively useful. While their initial drug use is described as 'exciting' and 'fun,' for example, the progression to more regular use is motivated by a desire to 'lose it' or 'to forget.' These young women do more than 'crowd the edge,' they go over it – in much the same way as Katz's (1988) 'badass' loses control in order to take control. By deliberately pursuing a path of drug use, offending and/or self-harm, young women were able to master an internal sense of helplessness and anger. While their actions may ultimately be misguided, reinforcing

alienation and exclusion, the young women took comfort from the fact that they were creating a situation of their own making. As Annie explained, 'It's like you cannae control what's happening around you, so you control what you dae to yoursel'.² Hence risk seeking was not regarded as something that was imposed on the offender, but rather a lifestyle that has been chosen.

By showing that the emotional rewards of edgework only take place after the experience itself is actually over, Lois's work also demonstrates the way in which feelings are constructed according to gendered cultural norms. As young people, young women are controlled by a set of ideological forces that encourage them to 'live for today,' 'let go,' 'give in' and take risks, but as females a contrary force cautions them to avoid risk and exercise self-control. Where young women, looking back on their past behaviour, feel unable to explain their actions by recourse to (sub)cultural norms and values, 'rules' regarding deserving victims for example or the need to stick up for friends, they are more likely to rely on discourses of normative femininity, which interpret their behaviour as pathological and/or irrational, and therefore feel guilty about what they have done. This perhaps explains why younger women (mainly those in the 'teenage fighter' category) were more likely to experience risk seeking as exciting, viewing violence in particular as an expression of control, while older offenders' accounts were more likely to be characterized by ambivalence, shame, and embarrassment. Chapter Seven examines the proscriptive and prescriptive 'rules' of violence in further detail and, in so doing, demonstrates that 'proper' violence is regarded as an essentially masculine activity. As we shall see in Chapter Eight, this has important implications for the young women's sense of self and in particular their understanding of themselves as a violent person.

Chapter Seven

‘You Need tae Stick Up Fer Yourself to Get Respect’: The ‘Unwritten Rules’ of Young Women’s Violence

Chapter Seven builds upon the findings of the previous two chapters to examine the meanings of violence held by the young women and the ways in which these contributed to violent behaviour. As Chapter Four noted, violence is a highly subjective and contested term (Norman 1995), yet most accounts of violence acknowledge its gendered patterning, conceptualising it as a problem and a consequence of masculinity. This means that when women are violent, their behaviour tends to be explained in terms derived primarily from male experience; for example, they are commonly described as try to be (or actually becoming) more like men or as unfeminine, unnatural, pathological and so on (see Chapter Two). Violence is also almost always viewed pejoratively. Torrance (1986) remarks that we tend only to label an act ‘violent’ if we consider it to be illegal or unwarranted. With the exception of certain specific acts, such as the state sanctioned ‘war on terror,’ no level of violence is deemed ‘reasonable’ or ‘acceptable’ by contemporary Western cultures (Stephens 1997). The data reported below reveal that the young women in the current study had much more complex and contradictory views about the use of violence. For example, whilst they adhered to a legal definition of violence as an act of intentional interpersonal physical harm, they also acknowledged the longer-lasting and more damaging effects of verbal abuse. In general, they possessed negative views towards violence, yet believed that there were certain situations in which the use of violence was justifiable, or even prescribed. In addition, they held contradictory views about whether violence was essentially masculine or whether it could be used to express a particular form of ‘bad girl femininity.’ By attending to the ‘unwritten rules’ of young women’s conduct Chapter Seven challenges dominant depictions of female violence as irrational and ‘out of control,’ and reinforces the findings of the previous chapter, namely that women’s involvement in violence has

multiple motives and meanings and therefore cannot be captured in a reductionist or monocausal way.

The definition of violence

Unlike the girls and violence study, where the term 'violence' was used by girls to describe a diverse range of behaviours (Burman et al. 2003), the current research found that young women adhered to a legal definition of violence, reserving the term for incidents of intentional interpersonal physical harm (e.g. 'fighting wi' people,' 'battering folk wi' hammers,' 'stabbing somebody,' 'slashing somebody with a blade,' 'booting ye in the mooth,' 'attacking folk wi' a bottle,' 'torturing someone, murdering someone'). In addition, the young women commonly differentiated 'proper' or 'serious' violence from 'wee stupid' fights, as the following excerpts illustrate:

Stephanie: Violence is, em, when you're *stabbing fuck* oot o' somebody, *battering fuck* oot of them wi' a hammer or an axe, that's violence.

SB: So for you it is something that's really serious?

Stephanie: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative]

SB: Does it have to involve a weapon?

Stephanie: But you can be dangerous when you fight tae, when you've got the nails an' things like that. You can *mark* them; you can mark their face.

SB: So seriousness has got to do with how serious the injury is?

Stephanie: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative]

SB: Would you say that violence between prisoners is a problem?

Carol: To be honest wi' you it's just silly wee slaps! Know what Ah mean, Ah've seen ma granny fight better! It's just stupid wee- There's some folk, like, stabbin' folk wi' forks – know what Ah mean? –

plastic forks and slashing folk wi' phone cards, know what Ah mean? Just stupid wee things like that, but it's no serious, know what Ah mean? It's nothing really bad.

SB: When you're saying something's not serious, is it because folk are not injured or-

Carol: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative]

As discussed below, 'silly wee fights' were most commonly associated with (other) females, while males were seen as responsible for most, but not all, serious 'violence.'

Intentionality was another marker of 'proper' violence. For this reason, play fighting between siblings and friends was rarely considered violent, unless one of the protagonists was regarded as deliberately trying to cause harm. Jay, for example, distinguished between the fighting that took place between her siblings and the violence between her parents:

SB: Did you and your sisters fight a lot?

Jay: Aye, we fought like cat and dug. 'Tiniest wee 'hings like- I don't know [...] Corrine used to *crack up* if we went near her stuff. Or, like, tried to follow her when she went oot and stuff. She *hated* it, hated it. She split ma heid open for following her wan time. Well, she never really split ma heid open; she battered me. So I ran away fae her and she chased me intae a back gairden and I climbed up on the garage 'cause there wasnae a way oot the back garden, the gate was locked. So she's followed me on the gairage and she's pushed me doon and [...] I landed on ma heid. [Laughs] She hit a whitey when she seen the blood, let me tell ye!

SB: When you talk about fighting with your sisters, it doesn't sound like something that you think was a bad thing?

Jay: Naw. Nut. Cause of anything bad happned we were always there to cuddle each other and stuff. Know, we'd jump in the same bed

and that if, know, if wan o' us had nightmares [...] Aye, all weans fight, mebbe no as much as we did, but they fight.

SB: What do you think is different about *that* kind of fighting and the fights your mum and dad used to have?

Jay: They're meant to love each other, they're meant tae- [...] I mean for all me and Corrine fought, it was never- There was nae hate in it, do you know what Ah mean? There was never any hatred in our voices [...] Wi' ma ma and dad there was always badness in it, do you know what Ah mean? It wasnae just a silly wee fight that they would get over. It was bad, nasty, horrible stuff. *Trying* to hurt each other. Do you know what Ah mean? That's no right. No.

Whilst some of the young women explicitly referred to aggression as something they associated with violence, most of their accounts focused on physical rather than verbal aggression. Without prompting, all of the descriptions of violent situations given by the young women dealt with physical violence and not the 'indirect' forms of aggression commonly associated with girls and young women (Björkqvist et al. 1992; Björkqvist and Nimela 1992; Crick and Grotpeter 1995; Crick 1996; Rys and Bear 1997; Brown 1998, 2005). That said, when the young women *were* prompted, they acknowledged a wider range of acts as potentially harmful and, like the respondents in the girls and violence study (Batchelor et al. 2001; see also Renold and Barter 2003), said that verbal attacks and intimidation were often intended and/or experienced as more hurtful and damaging than physical forms of violence. Debbie, for example, said that her mum could hurt her 'mair wi' 'er mooth.' In fact, she told me that, 'Ah would rather she would batter me than said some'hin'.' Again intentionality was key, but the young women also emphasised the breaking of trust that verbal abuse could involve and the longer lasting emotional impact.

Sentenced for assault to danger of life for spitting on a police officer and telling him that she had AIDS, Pauline didn't regard herself as violent in the conventional (i.e. physical) sense, but said that she often used verbal abuse as a form of self-protection (i.e. to pre-empt physical violence) and to hurt people deemed

deserving victims (see below). This was a survival strategy that she said she had picked up in residential care.

Ah can be really nasty. Folk in here have says, "Pauline, you're a violent person with your mouth, when you start that mouth," which Ah am. Ah went to see the psychy doctor the day about it. It's ma mouth. Ah'm not a violent person as in physical violence. It's ma mouth. See if Ah know enough about them, Ah could say nasty things about what they're in for and all that sort o' stuff. And that really hurts a lot, obviously. But Ah'm really nasty, really, when Ah start. (Pauline)

Kelly and Jay both compared the impact of verbal abuse with physical violence, concluding that the emotional harm caused by verbal abuse was 'deeper; it stays longer.' As Kelly explained, 'If you just go and attack them, that's that over and done wi'. Verbal talk [sic] can hurt their feelings.' Jay expanded on this:

I mean you could punch me the noo and I would have a black eye and it would be away in a couple of days and that would be that. But if it was somebody that I really cared about that done something really bad tae me then that ruins your trust forever, doesn't it? You cannae go back when you've done or said something. You can mebbe say, "I never meant it," but it's been said. Know what Ah mean? (Jay)

Thus verbal abuse was regarded as a process rather than an event, and was often embedded in ongoing relationships. As Zoë acknowledged, the best way to hurt someone was by using 'inside' knowledge gleaned from personal contact, saying 'rotten 'hings, bad 'hings, 'hings that arenae true. Well, sometimes they are true, but you don't want people knowing.'

Disloyalty from friends was a common theme in young women's accounts. Because their experience of relationships had often been exploitative or abusive (see Chapter Five), many of the young women said that they didn't trust other people easily and therefore felt particularly upset if someone that they let into their lives subsequently let them down. They often described a pattern of unstable and intense relationships, characterised by an initial period of intimacy (or 'closeness') followed

by rejection and devaluation (when the other person transgressed the rules of friendship in some way). Angela, for example, recounted a story about a young homeless woman she befriended. Shortly after meeting the young woman, Angela let her stay in her flat until she could find somewhere else to live. However, shortly after moving in, the other young woman went round to a local dealer's house and, using Angela's address, bought drugs 'on tie.' She failed to pay the money back. The sense of betrayal Angela felt, she said, was even more upsetting than the threat of violence from the dealers:

When she done it, it hurt. You are trying to help somebody out who's in need and basically she threw it back in ma face. That's how I felt, that she'd thrown it back in ma face [...] I had gave her trust, because if I wasnae in she had the key to ma hoose. I had gave her the trust to come in and out whenever she pleased. She had a roof o'er her heid, she had somewhere to stay, otherwise she would have no doubt been sleeping on the streets [...] I thought, "Well, you've just threw all that back in ma face." (Angela)

Angela retaliated by locking the young woman in her house and subjecting her to a very serious assault. Within the prison setting, Debbie told me a similar story about feeling hurt and betrayed by a former roommate who went through her personal belongings:

I wis at the hospital all day 'cause I had OD-ed on these sleepers. I came back fae the hospital and ma roommate hadnae got two-ed up. The wcc lassie she wis with says to me, "She wis readin your letters, while you were away to hospital." So I punched her. I thought she was ma pal. I wis hurt at her daein that. It was sleekit. (Debbie)

Such experiences either reinforced respondents' beliefs about the importance of the biological bond (i.e. the notion that 'blood is thicker than water') or they confirmed that 'you can't rely on anyone.' Carol fell into the latter category:

You can't rely on other people. You've only got yersel'. When you think about it, it's just you [...] The folk I'll sit doon and take drugs wi' are not really pals, they're acquaintances that I know. I don't really like them. You're just that wasted that you just don't care who you're sittin' wi'. You talk to them anyway; you're not bothered what they've done tae you or what they're thinking about doing tae you. You're just not bothered. (Carol)

In an attempt to shield themselves from further disappointment, some of the young women deliberately isolated themselves, emphasizing their self-reliance and self-determination: 'I'm a loner [...] very independent' (Pauline). Or they took protective action, deliberately hurting others before they could hurt them: 'I always 'hink the worst of everybody and I don't like letting people near me because I get hurt. So I'd rather hurt them before they hurt me' (Cathy).

The rules of violence

In their ethnographic analysis of various (predominantly male) forms of disorder, Marsh et al. (1978) demonstrate that violence and aggression are essentially rule-governed actions, in that the parties involved conform to a distinct and orderly system of roles, rules and shared meanings that delineate the parameters of a 'fair fight.'⁵⁹ Such rules may determine, for example, that a certain category of victim, because of their social or biological status, should endure more or less violence, or that fights should involve equal numbers of protagonists. Young women's violence, however, is commonly characterised as anomic (Campbell 1981). In contrast to the 'rational,' 'controlled' nature of male violence, it is depicted as an explosive or emotive response that is 'random' and 'out of control' (Chapter Two). As the following section demonstrates, these attributions bear limited resemblance to the meanings attributed by young women themselves. Building upon Anne Campbell's (1981) early work, the data demonstrate that young women are knowledgeable about their situation and the meaning of their actions and generally adhere to normative

⁵⁹ Fox (1977) offers an analogous account of male fights in a small island off the coast of Ireland.

understandings of acceptable behaviour. These understandings are part of what sociologists refer to as a 'vocabulary of motives' (Mills 1940; Gerth and Mills 1953; Matza 1964). These refer to means of explaining actions that are illegal or perceived as deviant in terms that are culturally appropriate and socially approved. These explanations are acquired through socialisation and therefore reflect what we have learned to expect others will find socially acceptable. Scott and Lyman (1968) describe the devices people use to explain and remove culpability when an unanticipated or untoward act has been committed using the concept of 'accounts.' Classified by content, accounts fall into two categories: 'justifications' and 'excuses.' In general, justifications arise in situations in which an actor accepts responsibility for an act, but denies that it was wrong (for example, by referring to subcultural rules or norms). Excuses, on the other hand, acknowledge that an act was bad or inappropriate but deny responsibility (e.g. through appeals to accident or to biological and/or psychological factors).⁶⁰ As Hearn (1998) notes, the distinction between excuses and justifications has been an important theme in work on violence, especially sexual violence (see, for example, Fuller 1995; Hearn 1988; Placek 1988; Scully 1990; Taylor 1972).

Like the young women studied by Campbell (1981) and Stephens (1997), most of the participants in the current study held surprisingly negative views of violence, and regarded unprovoked attacks – for example, just walking up to someone in the street and hitting them – as unacceptable. As Lesley commented, 'You don't just go out there and attack somebody for no reason at all just because you feel you're in a bad mood or you want a fight because your night's been boring.' Gillian agreed: 'It's no acceptable at the end of the day, ken what I mean? You want tae treat folk the way you like to be treated, ken what I mean? It's no acceptable to go round and hit folk, stuff like that. The way you want tae be treated, treat other people the same.' That said there were certain situations in which the use of violence *was* seen as justifiable, and in some cases deemed necessary. The following section

⁶⁰ Whilst similar to Sykes and Matza's (1957) *techniques of neutralisation* (employed in advance of an action that the person thinks may lead to stigmatisation), accounts are socially approved discourses that neutralise deviant conduct *after the event*. That said, the narrator does not describe the past as it was or as it was experienced, but gives it meaning in terms of the present.

discusses young women's views on the situations in which violence was and was not justified. The young women's excuses for violent behaviour are examined in Chapter Eight.

'You need tae stick up fer yourself to get respect'

The young people in Marsh et al.'s (1978) research engaged in violence as part of a struggle for personal dignity and status denied to them by the wider society. For example, through school pupil accounts, it was learned that pupils regarded good teachers as those who treated them with respect and knew and cared about them. If teachers treated pupils so that their dignity was undermined or they were otherwise degraded, they responded with acts of specific retribution, designed to restore themselves and their powers:

[W]hen the pupils feel themselves put down, treated without 'seriousness,' they behave in such a way as to restore themselves to the status of mature beings [...] So, for example, we see the pupils messing around, "to get back at teachers for telling them off and putting them in detention," or using physical violence after being unjustly accused of a misdemeanour. (Marsh et al. 1978: 44)

Likewise, in her 1981 study of fighting amongst girls and young women, Campbell found that fights usually arose over issues of personal integrity ('saving face'). Personal integrity included instances of false accusation, gossiping behind the young women's back, and pejorative remarks about sexual morality, delinquency, or intelligence.

The young women in the current study placed a similar premium on being treated with 'respect,' believing that if they allowed other people to disrespect them, they would be left with nothing. According to Baskin and Sommers (1998) this attitude, or 'code,' that places respect above all else springs primarily from economic and social marginalisation:

In severely distressed communities, particularly among young males and increasingly among young females, it is sensed that something essential is at stake in every interaction. People are encouraged to rise to every occasion, particularly with strangers. To run away from such disputes would leave one's self-esteem in tatters. (Ibid.: 35)

Thus 'respect' – defined as being treated right or granted the deference one deserves (Anderson 1999: 33) – often forms the core of a person's self-esteem and one way to acquire respect is by developing a reputation for being violent (ibid: 72). On the streets, the image one projects is paramount, and at the top of the hierarchy is the 'crazy,' 'wild,' or 'mad' 'badass' (Katz 1988; see also Maher 1997; Polk 1994; Wilkinson 2001). A badass, according to Katz, is an adolescent tough guy who is willing to use violence to harm others. To be recognized as 'bad,' he [sic] must send the message that he is prepared to back up his posturing with violence when necessary, to show others that 'he means it' and to ensure that his actions are not misinterpreted as childish or playful. This does not mean that the badass is necessarily involved in violence on a continuous basis, but rather that he must convince other people that physical violence is imminent.

The respondents explained the significance of respect as follows. A fairly large number of extracts are reported in order to convey the pervasiveness of this theme.

If you let people walk all over you, people will and people do. D'ye know what I mean? I have only been in two fights in here and one of them wasn't really a fight it was just basically a lassie squared up to me, so I squared up to her back and hit her back and that was it over. See if you stand back and let them hit you, they will keep hitting you. If you hit them back, then they usually stop. You *have* to be violent in here because I would say 70 percent of the lassies *are* violent so if you're *not*, then you won't get nowhere. You get bullied and you don't get any respect. It's simple. It is not as bad for me because I am quite big, but see some of the wee lassies I have seen them getting quite bullied and stuff. But I have seen tiny wee lassies sticking up for themselves to big lassies and they get a lot o' respect for it. They don't even

have to touch them necessarily, but tell them what they think of them and they are respected. (Karen)

I've realised now that I've got to defend for masel' [sic]. And if that means doing anything, that means doing anything, no matter what it takes.

If you let folk think that they can just come up and they can just smack you, you're gonnae get that all the time, you're gonnae get treated like a pure bam. And you are gonnae get targeted and targeted and targeted. You cannae just stand there and let somebody punch you, or stick the head in ye, know what Ah mean? You're obviously gonnae hit them back. (Carol)

Sometimes you cannae just walk away fae it. Because if you walk away fae it all the time and everybody sees that you're just gonna take it, then everybody's gonna try and have a shot. That's the way I see it anyway. You've got tae fight sometimes, to get respect.

They tell ye tae walk away fae fights and that but then if you're getting bullied they tell you to stand up for yourself and the bullics will just leave you alone. You're getting told one thing and then you're getting told another. You've just got to work it oot fer yourself really. If you're violent, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesnae. I suppose you learn when to use it and when to not. (Lesley)

I just dae it for ma own- to make me feel more secure and that. It sounds stupid, but it just makes me feel reassured that naebody else 'hinks I'm a walkover or nothing, ken what I mean? Because you hear the lassies going: "She is just a fuckin' stupid wee lassie" and that, ken, talkin' aboot other folk if they are quiet and timid. I dinnae want folk to talk about me like that. I wouldn't like to have the ticket: "She is a walk over." I just feel like if they ken that you won't take any shit then they wont try and walk all over you or bump you or shit like that. (Samantha)

SB: So when is it okay to use violence, then?

Annie: If someone hurts you, if someone hits you first.

SB: Why?

Annie: Because you'll not be bullied. Because if you didn't stand up for yourself people just bully you and hurt you.

SB: Why will they?

Annie: To act smart. To make theirsel' out to be *something*. To make you oot to look an idiot. You've got tae, you've got tae stick up fer yersel'.

Ah cannae walk away. Ah just cannae walk away fae a situation. Ah've got to shout- Because if Ah walk away from a situation then they think that Ah'm a daftie. Naw, Ah just cannae. Ah don't dae it as a macho person or any'hin' like that, 'cause Ah don't like to think that other folk 'hinks- Ah don't want tae be in the in-crowd or any'hin' like that. Ah just don't like to think folk can take a len of me. (Pauline)

Cathy: Aye, if somebody hits you first of course you are going to hit them back.

SB: Why do you have to hit them back?

Cathy: Because they've just stood and punched you! You cannae jut stand there and naw dae nothing!

SB: Why not?

Cathy: Because they're gonna batter you, so you've *got* to stick up fer yerself.

I dae [don't] like seein' people fight, and I dae [don't] like fighting. I'm no like a fighter, I cannae fight mysel'. I'm just no that type o' person. You know, I dinnae go looking for fights. But like if somebody did, like I says, wait for me first, I've gotta, ken, retaliate. I've gotta mind my back.

I mean if I was gettin' booted, really, really kicked the shit oot o', I wouldnae just lie on the ground, curl up in a wee ball, come oot wi' a black and blue face. I'd rather get up on my two feet and dae my best. 'Cause I wouldnae let them kick me. 'Cause that just means that they can come back and get mair. If

they've seen they've done it once tae you, they'll keep comin' back and comin' back. So as long as you stand up once they'll no come back. 'Cause they'll just walk all over you. They'll come back and get mair. If you show one sign that you're no scared o' them, they'll no come back. (Diane)

Much of the young women's violence, then, was motivated by a desire to gain respect, but this search for respect was in itself a form of risk management, an attempt to pre-empt bullying or victimisation through the display of an aggressive or violent disposition. Almost without exception, the young women expressed the importance of being *seen* to 'stand up for yourself,' repeating the mantra: 'Better a sair face than a red face.'⁶¹ As Kelly explained, 'You need to keep yer guard up all the time, or people will be like that, "Aw," an' just take the cunt.' Adopting a tough, aggressive approach was regarded as an *unavoidable* aspect of life growing up in a 'rough' area and was something that many of the young women said that they were taught by their parents, explicitly and by example, from a very early age. As Joanne explained, 'I was brought up no tae let people boss me around or pick on me. Ken, if somebody hit me, then I've tae hit them back; if I disagree wi' some'hing, I've tae express the fact that I dinnae agree, 'hings like that.'

This code, which prescribes violent conduct and which is passed on from one generation to the next, can be labelled a 'subculture of violence.' According to Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967), subcultures of violence exist in the form of values, beliefs, and attitudes held by their members:

[The] overt use of force or violence, either in interpersonal relationships or in group interaction, is generally viewed as a reflection of basic values that stand apart from the dominant, the central, or the parent culture. Our hypothesis is that this overt (and often illicit) expression of violence [...] is part of a subcultural normative system, and that this system is reflected in the psychological traits of the subcultural participants. (Ibid.: 158)

⁶¹ In other words, it is better to fight and lose (i.e. get a sore face) than have the embarrassment (i.e. red face) of backing down.

Having been repeatedly let down by those close to them, the young women in the current study viewed the world as an unpredictable, unpleasant, hostile place, full of people out to 'get' them or 'put one over' on them. The belief that they must avoid being positioned as a victim at all costs justified their use of violence in order to 'save face' and thereby defend their definition of self.

Against this backdrop, some of the seemingly trivial sources of young women's anger and annoyance are rendered intelligible. Within the prison setting, for example, Zoë attacked a fellow inmate for lifting a slice of bread that she had put in the toaster: 'I'd toasted it and she's just buttered it and taken it away. That's treating ye like a daftie,' while Stephanie got involved in a fight over a cigarette:

I got put in with this girl and her fag went oot and I says, "Cool doon! You'll get a light. We've only got 10 minutes to go!" and she went, "You shut up!" I went, "Who are you telling to shut up, you bam?!" She went, "You're the bam!" I says, "Prove me the bam!" and she went, "Naw, *you* prove me the bam!" I says, "Naw, *you* prove *me* the bam!" [...] and she jumped up and grabbed us. I was like that, "I'll have tae fight fer maself here" and I just started punching fuck oot 'er.
(Stephanie)

Both Zoë and Carol felt that they *had* to react in such circumstances or they would be seen as 'a daftie' or 'a bam' (i.e. easy prey). Far from being irrational, then, viewed within the hostile environment of the prison, their behaviour could be regarded as a 'necessary survival strategy' (Maher 1997). The young women confronted real danger on a daily basis. At any given moment, their victim, their offending peers, or various agents of the state, could attempt to take advantage or 'put one over' on them (Katz 1988). By communicating that they were prepared to stand up for themselves, physically if necessary, the young women maintained a level self-respect and status, and in doing so protected their emotional and physical selves.

Beyond the prison walls, fights over issues of public status were often highly gendered, involving assaults on the young women's personal integrity *as women*, in particular their sexual reputation, their ability to get (and, perhaps more importantly, keep) a man, and their competencies as a mother. As Adams (1999) and Joe-Laidler

and Hunt (2001) have pointed out, the notion of 'respect' can have very different meanings for young women compared to young men. When discussing their 'reputation,' for example, the young women in the current study were careful to distinguish between having a feminine 'reputation' (as someone who 'sleeps about') and a masculine reputation (as 'a hard nut'). Respect, therefore, was closely associated with the pursuit of 'respectability' (Skeggs 1997), which in turn meant 'not sleeping around.' As illustrated in the comments made by Zoë in Chapter Eight, accusations of sexual promiscuity, or indeed 'frigidity' or 'perversion' (in the form of lesbianism), were cited as common causes of 'silly wee fights,' particularly between teenage girls, but most of these incidents did not result in criminal charges. 'Nipping someone's boyfriend' was also regarded as highly provocative, particularly when it took place in the presence of others. Cathy, for example, told me about an incident where she found her boyfriend in bed with another girl at a party:

I've went through tae the room [laughs] and Darren's been lying in bed wi' another lassie! So I dragged her oot the bed and battered her and I slapped Darren across the face. We cairried on partying and all the rest o' it and I just kept battering [the other lassie] all night. (Cathy)

Her index offence was committed against a young woman accused of spreading rumours that she was pregnant to the same boyfriend. Another commonly cited form of disrespect and, therefore, provocation was disparaging remarks regarding a young woman's parenting style and/or ability to provide for her children. Jane, for example, had been engaged in a long-running dispute with a girl from school, but she only resorted to violence when the young woman referred to her as an 'unfit mother.' A mother at age 15, Jane said that, despite fighting to keep her baby, she 'just couldnae cope.'

She'd been walking up and doon by ma hoose, eh, saying I was an unfit mother and a' that and I just went oot and I just flew at fer her. I just started hitting and hitting her. I couldnae stop hitting her. The polis had tae pull me aff her. I was just that angry 'cause everybody was saying I was an unfit mother, but the way I looked at it

if I was an unfit mother, the wean was still wi' me at the time so I don't know how she could call me that. [Short pause] Everybody could hear it, basically. That's what made me mair angry. 'Cause she stood bawling it oot the top of her face. (Jane)

Disrespect was also cited as a source of violence towards prison staff. As Carlen has argued (1983, 1985, 1986), much of the violence in women's prisons is a response to rigid disciplinary regimes and fear inducing techniques employed by officers to restrain unruly prisoners. Similar conclusions were reached by Mandaraka-Sheppard (1986), who demonstrated that the main factors explaining violence were: organizational practices including punishment methods, the quality of inmate/staff relations, staff age and experience, a perceived lack of autonomy, and lack of incentives to good behaviour. The main sources of confrontation with staff were: the withholding of rights, favouritism, unfairness or victimization.

Inmates who responded defiantly, and whose behaviour took the form of physical violence, were more likely to interpret the actions of others in the prison environment (either staff or inmates) as hostile and threatening to their autonomy, not withstanding the degree of their rated potency and previous violent criminal record. (Ibid.: 203)

Several of the young women in the current study expressed feeling like 'children' subjected to a regime where they are expected to unquestionably obey those with power over them (see also Faith 1987). For example, Debbie told me:

When I was younger I wis kinda anti-screw crew. I hated theym fer what they represented. The system. No being able to control ma ain life. I hated bein' told naw. I hated bein told Ah wis wrang. *Wi' no explanation*: "Cause I says so." Treatin' you like a daftie. (Debbie, emphasis added)

Jane said, 'I'm wan o' these lassies that if I get telt no I hate it. I dae, if I get telt no *fer no reason* I hate it. When the staff say no I go aff ma head' (emphasis added). Most young women said that they respected workers who treated them fairly, showed

real interest in them as people (for example, if they were sent to hospital, phoning up to see how they were doing), and listened to what they had to say. Conversely, they were more likely to 'kick off' when staff treated them unfairly, refused to listen to them, or spoke down to them because they were prisoners. Another reason the young women gave for acting violently towards prison staff is illustrated by the comment made by Carol in Chapter Six (page 160). As Kirsta (1994) acknowledges, because prison has a hierarchical structure, power relationships result and this imbalance of power can 'increase the levels of violence and alienation in women.' For certain young women, then, violence against staff is an assertion of power and control: 'your mind just goes intae somewhere else so that you're tolerating it [...] And it makes them worse because you are tolerating it [...] They're like that, "Why the fuck is she no squealing?" [...] Ah just sit there and smile' (Carol).

'If somebody fucks wi your flesh and blood, you've got tae do somehin about it'

In addition to defending the use of violence in protecting their physical and emotional selves, the young women also said that violence was warranted when used to protect others, particularly family members and friends. As Chapter Five demonstrated, most of the young women saw their relationships with kith and kin as central to their sense of self and were fiercely loyal toward their family and, particularly in their teenage years, their friends and their locality. These values are reiterated in the excerpts that follow:

I've got mair value in all [ma family's] lives than in mine, know what Ah mean? I would- If somebody was going to shoot [ma man] I would jump in front of the gun, do you know what Ah mean? Naw, naw, I couldnae have anything bad happen to anybody I care about. (Jay)

See if your ma pal, I'll back ye up and same goes for them, they'll back me up, they're ma pals, we just back each other up.

Nearly every fight I've been in was for somebody else, ye know what I mean? Like ma best pal, Jane, me and her, if anything's happened tae Jane I will get her back and she would be the same for me. (Judy)

Having said that, the young women's views on what constituted a 'fair fight' (see below) meant that 'jumping in' for others was only deemed acceptable in certain circumstances, most notably when the opponents were unequally matched. In their absence, however, the young women had no qualms about fighting to defend the honour of friends and family, viewing sleights against their kin as an assault on their self. As in the girls and violence study (Batchelor et al. 2001), participants agreed that the most hurtful thing that someone could say or do to them was 'talking about ma family, talking about ma pals.' As Jane explained, 'There's a lot o' 'hings you could say to somebody and it would be mair hurt than it was in a fight and that. And that's like me. I'm mair hurt in a fight when the wean comes into it.'

Caring for and protecting others was a central theme in the young women's accounts. Once they became old enough to comprehend the abuse around them, young women often became very protective of vulnerable family members, especially mothers and younger sisters or female cousins, and were determined to prevent further victimisation. As Angela (who had been sexually abused by her uncle) explained, 'I thought o' all ma young cousins and I thought, "I cannae put them through that."' The young women often saw it as their *personal* responsibility to stop other people from being hurt and expressed overwhelming feelings of guilt and rage when they were unable to protect others from the same fate:

I used to see ma dad battering ma mum and I didnae like it. Ma mum used tae sit and take it from him. Then one day I've sat and went like that, "How is she letting a man hit her? How does she take that?" That's when I started fleeing about him, scratching his face an' hitting him an' that. (Stephanie)

I was *hurt* inside. I was messed up big inside. Bccause I couldnae handle the fact o' what had happened. It was no really that- At that time I was messed up, wi' what

happened, but really I was messed up that I couldnae protect ma wee sister fae what happened tae her. (Cathy)

This desire to protect others can be linked to normative discourses of 'emphasised femininity' (Connell 1987), and is also allied with the notion of a female relational disposition (see Chapter 2). From an early age, women are taught to care for (i.e. protect) other people. Consequently, they not only develop a sense of self and self-worth via their emotional connections but also in terms of their ability to look after others. Caring, then, becomes a form of feminine cultural capital (Skeggs 1997) and is regarded by many young women as an important source of self-identity and self-worth (Gilfus 1992), as the following narratives illustrate:

I used tae steal quite a lot. It was all- Never really stuff for masel, but. It was always stuff for the hoose or ma pals' mas or that. That's all I ever stole, grub. Or I'd go to the van if naebody had any fags and say, "I'll have 40 Regal and a Mars Bar" and he'd turn round and get the Mars Bar and I'd do a runner. Just so I could get a'body fags. Madness. Daftness. Weans stuff, but.

I never ever even thought about it as being wrang, do you know what Ah mean? It was- I *needed* tae. It needed tae be done. It made ma mum feel better if she had loads o' stuff in the hoose. And it made me feel good being able to go up and *gie* her it all, do you know what Ah mean? Or gie ma pals' maws. Like Lucy Robertson, ma bestest pal, I used tae take her ma crisps and that, loads o' messages. And she was like that [affectionately], "Aw, wee Magpie!" and that was ma nickname, know? It was that people needed me. It was feeling pure wanted, needed. Being able tae dae something. (Jay)

Ma da' - I call him Dad, but it's ma step-dad - doesnae see his boy an' that. So Ah've been the aipple o' ma stepfaither's eye. Ah'm 'is wee number wan. So, Ah think he sees me, kind o', as wan o' the boys, type thing.

Ma dad- This sounds pure pathetic, right? Ma da, I think he kind o' respects us, know what Ah mean? Like if he wasnae here he knows ma ma and that would be safe, sort o' 'hing. He knows I'm a provider. See anything I do outside, see if I've

got a load o' money, ma ma always gets first. Ma sisters get first. Maself, ma ma, ma granny, ma auntie, ma wee sister all went on holiday last year, know what Ah mean? I defend ma ain, know what Ah mean? I'm- I don't know what it is. I like to make sure everybody's all right. (Zoë)

This desire to protect and care for others caused Zoë and Jay much trouble throughout their lives. Jay's first custodial sentence resulted from an assault and robbery she committed to pay off her mother's drug debt. The first time she went up the town soliciting was to get money for drugs for her mother, who was experiencing withdrawal and therefore too ill to work herself. Her current offences were committed alongside her partner, in order to fund both their drug habits. Zoë's current offence was the result of a long-running family feud over a fight her younger (teenage) sister was involved in. After the initial altercation, Zoë went round to the other girl's house to retrieve a chain that had been snapped off her sister's neck and ended up 'battering the wean's ma.' The mother got Zoë charged with assault and this led to a campaign of harassment which included 'dirty phone calls' and 'smashing windaes.' On one occasion Zoë and her boyfriend drove round to the other family's house and 'smashed their motor wi' a hammer.' The family retaliated by sending two cars full of men round with baseball bats. One of them attacked Zoë's stepfather and she stabbed him.

These accounts raise an important critique of the notion of double deviance. As discussed in Chapter Two, women who offend are commonly viewed as deviant, not only for breaking legal rules, but also because they have offended against rules of feminine behaviour. Yet as Chapter Eight demonstrates, the majority of young women in the study did not consider themselves to be 'unfeminine' nor 'unnatural.' Rather, many claimed to be offending to *fulfil* gender norms. This picks up the point raised earlier, regarding the gendered meaning of respect. For young women, respect is not understood solely in masculine street terms of power and control, rather it is associated with the pursuit of respectability, one important dimension of 'being feminine' (Adams 1999; Joe-Laidler and Hunt 2001). As Skeggs' (1997) research with white working-class women in England demonstrates, alongside sexual

restraint, one of the key means of signifying respectability is through developing and monitoring a 'good' 'caring' self (see also Mitchell and Green 2002). For young women like Jay, caring was often the initial impetus for involvement in offending behaviour; for Zoë and others, willingness to defend kin – violently if necessary – was an integral component of the caring self.

'I'd go round and kill every sex offender there is if I could'

As Donald Black (1983, cited in Kubrin 2005) demonstrated more than 20 years ago, much crime is moralistic and involves the pursuit of justice. More recently, Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) have argued that inner-city residents typically characterise their use of violence as a legitimate exercise of social control. In line with this North American research, young women in the current sample expressed vengeful thoughts towards individuals deemed to have offended against vulnerable victims and indeed many felt that they had a *responsibility* to act against perpetrators of such abuse. Violence against the perpetrators of 'sick' crimes (such as child abuse, sexual abuse, and 'granny bashing') was thought to be entirely justified and, within the prison, fostered a sense of solidarity between 'cons' (versus 'beasts'). Such acts also established social and self-respect, enabling some of the young women to feel powerful (instead of being victimised).

While most of the young women claimed that (women's) prisons were not violent places, certainly in comparison to the world they inhabited outside, they all provided examples of harassment, torment, and physical assaults against women regarded as having committed 'beastie' crimes. Angela described being the victim of one such attack:

I got quite a lot of verbal; quite a lot of fights I was involved in as well. I've been called beasts, everything. I've had sugar and water thrown about me, fighting. All daft things really.

I was fighting the first night I came in. I came in to [the unit], the officer showed me what room I was going into and I went in, I put my bags in. The next

minute I turned round and there was a lassie threw a cup and I didnae know it was boiling water and sugar. And I've got it on ma airm. Em, so because of that the lassie's came in and started pushing us about and all that and I've went, "Naw, here, hold on a minute. I'm no taking any stick aff you." So I started fighting with the lassie. But the staff's heard the commotion and come oot and dragged the lassie away and put me in and locked the door. And I thought, "What's going on here?" Because I had never been in Cornton Vale, do you know what I mean? So it was all new. (Angela)

One of the young women who had assaulted Angela and her co-accused was Zoë, who discussed the case in some detail:

SB: How do you feel about that case?

Zoë: *Dirty rotten bastards*, some of them are. The things they did was sick.

SB: What is the difference between what they did and what you did?

Zoë: [Long pause] Naw, they did things to that lassie that was totally unbelievable. I've read in black and white what they've done to her. Know what I mean? I've read their actual indictment, it tells you everything. And it was *sick*, sick. It made me *sick to the back teeth* [...] I wouldnae even put you through telling you because it is *wrong*, it's *disgusting*.

SB: But some people might say that what you did, threatening someone's life, is as serious as that.

Zoë: [Interrupts] Aye, it is as *serious*, right? It is as serious, but it isnae as *sick*. [Short pause] I didnae torture that person, did I? I never put them through what they put her through, know what I mean? They put that poor lassie through hell [...] I wouldnae dae that taе anybody. I wouldnae, nut. It's no in ma nature to do 'hings like that. Beastie. Nut. I don't stab lassies neithcr. Laddies, but. I have stabbed a lassie, aye, but no very many. No very many, just wan that thinks she's a- Wans like masel'. No like a girlic girl.

Somebody vulnerable, somebody that's no all there, or – I'm no being cheeky! – but somebody like you. I wouldnae pick a fight wi' somebody like you. Do you know what I mean?

SB: What is it about me?

Zoë: [Short pause] Oh God! You're a nice person and you're no a fighter. A troublemaker can tell a troublemaker. Know what I mean? Eh, it's maistly guys I fight wi'. I always fight wi' boys. I hardly ever fight wi' lassies unless I'm in here [...] You don't do that, you just slug her, man. Or slash her. You don't fucking put her through oors of torture. That's not acceptable, totally unacceptable. It's no the way I've been brought up.

This code of 'zero tolerance' for 'beasts' was used by a number of the other young women to justify violent or aggressive behaviour. Pauline, for example, was currently on the Anti Bullying Strategy (ABS) for verbally abusing someone convicted of an offence against an elderly victim: 'Ah was really nasty to her 'cause of what she's in for. She's in for robbing an old lady and Ah was calling her "a beast" and stuff. She's in for robbing an old lady, a 73-year-old. That could've been grandparents or any'hin'. Karen was subject to similar consequences after she 'battered a lassie because of what she was in for.'

She was in for stabbing a 13-year-old lassie and she was 19. She was older than me; I was only 18 at the time. I didn't talk to her in the first place. I passed on this message, "So and so is going to kill you" or something stupid like that, ken, and she grassed on me and I got an ABS. [One of the governors] came to see me at the dub up and when they opened the doors I just went straight to her room and went in and shut the door after me. Battered her. It *had* to be done, basically. (Karen)

Hans Toch (1969) refers to such offenders as 'norm enforcers.' Norm enforcers, he argues, exercise violence as a matter of principle, often justifying their violence as being in the public interest. They 'see themselves as arbiters of dispute, slayers of dragons, protectors of the weak, and dispensers of justice; they define

themselves as policemen, prosecutors, judges, and executors' (Toch 1969/1972: 210). Yet while such actions ostensibly occur on behalf of others, Toch argues, in reality norm enforcers use violence as a form of self-promotion. As Anderson (1999: 72) discovered in his study of inner-city Philadelphia communities, young people often create altercations with the sole purpose of building respect and reputation (see also Fagan and Wilkinson 1998; Jacobs 2004; Wilkinson 2001; Wilkinson and Fagan 1996). Thus, 'When [the norm enforcer] interferes in the affairs of others he [sic] advertises his role rather than their problems' (Toch 1969/1972: 209). In other words, "'Justice" serves as a convenient excuse for ostentatious interference' (ibid.: 209).

In line with the findings on 'respect,' reported above, other deserving victims included 'grasses,' 'folk tryin' to be wide wi' ye,' 'liars,' 'two-faced people,' and 'big show affs [...] folk that think they're better than you.' Jay, for example, justified her offences against 'punters' (she lured male clients back to their flat for sex and then she and partner her robbed them) by claiming that she only robbed clients who tried to use her body as 'a thing:'

It was if, if I took a dislike tae somebody. Like if I went up the toon on a Friday night and Donald was going tae stand somewhere, wherever or be in ma mum's hoose. Sometimes I would go intae ma mum's hoose and go, "Go oot the noo," do you know what Ah mean? And that person never got robbed, if it was a regular or whatever. But if I got in a motor and somebody said the wrang thing or whatever. I suppose that's *really* bad as well, but that was ma reason. I couldnae rob anybody- I couldnae be nasty to anybody wi'out justifying it to maself. I could dae anything in the world as long as I felt justified in maself. It's crazy.

Just because I worked the toon doesnae mean I'm any less a person. Know what Ah mean? I don't like- I suppose I had a wee bit o' a problem wi' guys being in control anyway, I suppose. I don't know. It's just- I like my ain kind o'- I'm the boss, kind of thing. I'll say, "Right, we'll dae this, we'll dae that." And if they go along with me everything's all happy, but as soon as they start trying to boss me about, know, "Dae it this way, dae it that way," then I start getting, "Naw, it's no meant to be like this." [...] It was just like I didnae like the way they tried bullying

tactics. It was as if I was trying to prove to them it was *me*. They've got to 'hink about me. I don't know. It's weird. (Jay)

Like a number of the young women, Jay said that her time in prison had given her the time and space to think about her past behaviour, and was able to give a reflexive account about the function of such justifications.

[The first guy we robbed] was really drunk and the way I seen it he's no being hurt or anything. We're taking money aff him. He'll walk oot the door and forget about it. It's no as if it will have a lasting effect on him. He'll know better than tae come into the toon. I was making up wee scenarios in ma head: "Well, it could have been a wee lassie of 14, 15." Even though he was probably a brand new really nice guy, that would have treated- been fine, gi'en me the money and went away. It was just self-justification: "He's a punter therefore he must be low." Even though before that I never thought that way. Just because I was daein something I was thinking that way now. Do you know what I mean? "I don't feel any remorse fer them. They're punters, they're perverts." But they're no. Most of them are just normal lonely guys but because I was robbing them it was easier fae me to deal wi' by putting the blame on tae them: "If they hadnae been up the toon; if they hadnae been looking fer young lassies; if they hadnae been wanting tae dae this that and the next 'hing I would never have robbed them." They put themselves in this situation. I mean, how many people that you know would go back to a hoose wi' a strange lassie they'd met in the red-light district, that so obviously looked a junkie. Do you know what Ah mean? (Jay)

'If you cannae fight onc-on-one, you shouldnae be fighting'

There was a similar degree consensus as regards the kinds of behaviour that the young women said were prohibited during violent encounters. The three most cited proscriptions were: engaging in a fight that wasn't 'wan-on-wan,' attacking a vulnerable victim, and using knives and/or other weapons. That said, as the respondents' offence histories demonstrated (Chapter Four), many of the young

women had broken these rules at some time, often during the commission of their current offence(s). It was these young women who were more likely to experience negative feelings about their offending and, consequently, about themselves.

'Fair fights' were generally considered to involve two, equally matched opponents and, as a result, the practice of 'jumping in' for other people was generally outlawed. Where fights were deemed to have 'got out of hand,' however, or where the protagonists were unequally matched or 'getting battered by more than one person,' then 'aye, you jump in because at the end of the day it's no fair' (Lesley).

It's no acceptable to jump in for a friend. But I mean if whoever your pal's fighting wi', if *their* pals jump in, like two on one to my pal, I'd actually grab the other person to shove them off. And let the other two still fight. But if it got out of hand- I mean, if I seen a fight and one lassie was gettin' the better of the other lassie, who wasnae hittin' back, and she was gettin' booted, I would actually stop it. But if it's like a fight that the two o' them can handle, then its gonna- Do you know what I mean? If they are gettin' the best of each other, I wouldnae stop it. But if somebody was gettin' hurt, then I would jump in and stop the fight. I mean, I wouldnae let it go any further -- banging heids off fences and stuff like that. (Diane)

SB: If you saw two people fighting like that on the street, would you go and-

Kim: Ah'd watch! No, just kiddin'. I'd jist leave them 'cause I wouldnae wanna get involved in it, 'cause at the end of the day it's nuttin to dae wi' me. But if it was, like, really bad, then I'd maybe go and split it up.

[...]

SB: How would you know when it had gone too far?

Kim: [Long pause] See if like two folk was fightin' and one was on the drink getting battered, or like a right kickin,' then you'd know that they couldnae dae that and they were gonna keep goin' and something could happen. But obviously you've gotta step in and say, "Just leave it." But if it was just a stupid slap like or something

then I'd just leave it. 'Cause they could be oot with each other or something, you don't know, and just had a wee argument.

As both of these excerpts illustrate, intervening in someone else's fight was not only regarded as unfair, it was considered intrusive, and damaging to the original protagonist's reputation and sense of self. As Donna explained, 'folk would call you a daftie, ken, say that you cannae fight your own battles [...] Sometimes yer on yer ain [so] you've got tae be able to stick up fer *yersel*.' Group fights, therefore, were regarded as male-dominated affairs, and the few respondents who admitted having been involved in such violence reiterated that they generally fought with other males, very rarely other females.⁶² Lesley said this was because, unlike men, 'Lassies *don't really* go oot looking for fights [...] They generally [fight because they] think they've got a reason. Guys will just go oot there and hit anybody for anything, if they feel like it.' In this sense, the young women considered their violent behaviour to be more rule-governed than that of young men.

'You dae hurt children and helpless people'

Consistent with their views on deserving victims, the young women all agreed that you should never harm vulnerable victims, i.e. people who are unable to defend themselves. As Zoë explained,

You don't pick a fight wi' somebody vulnerable, somebody that's no all there. You *don't*, you don't do that. It's no the way I've been brought up. It's the same [with] granny bashers, you don't dae that. You don't hit old women, you don't hit old men. Or weans. (Zoë)

Annie told me that, if an elderly victim was to come up and grab her, she would 'probably just walk away. I'd never hit him.'

⁶² Attacks against 'beasts' within the prison setting provided a notable exception. It was considered perfectly acceptable to 'gang up' on such a person.

'There's nae need fer weapons'

In line with Campbell's (1981) findings, most – but not all – of the young women considered the use of weapons to be 'out of order,' and of those, many made a distinction between deliberately carrying a weapon (inexcusable) and picking up and using an object in the 'heat of the moment' (comprehensible but not condoned).⁶³ The main reason given for the non-use of weapons was the amount of harm they could cause, but young women also said that using weapons was cowardly. 'Proper' fights, they argued, were a test of two opponents' physical prowess.

Ah dimae agree wi' it wan bit. Ah 'hink if people's gonnae fight, then they should just fight wan another. If they've got tae just fight wan another wi' their hands or their feet or whatever, but no tae use knives and baseball bats, 'hings like that. (Joanne)

I think it is unacceptable. The way I see it if you've got tae fight just use your fists or whatever. There's nae need for weapons. I mean you could kill the person. With a fist I dae [don't] think you could kill them, wi' a punch or a kick. But with a weapon you could. (Diane)

I've never used a knife. But I wouldnae like be sittin' in the hoose and say "I want tae go doon the toon, man. Where d'ye want tae go?" and walk oot the hoose with a blade in your pocket. Because tae me that's somebody goin' oot tae look for a fight, because they're carrying something. It's no just, "Well I'm gonna defend myself, so I'm gonna carry a blade tae dae that," ye know what I mean? I don't agree with folk just walking about carrying blades. In ma situation, I was at the dancing I walked oot the dancing with a bottle of beer and I just loss the plot and I used it. But, em, I don't think it's acceptable carrying a knife. (Judy)

⁶³ While most young women disagreed with both using and carrying a 'chib,' for a significant minority both were justified if used to protect oneself from potential and/or actual assault.

While the use of 'chibs' or 'blades' clearly wasn't an *exclusively* male activity, weapons – and the physical damage caused by weapons – was more closely associated with men. In fact many of the young women said that weapon carrying and weapon use were the main things that differentiated male violence from female violence.

Ah'm naw somebody fer jumpin' about wi' blades or that. Like, ma boyfriend and stuff, he always carried a blade. He still does, Ah 'hink. All the guys Ah ran about wi' were aye [always] jumpin' about wi' blades and stuff, but Ah dinnae personally.

Ah 'hink it's mair like guys will walk about tooled up or wi' chibs or whatever. It's just sort o' a role that boys have took on, like they jump about wi' tools an' stuff. And Ah 'hink that guys have just sort o' got that role where they beat somebody up and they've slashed them. That's where they jump about wi' blades and chibs and stuff like that. Plus other guys are runnin' about wi' blades and that anyway, so a lot of guys will cairry them sort o' tae protect themselves, know what Ah mean? (Joanne)

Samantha: The men obviously hurt the other men more than we hurt the other female.

SB: Do you think so?

Samantha: Aye. It's stupid but lassies have got feelings and that when it comes to 'hings, like. Guys wouldn't think twice about kneecapping somebody. A lassie would be like, "Aw naw, that's quite serious." Know what I mean?

SB: But you've committed a serious crime. [Samantha laughs] Stabbing somebody with a knife in the face – a lot of people would say that that is about as serious as it gets.

Samantha: Aye, but there's mair men that's pronc tac daein' 'hings like that than women. Well in ma view, right, I done it 'cause the lassie fucked ma heid up, right? Guys would do that over a tenner bag, know what I mean? Guys wouldnae think twice about doing it fer a

mate or somebody grassing somebody in. They wouldnae think twice about doing it fer something like that.

‘Proper’ versus ‘bitch’ fighting

While the majority of respondents considered *themselves* to engage in ‘proper,’ ‘serious,’ rule-governed violent behaviour, they said that, in general, men were ‘mair violent’ and women were ‘mair bitchy.’ The notion of ‘bitchiness’ generally referred to the verbal abuse, talking behind backs and so on, discussed above. When used to describe physical violence, however, it signified the use of stereotypically female fighting techniques, such as scratching, slapping, hair pulling, and biting. Like the girls interviewed by Campbell (1981), most of the young women regarded such techniques with contempt. For these respondents, ‘Kudos was gained by approximating as closely as possible to male fights’ (ibid: 172). Karen’s views were fairly typical:

All the lassies that I have ever fought wi’, they don’t seem to fight. They just seem to just wave their arms about and, I don’t know, it is as if they are trying to swim or something. They just wave their arms about and scratch. I have not got a single nail on my body. They bite and I can’t bite anything because I have got really sensitive teeth and it gies me the boke. They pull hair, which I have no got a lot of. They dae things like that. When I battered that lassie, I woke up the next day in the back cells and I am looking at my leg and I had this big fuckin’ bite mark. Ken, like the teeth, each individual tooth you could see and it was all the way roond my leg. I thought, “What a little bitch!” ken? She bit me, and I had all these scratch marks doon ma neck. Apart from that I had nae injuries, ken she never punched me or kicked me or- Her injuries were like a burst nose, a black eye, bruises on her face and bumps on her heid where I had punched her and kicked her. She was biting and stuff instead.
(Karen)

Because of such girls’ perceived inability to fight, a number of the young women said that they preferred – or chose – only to fight with young men. As Zoë put it,

'you get a better *scrap* wi' a boy.' Likewise, Karen said, 'I *like* fighting. I *enjoy* it but I *don't* enjoy fighting with females. I don't know. I don't like hurting females. I don't enjoy it at all. I don't get a buzz from it.' Another group of respondents, however, claimed that women could be as violent as men, and dismissed 'bitch fighting' as a myth:

Judy: Lassies in here have done 'hings that guys in jail have done tae. It all depends on what situation you're in, but [women] can be [as violent as men].

SB: A lot of folk, when they talk about lassies fighting, say that they just scratch with their nails and pull hair-

Judy: [Interrupts] Naw! [Laughs] You're in the real world noo! You need tae open your eyes!

Joanne: Ah 'hink a lot ' folk 'hink that lassies will just fight wi' just pullin' hair, scratching! Ah 'hink maist people just 'hink, "Right, lassies fighting, this is what happens: pull hair, biting and nipping."

SB: Is that what really happens?

Joanne: Naw, naw! [Laughs] Definitely no, but that's what a lot o' people 'hink, eh?!

What all young women agreed, however, was that men and women generally had different motivations for engaging in violence. In line with gender norms regarding feminine emotionality and masculine stoicism, they said that 'Women are more emotional and they put more emotion into their fights than guys do.' The reason for this was that 'Lassies are more protective than men are. They care' (Lesley). In other words, women were considered to be motivated by emotional concerns, for example because they felt emotionally hurt or in order to protect a loved one, whereas men were considered more likely to 'just go oot there and hit anybody for anything.'

Women do put more emotion into it. Women are more emotional and they take their emotion and their frustration out [by fighting] whereas men will just punch a wall or something. If a lassie's man sleeps with another lassie, she's more likely to go and take it out on the lassie and really take her emotions out on the lassie whereas a guy's probably just going to walk up, punch her a few times, that'll be it.

Lassies are more emotional and once they let go, they let go. If she lets one lassie get away with it, she makes it that the rest of them can get away with it kind of thing. But if a guy goes up and sticks the heid in him, kind of thing, that's it finished with [...] A lassie she'll swing the lassie about by the hair and punch her, kick her, scratch her and everything, bite her. A guy he'll just punch him and stick the heid in him and that will be it, because he's done what he set out to do. But lassies, they seem to drag it on and on. I don't know why that is. Lassies dae, they dae let their emotions get in the way of everything. It doesnae matter if it's fighting or whatever. Their emotions always come into it somehow. Whereas a guy just lets it out in a couple of seconds and that's it. (Lesley)

Women were also considered more likely than men to engage in violence as a last resort, i.e. after some contemplation, or following an attempt to deal with the problem verbally. Men, on the other hand, were thought to respond with violence more directly.

Where there's two guys, they're no gonna stand about arguing for a half hour. If there's somethin' said, there's an automatic go ahead, whereas lassies do tend to stand there and bitch for about half hour, screamin' and shoutin,' or it could be carried on for weeks, all the growling and everthin' else and *then* it comes to blows. (Judy, emphasis added)

[Women] are no as quick-tempered as what men are. They tend to fuckin' take time to scream an' shout whereas men will jist go on attack straight away, wi'not even askin' [...] Women tend to drag things on for longer, whereas men jist, like, forget about it, know what Ah mean? Ah think there's mair evilness in women, know what Ah mean? Mair than there is in men. Like- [Short pause] Wi' men, if they've got

something wrong wi' somebody right, they jist, they don't like them, they'd jist rather go an' jist batter 'em. Women like to put them through hell, torture them, keep it going for ages and ages. She wants revenge, an' it doesn't matter if it's years later or whatever. She'll wait an' wait an' wait 'til she gets it. Whereas a man, Ah think he jist lets it go right around his heid. He doesnae bottle it up for years and years, whereas women do. Women are mair emotional than what men are an' all. They let it fuck wi' em mair. Whereas men don't tend to get upset dead easy. (Kelly)

Referring to an incident involving her (male) cousin, Judy gave an example of this gendered approach:

We were sittin' in a pub. Ma cousin, Gibby, had an argument with this guy the week afore and he walked intae the pub. There was nothin' says and he just went over and coshed him wi a bottle. Straight away man, no a word said. But the other guy knew it was coming, know what I mean? I've never been in a situation where I've been sitting there and I've seen a bird dae that. (Judy)

Thus, while respondents went along with the idea that young women's violence was emotional, in some cases leading to a loss of control (see below), they felt that it was still rule-governed and therefore ultimately justifiable. For them, it was men who were more closely associated with 'senseless' or 'vicious' attacks.

These supposed gender differences were explained by reference to processes of sex role socialisation (Parsons 1942) and the relative acceptability of male violence compared to female violence. As Lesley explained, 'Men, they're brought up to think that they've got tae fight, because they're supposed to be the fucking- the ones that look after us and all that crap.' Donna and Joanne concurred:

Men are brought up to be macho and women are brought up to show their feelings, stuff like that. Men are supposed to hide them, whereas lassies can show them without feeling like an idiot, but if a guy shows his feelings then he's an idiot. So if he was to walk up, punch, torture a guy for sleeping with his wife or whatever, then

it would be showing that it got to them but if a lassie does it then it's alright because she's allowed. (Donna)

It's no acceptable in any sex right, but it's mair acceptable for a guy tae stab somebody, but then when it's a young lassie that's stabbing folk then it's [Exhales noisily] big write ups about it [...] Women are not supposed tae be [violent], but they all are. Well, that's what you're brought up tae believe, you know what I mean, that young lassies shouldnae be going round- Ma papa's like, "A young lassie oot fightin,' that's terrible," whereas if it was ma [male] cousin that was, he'd be like "Oh, well done son!" (Joanne)

Thus, whereas the respondents agreed that women generally engaged in violence as a last resort, and usually for important (i.e. emotional, altruistic) reasons, male violence was thought to be utilised in a more instrumental fashion, in order to gain respect and maintain a reputation. In relation to this latter point, Angela explained, 'Guys need tae keep a name fer theirsel'. If you've got three guys, maybe one of them's saying, "I'm such and such an I'm keeping ma name," do you know what I mean? "I'm not gonna be known as such-and-such the fuckin' wimp.'" Kim said: 'Boys have got their reputation to protect. If everybody else is daein' something one boy wouldnac turn around and say no 'cause then he'd get slagged for being a shitebag. But I think lassies just- They're no bothered that much about it.'

Summary

The aim of this chapter was to examine definitions of and justifications for involvement in violence. As was noted at the outset popular accounts have characterised young women's involvement in violence as unruly, irrational, and emotional. By contrast, the current data indicate that young women's violence can be a purposeful, rule-bound activity. Young women routinely justified their actions by recourse to (sub) cultural norms and values which promote the defence of respect and reputation (of self and others), public displays of aggressive prowess, and the

dispensation of retributive justice. While some aspects of their experiences clearly support existing accounts (for example, young women concurred with the view that young women's violence is more emotional and less physically injurious than comparable male violence), the findings depict a broader range of motivations than are commonly attributed to women who commit violent crimes and they also demonstrate the extent to which these motivations are gendered. In contrast to essentialist accounts, which depict violence by young women as an aberration, the participants in the current study demonstrated how, within a specific local setting, violence and other forms of offending behaviour can fulfil – as well as transgress – norms of appropriate femininity. This is a theme that is developed in Chapter Eight, the final findings chapter, which looks at the young women's competing and conflicting identities as 'wan o' the lads' but 'girly to a certain extent.'

Chapter Eight

‘Wan o’ the Softest People You’ll Ever Meet ... but if Ma Toes Get Stepped on Then I’m Aggressive and I’m Violent’: Negotiating an Identity as a Violent Young Woman

The preceding chapter focused on the so-called ‘rules’ of violence and in doing so illustrated the situations in which young women saw the use of violence as warranted/unwarranted. The chapter demonstrated that young women who were able to justify their offences by recourse to (sub) cultural norms (e.g. regarding the defence of respect) were able to retain a positive sense of themselves *as young women*. Being known as ‘a person to be reckoned with’ was not portrayed as an identity incompatible with femininity; on the contrary, for some young women it was seen as an expression of femininity – albeit a specific and localised form. This chapter focuses on the views and experiences of young women whose offences *transgressed* norms regarding proscriptive rules of violence, i.e. those who offended against vulnerable victims, or who were involved in group acts of violence, as well as those whose violence ‘went too far,’ resulting in serious injury to the victim. These young women accepted that their behaviour was wrong, but attempted to shift responsibility to forces beyond their control – attributing their violence to experiences of victimisation and the intoxicating effects of drugs and/or alcohol. In other words, like the female offenders interviewed by Worrall (1990) and Bosworth (1999), they colluded with attempts to deny their responsibility by representing their actions using dominant discourses of femininity.

Doing gender

Despite their conviction for violent offending, the young women rarely described themselves *as violent*. Rather, they made a distinction between *being* a violent

person and having the *potential* for violence.⁶⁴ As Jay explained: 'I can be aggressive when I want to be, but it's put on. I wouldn't say I was violent.' Similarly, Karen said, 'I'm only violent if I have to be. I have *had* to stick up for myself in the past, ken?' Stephanie concurred: 'I wouldn't really describe myself as violent. Just when I'm pushed. I'm not violent all the time.' This apparent anomaly can be explained by reference to the significant amount of violence the young women had experienced growing up and also their understanding of 'proper' (i.e. serious) violence as an essentially masculine activity. As highlighted in Chapter Five, histories of physical and sexual abuse were common among the young women in the current study, many of whom reported witnessing regular incidents of domestic violence between their parents and their siblings. In addition, they commonly described local communities characterised by territorial violence and the defence of respect and reputation. Consequently young women had grown accustomed to violence and the values associated with it. Violence was thus viewed as an inevitable and unavoidable part of their daily lives and they regularly made a distinction between 'everyday violence' (Stanko 1990) and 'proper' or 'serious' violence. Because 'proper' violence was perceived as masculine, the research participants found it difficult to reconcile with their gender identity as young *women*.

'Wan o' the lads...'

One of the central debates within the literature on girl gangs is whether in enacting violence such young women are 'doing femininity' (Messerschmidt 1995, 1997) or whether they are in fact 'one of the guys' (Miller 2001, 2002). In his 1995 paper on girl gangs James Messerschmidt argued that in 'the daily life of the youth gang, girls not only participate in the social construction of [gender] difference but also engage in practices common with boys' (ibid.: 178). Yet rather than embracing a masculine identity these girls dubbed themselves 'bad girls.' Jody Miller (2001), on the other hand, shows that certain gang girls identify with the boys in their gangs and describes

⁶⁴ In the warm-down questionnaire only two respondents agreed with the statement 'I am a violent person,' while nearly all agreed 'I can be violent' (N=19).

such gangs as 'masculinist enterprises.' Despite insisting gender equality was a normative feature of their gangs, these young women upheld a distinct gender hierarchy that included male leadership, a double standard with regard to sexual activities, the sexual exploitation of some girls, and most girls' exclusion from serious gang crime. In upholding this hierarchy, the girls differentiated themselves from other girls through a construction of 'one of the guys.' This led Miller (2001, 2002) to conclude that some girls, like boys, can construct a masculine sense of self.

The young women in the current study expressed fairly ambivalent and contradictory views regarding their gender identity. As Chapter Six demonstrated, some of the research participants explicitly identified themselves as 'wan o' the lads.' Karen, for example, explicitly rejected most aspects of emphasised femininity, and valued what she and her peers considered to be traditionally masculine traits, i.e. bravery, physical strength, toughness, risk-taking and emotional stoicism.

Since school I was always one of the guys, always the tomboy. Even when my mum took me to a wedding when I was six, I laid on the pavement and screamed and said, "I am not going!" It was outside my front door and I said, "I am not going anywhere in this fucking dress!" Ken, five or six year old or something? Swearing at the top of my voice. I have always been a tomboy.

I dae [don't] like the company of lassies. I don't know. They just don't have the same attitude as me. They just all- They are dead upset at things and depressed and- I don't know. Me and ma [male] friends, none of us get depressed. I don't believe in depression; I think it is a lot of bullshit. I think it is just some psycho crap. [Laughs] I do. I don't believe in it. They just come oot wi' all this psycho crap, females. I don't know. They're all into meanings and stuff. It is just too heavy and deep for me. I have just never been into it.

I think I am more like a guy. I have never been afraid o' hard work. I got a job when I was 13 on the markets. You're talking, like- I started at half five in the morning and at first I would get into the van and unload these boxes of jeans and they were like boxes with maybe like 60 pairs of jeans, 60 pairs of Levis, and I had to pick it up and throw it on to the ground. You are talking like, well, one of these big half lorries things. I had to chuck all them out and then I had to lift the jeans out

in piles of 40 and put them on this big long table and 40 pairs of jeans weighs a fuckin' lot. Do you know what I mean? And I did get quite strong through that, I think. After that I went to the gym; I have done boxing and stuff. (Karen)

Yet despite this, Karen denied that she was trying to be a guy, or that she considered herself as unfeminine. Indeed, she claimed that such interpretations were sexist: 'I wasn't trying to be *like* [my male friends]. It is just the things that I enjoy. Since the age of 10 or 11, *I have done what I like.*'

Zoë's narrative presented a similarly complex picture. Like Karen, she had committed a number of stereotypically masculine crimes (including car theft, serious assault, housebreaking, and attempted murder) and said that she identified more with boys because they were less emotional and less 'bitchy' than girls.

Ah don't really hing about wi' lassies, it's boys Ah hing about wi'. You get a better laugh. Eh, don't need to worry about yer make-up, yer hair and a' that! You jist stick yer hair back in a bobble and a hat on! That's all ye dae! You can sit and have a pure slaggin' match wi' they boys, know whit Ah mean? "Shut up!" and all that, man. You can say daft 'hings tae each other an' a' that. But you don't start fightin' wi' each other a' the time. You don't get bitchy wi' each other. You jist say, "Fucking gie us that ye dick" and take it aff them, know whit Ah mean? They go like that, "Ye wee fanny," ken, 'hings like that. And you slag 'em about, "Ahh! That bird says you were a snide ride an' a' that!" That's the kinda- Ah think Ah'm a guy trapped in woman's body sort o' hing! Know whit Ah mean? Ah'm mair a boy than a woman. But Ah'm tomboyish.

You can be straight wi' them, you can be yoursel'. They don't go in the huff and they don't [puts on feeble voice] "Oh, that hurts me! Oh!" See lassies like that- Awww. I like lassies, lassies are brand new tae get on wi' and I've wan lassie best pal, that's it. And she's like me and a'! [Laughs] Know whit Ah mean? She's jist wan o' the lads. Ah've always been like that. That's like all ma pals. (Zoë)

To be respected and accepted as 'wan o' the lads' involved proving herself (through violence and other criminal activities – see Chapter Six), but also by not behaving

like a girl. This meant showing no signs of weakness of any kind (for example crying or going in the huff) and – importantly – not sleeping around. Zoë was often party to conversations in which her male friends disparaged other young women sexually – both those they had slept with and those they wanted to sleep with – and this was something she herself was careful to avoid. In fact she described herself as ‘quite prudish’ for her age, having been dumped twice for ‘not coming across with the goods.’ She attempted to avoid unwanted sexual attention by not getting drunk,⁶⁵ not taking drugs in the company of people she didn’t know, and staying away from parties where she didn’t know anyone.⁶⁶

SB: Why are you accepted as one of the lads in a way that, like, another girl that you know isn’t?

Zoë: Ah don’t sleep about. Ah don’t put masel’ about. [My male pals] a’ dae it but Ah don’t. [Laughs] Some lassies, like, that we know- Right just say some o’ the lassies we know, we’ll talk to them, aye, but we’ll not sit in the living room and have a puff an’ a’ that thegither, know whit Ah mean? They’d be like that, “Ah’m goin’ to shag her the night.” They don’t think like that about me. Ah’d kill them if they thought about me like that!

SB: But would you judge another lassie-

Zoë: [Interrupts] If she’d a different guy every night. If she’d been wi’ all ma pals, aye. If she’s been roond all ma pals, then Ah’d be like that, “Better chase her!” know whit Ah mean? If she’d been roond a’ o’ them. Cause Ah’ve got a pal like that, she’s been roond all ma pals and Ah don’t talk about her or any’hin’ Ah jist dae that tae her, “Look they’re all talkin’ about you. You better get it thegither.” Ah’d jist say, “You’re puttin’ it about,” know whit Ah mean? [Laughing] She’s like that [Puts on ‘girly’ voice], “Aw, whit did Ah dae last night” and you’re like that, “You fuckin’ know whit ye were

⁶⁵ Zoë initially told me that she didn’t drink, but later in her interview it transpired that by saying this she meant that she drank in moderation (i.e. one bottle of wine, or one bottle of cider, per session) but didn’t get ‘paralytic.’

daein!" They try and kind o', "Aw, Ah was drunk!" You're like that, "You were sober. Ah seen ye! Ah was talkin' tae ye." [Serious again] Ah don't like sleepin' aboot and Ah don't like- Ah'm quite prudish fer ma age. Ah don't know whit it is. Ah think it's 'cause Ah hang aboot wi' boys and Ah hear them talkin' aboot birds, know whit Ah mean? [Puts on 'neddy' voice] "Aw naw, you want tae hae seen her by the way. D'ye know what she was daein last night?" (Zoë)

One of the main advantages of *acting* like a boy, then, (or rather not acting like a girl) was that 'folk' (specifically young men) were less likely to 'take liberties' with her – both physically and sexually.

- SB: It sounds like it is important to you to be accepted on equal terms, as if you were a boy, rather than being given special treatment because you are a girl?
- Zoë: Aye, equal.
- SB: And you mentioned that sometimes you feel like a man trapped in a women's body. Would you prefer to be a man or-
- Zoë: [Interrupts] *Naw!*
- SB: -is it just because sometimes you identify with boys more than girls?
- Zoë: Aye, Ah identify mair wi' boys. Ah dae mair boys things than some boys, know whit Ah mean?! [Laughs]
- SB: What is it about being like that that appeals to you?
- Zoë: Because naebody will take the cunt oot o' me. Naebody'll try and batter me or take advantage, know whit Ah mean? It *is* a bit shite when you think aboot it, but doon ma way cunts are like that "Aw naw, there's Zoë Barlow. Watch whit ye say," know whit Ah mean?

⁶⁶ Zoë had been raped twice, once by a stranger when she was 12 and more recently by her then boyfriend. She had imbibed a cocktail of drugs and alcohol on both occasions.

Sometimes they've been tryin' tae take the cunt out o' ye and you're like that, "Fuck off." [...]

SB: It sounds, though, that when you were younger you liked being thought about in that way-

Zoë: Ah did. Ah did when Ah was younger.

SB: Was it that you like being thought of as somebody who was violent or somebody that would just take no crap?

Zoë: Somebody that wouldnae take any shite, aye. No because Ah was- Ah didnae think Ah was a big hard-on, Ah jist knew Ah could haud ma ain. And Ah liked people tae know it because then you don't get any hassle aff the boys and you don't get any hassle aff the lassies.

'...but Ah can be girly when Ah want tae be'

Recent research with girls and young women from a range of backgrounds points to a pervasive distinction made between 'girly girls' and 'tomboys' (Halsall et al. 2005; Kelly et al. 2005; Reay 2001). Girly girl is a slang term for a young woman who chooses to dress and behave in a traditionally feminine way, for example by wearing skirts or high heels, wearing make-up, talking about relationships and so on. A tomboy is a girl who behaves according to a traditionally male gender role: wearing non-feminine clothes, engaging in and enjoying activities typically associated with young men, and seeking out the company of boys rather than girls. In their research with young working-class women, Halsall et al. (2005) reported that their respondents referred to themselves as being 'proper boys' and as 'turning into girls' as they grew older. This transformation was constituted as being reflected in the girls' clothing and appearance, as they gave detailed accounts of the clothes, make-up and hairstyles associated with being 'a proper boy' and as evidence of 'turning into a girl.' The young women in the current study made a similar distinction, describing tomboyism as a youthful phase, something that even the most hardened tomboys in the sample expected to grow out of. Zoë, for example, told me that prior

to her incarceration she was making a conscious 'effort' to appear more feminine, now that she was 'getting a bit aulder.'

I went very girly last year and I've still kind o' went a wee bit girly the noo, but it's 'cause I'm growing up. I don't want tae be like that all ma days [...] You could be 80 and they'd still be saying, "Look at that mad auld dear, chasing the wee ains wi' the broom!" [Laughs]

When Ah was younger – when Ah was like 14, 15 – guys used to says to me, "Aw, Zoë, ye dyke!" [Laughs] 'Cause Ah'm always wi' the boys. One night Ah was walking past these boys, an' wan shouted: "Zoë, ye fuckin' dyke!" Ah ran o'er and Ah battered 'im in front 'o all 'is pals, know whit Ah mean?

Ah'm girly, don't get me wrang, Ah'm a' girly. But Ah'm only girly tae a certain extent. But, like, when Ah go oot the dancing and that, aye, Ah'll wear a skirt and Ah'll wear ma high heels and that. When Ah'm goin' oot, aye, Ah'll put make-up on and a' that. But during the week it's trainies, or ma boots an' that. Ah'd like tae be different, yeah. Ah tried, when Ah was oot last year Ah wis kind o' walkin' round wi' make-up an' that. (Zoë)

Thus, being a tomboy was regarded as an identity (or perhaps more accurately a practice) that was *undertaken* (consciously or otherwise) as a form of resistance to the confines of emphasised femininity. At the same time, however, it was an identity that had to be carefully managed (so as to avoid being labelled 'a dyke'). Zoë made repeated asides throughout her interview that she was not 'a dyke' and could be 'girly' *when she wanted to be* (e.g. wearing make up when she went out to the dancing). In this way, whilst aligning herself against a (rather stereotyped) version of traditional femininity (huffy, bitchy, tarty, shallow), Zoë stressed that she was feminine nonetheless. Like Karen, she said that generally speaking she preferred 'dacin the 'hings that boys dae' (for example, having a laugh, looking after herself, being able to dress casually and not worry about her appearance), but that there were still times when she enjoyed doing 'girly 'hings' too. This complex, and seemingly contradictory, relationship demonstrates how young women can 'do' femininity at the same time as they are attempting to resist it (Holland 2004). As Bordo (1993)

acknowledges in her analysis of eating disorders, while women may well be critical of aspects of emphasised femininity, they are still embedded within these same discourses and cannot help but collude with them.

Adams (1999) makes a similar point in her paper on fighting between adolescent schoolgirls. According to Adams, fighting by girls and young women can be read as a masculine metaphor that resists the objectification and normalisation of the docile female body. By engaging in violence, she argues, young women can gain access to a domain usually reserved for males:

They clearly recognise that physical strength, prowess, and aggressiveness (i.e. masculinity) are valued in our society; thus fighting, for them, becomes a legitimate avenue for gaining access into a discourse of power ... [Adolescent girls] refuse to be seen as the passive victims of male sexuality and violence, and, on one level, their fighting literally becomes the embodiment of that resistance. However, their fighting also represents the struggle of adolescent girls against an erasure of self that splits apart their bodies from their mind and soul, reducing them to a body – a thing. (Adams 1999: 127-128)

As Jay's discussion of her offences against punters demonstrated (previous chapter, page 191), violence offers some young women a way to move from being a *no/body* (i.e. an object) to a *some/body* (a subject) (ibid.). Crucially, however, Adams also demonstrates that girls' violence simultaneously *sustains* the normalisation of femininity. Embedded in their stories is an understanding of 'respect' that transcends the masculine understanding of respect found in the street culture of boys as a personal and individual issue (and articulated by Anderson 1999). For these girls, a relational understanding of respect is prevalent in which 'respect for others is paramount in maintaining solid, stable relationships.' (Adams 1999: 129). In other words, while young women may profess to 'fight like a man,' a contextual reading of why they fight, under what circumstances they fight, and how they justify their fighting reveals that physical violence actually 'validates what has traditionally been viewed as women's ways of knowing and making sense of the world,' namely through relationships with others (ibid.: 128). This picks up the point made in

Chapter Seven, that young women's violent behaviour can *fulfil* – as well as transgress – traditional gender roles. Recall that, alongside the defence of the self, one of the primary motivations young women in the current study gave for engaging in violent behaviour was to protect and/or prove their allegiance to their family, their friends and/or their local area. In other words, they justified their use of violence by reference to norms of emphasised femininity (e.g. selflessness, loyalty and caring for others). Unlike the young women in Miller's research, then, the respondents in the current study did not embrace a masculine *identity*, even though they may have adopted some stereotypically masculine attributes (e.g. independence, self-reliance, strength, toughness). Rather, they appropriated an ideology of femininity according to which the use of violence was socially sanctioned. Similar to the young women in the studies of Carlen (1988) and Joe-Laidler and Hunt (2001), they were *behaving* like males (in order to protect themselves in a patriarchal environment), rather than actually trying to *be* like males.

Responsibility for violence

The young women varied in the extent to which they saw themselves as responsible for their offending behaviour. While the vast majority didn't regard themselves as 'a violent person,' they often said that they thought of themselves as 'a bad person' and felt guilty about what they had done. The group most likely to express guilt or shame in relation to their violent behaviour were those young women whose current offence(s) transgressed the rules of violence (or what Anderson [1999] refers to as the 'code of the street' – see Chapter Seven). Like many of those convicted for 'beastie' crimes, Cathy told me:

I'm full of anger at myself fer taking part in such a *shitty fucking thing*. It's something that's gonna play with ma heid for the rest o' ma life. No matter how many year I spend in here, when I walk out o' them gates, that *ain't gonna leave me*, Susan. That'll be wi' me forever. That's just no something that goes away overnight. (Cathy)

Angela, Cathy's co-accused, expressed similar sentiments:

Many a time I've wanted to write to the lassie, tell her how sorry I am, how I wish I could turn back the clock, but I'm feart [...] I don't know how the lassie would react. Because at the end of the day she's got scars on her body and she's scarred mentally. And no matter what anybody talks to her, or teaches her, she'll no get rid of that. It's gonna be there for life, do you know what I mean? Because of me her whole life is ruined, do you know what I mean? Her whole life. (Angela)

Whilst acknowledging the moral reprehensibility of their offences, Cathy and Angela attempted to temper their negative definitions of self by excusing their behaviour as out with their control. During the attack, both young women were under the influence of a cocktail of acid, ecstasy, temazepam, cannabis, vodka and fortified wine ('we've been just pure mad wi' it, haven't got a clue whit's whit') and blamed their inability to intervene on 'the fear.'

Before I knew it her head was all swollen wi' bruising, her body was all bruised and before I knew it the next minute she was being stabbed in the legs. It was like, "Phew, this is going to far! This *has* gone too far." But by this time fear had set in [...] I was too feart. Although the door was open – it wasnae locked, I could have just went out – fear had set in on maself as well as the victim. Fear had set in. I think fear had set intae everybody. (Angela)

Cathy: She was put through all sorts of things. It was just the most horriblest thing you could ever imagine, Susan. I've never seen lassies acting like that in ma whole life. They were just animals.

SB: [Interrupts] Why didn't you intervene?

Cathy: Because it freaked me *right* out. *Really* freaked me *right* out. I couldnae believe what I was seeing. I started just heavy panicking. I've got asthma and I just- I've never seen anything like that before. I've seen violence, I've been brought up around violence,

but seeing lassies daeing that tae somebody is just a *heavy, heavy* scare. I've never- I've been feart, but I've never *showed* that I'm feart. That night *I* was in *tears*. *I* couldnae *believe* what was going on in that hoose.

[...]

SB: What role did *you* play in everything that happened?

Cathy: I just played as big a role as everybody else because I should have never used a knife and I should never have let her go through all that.

SB: And why didn't you stop it, or walk away?

Cathy: [Sighs] I haven't- I just don't have that answer. I was just freaked right out. And I know I could have walked out that door at any time, but it was *freaky*. It was. Honestly, you could never imagine putting yourself in a position like this. It's the most horriblest thing that you will ever walk intae. You don't know what's roond the corner for you, but you walk in tae some shit like that then. [Sighs] That happened six year ago and it *still* tears me apart. I've had to go to the psychologists and everything, psychiatrists, because this plays about wi' *ma heid constantly* and it *fucks* me up, so it does. Wan minute I'm all right and then the next minute I'm up, like I just loss it.

While the accounts offered by Cathy and Angela relate to a rather atypical offence, they highlight a number of themes raised by respondents whose offending violated prescriptive norms regarding the 'justifiable' use of violence. As discussed in Chapter Seven, attempts to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour take two forms: justifications and excuses (Scott and Lyman 1968). With justifications, the prime discourse is the construction of victim as somehow deserving, either because he or she has disrespected the offender or her family in some way, or because he or she has offended against a vulnerable victim. Excuses, on the other hand, involve accepting blame but not responsibility (Hearn 1998; Scully 1990). The prime forms

of excuse used by Cathy, Angela, and the women in the sample more widely were: references to 'emotional problems' relating to 'the way you are brought up'⁶⁷ and the effects of drugs and alcohol. Both of these excuses reflected the explanations traditionally ascribed to women who offend.

'It's all down tae the way you are brought up'

Across the sample violence was regarded as 'natural' and 'normal' phenomenon, something that 'everybody has got in them,' but which is 'triggered' by external causes:

Anybody can be violent. Like *you* can be violent – ken what I mean? – if somebody provoked you. You can ever never say, "I'll never come tae jail," because you could be oot one night and start a fight, pick up a bottle, smash it over a lassie's heid or some'hin, ken what I mean? So, everybody's violent in their ain way. (Gillian)

It's in everybody's nature to be violent. It just takes someone or something to bring it out of you. Like I never used to be violent. I didn't like getting hit in front of people. And then, I don't know, I just took enough. I used to be *terrified* of my brother and nooadays it doesn't *bother* me if he gets in any mair fights wi' me because if he gets in any mair fights then I'll hit him back. (Annie)

Some people are violent and they're in [prison] fer violent crimes, but they're no really angry people. You could go oot wan night and it's just the type o' area that you live in- You could go oot wan night and you could be in with the wrong crowd or whatever and *batter* somebody, in just a normal fight, and they could dae ye with assault and that's the wan aff time that you've actually lost your temper and done something like that, do you know what I mean? People make wan mistake in their lives and it sticks wi' them fer the rest o' it. (Cathy)

⁶⁷ As discussed in Chapter Five, both Cathy and Angela were victims of child sexual abuse.

Such notions not only conflate anger with violence, they imply that violence is unpredictable and uncontrollable, as well as inevitable and thus unchangeable. According to this understanding, 'violence is to be excused; it is not the responsibility of the [perpetrator] but is the result of past social, psychological and even biological events or factors, the effects of which are embedded in the body' (Hearn 1998: 123).

Judy's offence, which involved slashing another young woman with a bottle after a night out at the dancing, gave an illustration this kind of account.

It was ma pal Caroline's fight; she fell oot with ma pal – the lassie I'm in for – Lynn, right? Arguments had been goin' on for weeks and I took nothin' tae dac with it because I got on all right wi' Lynn. Eh, see Lynn had went wi' Caroline's man, right? She done slit with him and then it all kicked aff wi' all that [...] But it was Caroline's argument, so I stayed oot it. Caroline's just a pal of mine, so I thought, "Batter in", know what I mean? "This is your fight no mine." We were all in the dancing and Caroline started her rubbish wi' the lassie, shouting and goin' on and all this [...] I told Caroline just tae leave it, leave Lynn alane. I was like: "Just leave Lynn alane and you can get her when we get ootside." So we ended up goin' ootside, at this point I was wi' ma cousin and I had forgot all about it [...] I turned roond and I seen Gwen [ma other pal] punching her and Caroline kicked her, but it wasn't a scrap, it was just, like, walk up like that and skelped, know what I mean? I'd been stanning drinkin' a bottle of Bud and I just pure lost the plot. I don't know, I just seen red; I just seen Gwen hitting her and there was just- I ended up just flying aff o' the stairs. I ran up tae her and I skelped her wi' the bottle, see aff yer bone behind your ear? I got her there and it smashed and I ripped it doon her neck twice and I turnt and I grabbed her there and I flung her against a car and I stabbed her in her back. So it was like three, one, two on her back. It's just bad man, it shouldnae have happened (Judy)

Judy acknowledged that her violent behaviour was wrong, but excused it as an emotional outburst over which she had little or no control. The younger of two sisters, Judy's childhood was marred by her father's violence towards her mother when drunk (see Chapter Five). Shortly after he left the family home, when Judy was

aged 14, her dad was killed in a car accident alongside her sister. Judy then began drinking heavily and taking recreational drugs to 'block things out' (see Chapter Six). Referring to her current offence, she told me:

I don't know what was goin' through ma heid. The anniversary of ma faither and sister had just been – that happened, I think it was July or some'hin', and their anniversary is in June – and see when it comes tae the anniversary ma heid starts daein' overtime and all that and I end up blankin' it oot and I just blanked it oot for so long that I just lost it that night. (Judy)

When asked a general question about why she thought people were violent, Judy replied:

It's just some folk that have got circumstances why they done it. Like mine. I had just- Ma heid was all fried, just messed up and bottled up and then just exploded. There's other people that end up having tae be that way, just like- See like half the lassies in here got culpable *because* of their men. They've been battered a' their lives and then somebody starts turning on them and they might just react by just lifting their haunds. But like see- I don't know, like seeing your mam getting battered for so many years or somethin' fae a guy and just, I don't know, just growing up in an atmosphere where there is just *fighting* constant, it just becomes a pairt of your life. [Quietly] I don't know. I just seen it all the time. [Pause] I mean I had a guid- I had everything when I was a wee lassie, so it wasnae like I had *nothin'* and I've ended up turning this way or that way. But if I didnae see all that- I don't know. I don't think I'd probably be- Well, I don't 'hink I would have been the person I was, oot there. (Judy)

'The drugs hae got a lot to dae with it tae'

Given that three-fifths of the young women were addicted to heroin prior to their incarceration and four-fifths of the women's (current) offences were committed whilst they were under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, it is not surprising that

they explained their violent behaviour by reference to the impact of psychoactive substances. Typical statements referred to: drugs and/or alcohol as a disinhibitor; drug addiction, or more particularly drug withdrawal, necessitating offending to fund the next fix; and drugs and/or alcohol causing the offender to black out. For example, Joanne told me, 'Ah 'hink that mostly Ah'm violent noo 'cause Ah get drunk, or Ah drink too much, or Ah take too much [drugs] and then somebody could just say wan 'hing and Ah bite too quick, ken?' Jane emphasised the impact of her addiction: 'It's just the kit and a' that, you're taking it all the time and you cannae remember 'hings, you're arguing wi' folk fer nae reason, and you're going oot robbing folk just to get this money fer kit.' Virtually all of the respondents discussed blacking out during a violent incident, and often expressed some confusion as to whether this was a psychological defence, or simply the result of too many chemicals in their system. It was not unusual for the young women to say that they had woken up in the police cells the day following their offence and having to ask the officer on duty what they were in for (e.g. Joanne, Stephanie, Donna). Many of the respondents in this situation had difficulties coming to terms with the offence they had committed (e.g. Cathy, Fiona). One offender who fell into this category was Lesley, a young woman currently serving a prison term for assaulting an elderly man during a housebreaking. She gave the following account of her offence:

I had been off smack fer two days and I was just going to go cold turkey because I had had enough [...] I told the doctors that I wasnae sleeping at nights and that and I needed stuff because I was scared of going back to smack and the doctor gave me Valium [...] I came back up the road and I went into ma pal's hoose. I took six Valium, and we just started talking about things and we just started talking about smack and then I couldnae feel the Valium so I took the other six. And I didnae really take Valium because I didnae like them and they never really done much for me. [Lights a cigarette] And then I decided- I don't know, we decided we wanted a bag and she never had any money and neither did I. But I don't know what I even done after that. I walked outside and I cannae even remember much. I must have went home and got changed. I went a walk doon the street, eh, the next I know I'm in somebody's hoose and it was broad daylight, about half past two in the afternoon.

I never even had a disguise on or nothing [...] I walked in and there was an old man sitting in the chair – and I mean an old man – and I says to him, “Look, just sit there and I’ll leave.” But he wouldnae, and he got up and he came towards me and he started hitting me with his walking stick. And I was like that, “I need oot o’ here, I’m fucked.” So, eh, I just tried to get the walking stick off him and he fell over. And I don’t know, I didnae know but he had a cut on his eye, I must have hurt his eye or something. I cannae even remember how I got in his hoose or how I got out. And, eh, I got oot and I fucked off, closer to my bit and I seen this woman coming oot her hoose, eh, and she never even locked her door or nothing. She was wi’ her dog. And I went into the hoosc and there was a wallet sitting in the kitchen wi’ 50 quid in it, so I just took that and I fucked off. I went home and I got changed, again. I was going to catch the bus and I got lifted. That was it. They held me right up. And I didnae even remember what I’d done until the polis telt me. [Exhales noisily] It was crazy. That was all through drugs again.

I feel terrible about it. I don’t even like talking about it. Because it shouldnae have happened. That could have been my granddad. If somebody had done that to my granddad I’d have killed them. Plus I’ve got to go back to that toon and face everybody, all his grandweans, that are all about my age. I’ve got to face the consequences. It’s no gonnac get left, ken? I’m going to have to go out there and fight.

It is bad, what I’ve done, because it was an old guy but I’ve just got tae get on with it. It was at the lowest point in ma life. At the end of the day the old guy’s all right and it has done me good being in here. And he’s forgave me. I’ll probably live wi’ it the rest of ma life, aye, I’ll never forgive masel’, but you’ve got to get on with it. (Lesley)

Unable to justify her behaviour, Lesley felt guilty about what she had done, but attempted to minimise her culpability (and thereby protect herself from becoming overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and shame) by claiming that she was ‘fucked’ (i.e. intoxicated) the time of her offence. Like a number of other young women in the study, she thus distinguished between her ‘drugged up’ and her ‘real’ self, claiming that the ‘clean’ Lesley was a nice person who would never have behaved in such a

way. This notion of two selves is developed in the next section, which considers the young women's beliefs about the future and their likelihood of desistance.

Constrained choices

Although justifications and excuses are in some sense opposites, in so far as the former implies individual will and the latter determinism, most of the young women's accounts included both. Those who justified their violence as a defence of respect, for example, reiterated that it was something that 'had to be done.' In addition, those who excused their behaviour as a loss of control nevertheless accepted some measure of culpability. Judy, for example, refused to allow her defence counsel to use the death of her father and her sister as mitigating circumstances in court. She said,

I didnae want tae use ma da and that as an excuse. What I done was ma ain fault. I should never ever done that, ye know what I mean? I didnae want to have to staun' in court and say, "Oh well, ma faither and ma sister died so that's ma reason for daein all this." I don't use that at all, but it's- it was all in ma heid and everything else. (Judy)

Most of the young women, then, remained torn between the belief that they had a choice whether or not to engage in violent behaviour and the notion that they were in fact forced to do so as a result of their social background. This paradox reiterates the findings reported in Chapter Six, which indicated that young women experience violence alongside other forms of risk-seeking behaviour *both* as an expression of control as well as a loss of control. The young women's discussions of their future lives were characterised by a similar degree of ambivalence and uncertainty.

'Whatever happens happens'

Chapter Six demonstrated that, in contrast to the reflexive actors focused on the future and its attendant risks depicted by theorists of reflexive modernisation (Beck 1992, 1994; Giddens 1990, 1991), the majority of young women in the current study experienced their lives outside prison in the moment, the immediate, the here and now. This was partly a result of their age, their positioning within a youth culture based on 'the immediacy of and need for fun and pleasure' (Presdee 2000: 63), and their experience of substance misuse, particularly heroin addiction. Carol, an 18-year-old young woman who had been using to heroin for four years, described this short-range focus as follows:

You're getting' up in the mornin' and you're opening up your eyes and you're like, "Where's my next tenner coming from?" You're like that, "What am I gonna do?" You get that desperate, you feel that ill – know what I mean? – that you've just got tae go and do it, and whatever it takes you'll do [...] So I just take each day as it comes, know what I mean? Whatever happens happens. That's it. (Carol)

Carol's preoccupation with the present was also reflected in her difficulty in narrativizing her life within the interview setting. Like a number of the young women, she seemed reluctant or unable to reflect upon specific events or periods in her past in any great length and said thoughts about the future did not play an important role in her life. In fact, she said that she took drugs in order avoid conscious reflection:

I do kit because it helps me forget. I don't have to face things. I'll be truthful with you, right? I was in the jail – only a year ago – and I couldn't get things oot ma head, know what I mean? And I was actually seeing it all the time. Like things with ma ma and things like that [...] I couldn't blank it out no more. And it went through the whole of ma sentence, the whole 12 month I was in there. I was crackin' up, know what I mean? I got out and that and then as soon as I took kit a couple of weeks later, I just forget about it. (Carol)

When pressed about the future, she described her life as being pre-determined by her childhood experiences of abuse, subsequent drug addiction and now her 'master status' (Hughes 1945) as an offender:

Ah sit and wonder sometimes, but no a lot o' the time, know what Ah mean? [...] It just doesnae seem to change, if you know what Ah mean? Ah've been oot there and Ah've tried and Ah've got intae art college and Ah've done this and Ah've done that, know what Ah mean? And Ah just- Ah don't know, Ah just seem tae go back to kit [heroin] all the time.

Ah'm going back out there, Ah'm 18 year old, Ah've got a criminal record as long as anything, know what Ah mean? Who's going to want to take me on?
(Carol)

Within this context young women have nothing to lose by their offending, except perhaps their liberty. Carol regarded this as a plus. For her, prison was a safe haven (or a 'holiday camp,' as the young women referred to it) away from the chaos and uncertainty of her life outside.

Ah like the jail, know what Ah mean? Ah do, Ah really, really like it, know what Ah mean? Because you've got no worries, know what Ah mean? Ah'm no on drugs in here and I'm not robbin' people and Ah'm not hittin' people and Ah'm away from everything, know what Ah mean? Ah've not got any worries in here. When Ah go back out there Ah go back tae nothing again, know what Ah mean? Ah could be in here for murder the next time. Ah mean Ah could go that bit further and end up murdering somebody, if you know what Ah mean. And Ah don't want to do that. If Ah'm going to be in here Ah want tae make millions, robbin' somebody, no killing people, know what Ah mean? But sometimes Ah can take them the wrong way or whatever, know what Ah mean, and they're gonna die, know what Ah mean? And that's- Ah don't know, it doesn't frighten me, but Ah don't like the thought, if you know what Ah mean?

When you get out there and you've got a drug habit you're getting up every day, know what Ah mean? Ah got out the last time and Ah was only out a week and

Ah jumped over a counter and smacked a woman in the mouth and ran back out the shop again. Know what Ah mean? And that was only likc a week. Because Ah got out and Ah just *can't* cope. Ah just can't think straight. Everything's changed and everything's that different, know what Ah mean? Nothing was like what it was before. Like ma pals had changed, ma da had changed, *Ah* had changed but Ah never knew Ah'd changed, if you know what Ah mean? Ah mean, they just weren't my type o' people any more. Ah missed ma pals in here as well, know what Ah mean? Some o' them mean more to me than ma family do, know what Ah mean? And then you have to think, "Right, what am Ah doing?" Ah'm going back out on the dole, know what Ah mean? [...] And Ah'm like that, "Awfff!" Ah'll be honest wi' you, Ah can't live on what they gie me. Ah can't, so the only way Ah've got to do is go and do the things Ah do, know what Ah mean? That is the only way. (Carol)

Maruna refers to this sense of fatalism as 'a condemnation script,' according to which active offenders describe their life stories as 'having been written for them a long time ago' (2001: 75). Amongst the participants in the current study, this sense of hopelessness and inevitability was revealed in comments such as: 'so that was that' or 'there was nothing I could dae about it,' 'Ah got into that and then that was me.' Offenders espousing a fatalistic worldview, Maruna argues, have no real hope for the future and as a result are likely to accept the hand that fate has dealt them. If they are to transform themselves into desisters, however, they must develop a 'tragic optimism,' that is, the belief that good can come from bad.

The redemption script begins by establishing the goodness and conventionality of the narrator – a victim of society who gets involved with crime and drugs to achieve some sort of power over otherwise bleak circumstances. This deviance eventually becomes its own trap, however, as the narrator becomes ensnared in the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment. Yet, with the help of some outside force, someone who "believed in" the ex-offender, the narrator is able to accomplish what he or she was "always meant to do." Newly empowered, he or she now seeks "give something back" to society as a display of gratitude. (Ibid.: 87)

'Making good,' according to this narrative, is not a matter of being resocialised or cured, but rather of freeing one's 'true self' from external constraints (ibid.: 95). Thus, while the catalyst for change may come from outside, the source of desistance resides 'within' (ibid.: 96).

'The real me'

In her account of offending against an elderly victim, Lesley (above) distinguished between her 'real' and her 'junkie' self. The 'real' Lesley, she said, was 'caring' and a 'good mum.' This notion of two selves – the bad, violent, 'no very nice' self and the 'real,' friendly, caring self – was a common theme in the interviews, and served to neutralize young women's crimes and their identity as a violent offender. As the following excerpts illustrate, sometimes the bad self was the past self; sometimes it was the 'drugged up,' 'junkie,' or 'wasted' self.

See when we were like this [i.e. straight] we were the nicest people you could meet, but see when we were full o' drugs we were the horriblest people you could meet.

I know the person I am and the person I want tae be. And the person that I was was just *horrible* and *vindictive* and I would have stabbed you in the back in a minute. The person that I am the noo, I love everybody, I dae! And I just like to be nice. There's nae point in being horrible because people, in the end, people just really havenae got any time fer you, do you know what I mean? And [coming to realise that] it's made a whole difference in ma life. It's turned me right aboot.
(Cathy)

Some of the things Ah do people will be like that, "That's shocking!" know what Ah mean, "That's bloody terrible. Ah wouldn't even dream aboot doing that," know what Ah mean? There's a lot of people like that. And sometimes Ah wonder why Ah do some of the things Ah do. Ah wonder, "That is terrible," know what Ah mean? Ah sit there and think, "Ah, that's no me." And then Ah think, "Aye, it is!" know what Ah mean? It's like there's two o' me. (Carol)

By portraying themselves as someone who was essentially a 'nice wee lassie,' 'a good mother,' and/or 'a loyal pal,' the young women were able to emphasize the conventionality of their values and aspirations and thereby suggest that, underneath it all, they just wanted to be 'normal.'

In their seminal article on 'techniques of neutralisation,' Sykes and Matza (1957) criticised proponents of subcultural theory for overemphasising the extent to which actors reject conventional values. They maintained that, despite their involvement in law breaking behaviour, offenders maintain a strong bond to conventional society (evidenced through their expressions of shame and guilt) and are invested in maintaining a perception of themselves as good. The same might be said about the young women in the current study. As previously discussed, many of the respondents justified their offending behaviour not only by reference to subcultural norms relating to the defence of respect, but also according to an ideology of feminine relationality and emotionality. The young women also drew from traditional gender schemas to explain why they desisted from offending. For example, needing to 'be there' for family members was often cited as the only reason the young women could see for desisting from violent offending. This was particularly relevant for the members of the sample who were mothers, for example Jane and Lesley, but a number of the other young women, for example, Debbie and Zoë, also voiced concerns about the care of younger brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, while yet other participants spoke of the need to support their mothers and siblings.

I don't like living black, looking fer hags everyday. Because you're just putting yourself through hurt than anything else. And you've nae money and that. I've been through it all fer three years and that's enough fer me. I've got something to go oot for. I've got the wean. (Jane)

If I didnae have me wee lassie, I probably would go oot there and end up back in here before too long. But I want to go oot there and dae ma best and have a good life. But only because I've got ma daughter and I've got something to go oot there

fae. If I was like a lot of them in here and I never had nothing then I'd probably come back because it's no much of a deterrent, really.

The biggest punishment fer me is being away fae ma family. If I had ma daughter in here, like some lassies have got their babies in here, I wouldnae bother about the lib taking. (Lesley)

Ah could dae a life sentence and it wouldnae bother me, but Ah'm awfie worried about ma sisters. Ah've goat two wee sisters. Wan o' them's eight and the other's four. Ah feel quite- Ma cannae really look after theym, no very good anyway, so Ah'm awfie worried about them the noo. I phoned ma ma the other night and she could hardly talk tae me [she has a heroin addiction] and Ah phoned back and she went missin'. She wis arguin' wi ma auntie and ma auntie cut all her hair aff and stole her teeth and all the rest o it. Aye. So Ah phoned ma auntie Amy and I says, 'Huv ye seen ma ma?' and she says, 'Yer ma sent yer sister doon here herself in a taxi' and all that. And ma auntie Amy's an alchie. She shouldnae be daein these 'hings.

When Ah get oot this time Ah'm gonnae get ma ain hoose an settle doon a bit. Get ma sisters tae stay. Ah'm gonna need tae. Fer thar sake if nuttin else. It's a shame. (Debbie)

Ma sister, she's a junkie noo. I don't know how bad it is, right? But she's got ma wee nephew out there and I know that when he's growing up, if she doesnae get aff drugs noo, he's no gonna have the best upbringing he can get, know what Ah mean? So I want to provide it. I want tae provide it and I want to be there for him. (Zoë)

The way Ah see it, know what Ah mean, Ah cannae promise ma mother that Ah will. But Ah says to her, know what Ah mean, Ah'll try because it's aboot time Ah gave her some ay the respect that she's gave me. She's never once lifted her hand at me. All right, she could have been a bit stricter, but everything Ah've done an' all that, she shouldnae be there the now and she is. Ah nearly lost ma ma for a year fac the drink. She was on her deathbed to get her last rites and all that. So this might be the last chance Ah get wi' her, know what Ah mean? So Ah'm gonnae try. (Kelly)

When I get oot o' prison I want tae go oot there and make the lot o' things up tae ma wee sister and ma mam and ma dad, and make up for the time that me and [ma wee sister]'s lost, do you know what I mean? Go tae the dancing and go to the pictures and a' the rest o' it. So I've really got what I want in ma life sorted oot in ma heid. I only need tae get oot there and dae it. (Cathy)

Annie, whose child had been previously placed for adoption, who was estranged from her adoptive parents, and whose birth mother and father had both died from drug-related illness/overdose gave a stark assessment of the prospects of desistance for someone who had 'nothing left to live for':

I suppose if I had something to stay off of drugs for, like if I was to get ma house back and ma wee lassie back, I would stay off drugs. I would stay off drugs. But because when I get out of here I've got nothing, no house, no daughter. I've no even got a family. So what's the point in making an effort? Like you say, you'd lose a lot. But I've nothing to lose, I've lost it all. (Annie)

When I asked her about the kind of life she would like to return to, she said:

Haeing a good night out wi' ma pals, nae fighting, nae drugs, just haeing a good time, having a laugh and going home. Having pyjama parties, a group of lassies watching a video, good 'hings like that, going to the pictures and swimming, that's what I'd like tae dae.

I would like people to say, "There's Annie Smith, she's brand new. She's a good friend, somebody you can trust. She'll help you out." (Annie)

Like all of the young women, then, her aspirations were fairly conventional. As a group, the young women said they 'just' wanted 'tae dae normal 'hings': 'settle down,' 'get ma ain hoose,' 'have a wee motor,' 'go to college,' 'go tae the dancin',' 'get masel a wee job,' 'go for a walk, feed the ducks, just stuff like that, stuff that a mother should be dacin'.'

Summary

This chapter has explored the ways in which young women negotiate their identities as violent women. The findings show that despite their conviction for a violent offence, young women rarely label themselves as a violent person. Three reasons are put forward for this. First, low-level violence is naturalised and normalised within their families and their communities and, as we saw in Chapter Seven, justified by recourse to (sub) cultural norms and values. Second, ‘proper’ violence (i.e. ‘serious’ violence, which generally transgresses norms of acceptable violence) is understood as a largely masculine activity. Third, involvement in violence was associated with youth and so many of the young women didn’t consider it to be a stable feature of their personality, but rather something they would grow out of. Young women whose current offence could not be justified as a defence of self or others, was committed against a vulnerable or undeserving victim, and/or which resulted in a serious injury to the victim, struggled to maintain a positive self-definition and fell back on dominant depictions of women’s violent offending in an attempt to excuse their behaviour. That is, they commonly understood their behaviour to be a loss of control, attributed to past trauma and/or drug or alcohol abuse. In contrast to the previous chapter, in which young women took the position of active subjects, respondents who excused their behaviour in this way tended to view themselves as objects rather than subjects, and often held very fatalistic views about the world (and consequently their likelihood of ever desisting from offending).

Chapter Nine

Conclusion: The Multiple Motives and Meanings of Young Women's Violence

This thesis has investigated the social meanings attached to violence committed by young women. Its aim has been to problematize the ways in which young women's violence has been understood and explained within academic discourse by describing and analysing the multiple motives and meanings young women themselves ascribe to their violent behaviour. In this chapter I present the conclusions based on that analysis:

1. Examination of the various sociological and criminological writings on women who offend suggests that discourses relating to violent young women fall under four main headings, each of which draws upon an essentialist framework underpinned by fixed dualisms of masculine/feminine and/or victim/agent:
 - a) pathological discourses conceptualise violence as a masculine trait and so consider women who commit violent offences as unfeminine and unnatural;
 - b) discourses of feminine violence redefine violence as part of the natural feminine condition (i.e. emotional, irrational and out of control);
 - c) patriarchal discourses tend to reposition women who commit violent offences as victims; while
 - d) discourses of equal opportunity violence cast violent women as active, autonomous agents, freed from traditional ties of family and gender.
2. The central argument of the analysis of the interview materials is that young women's accounts embody some persistent conflicts and tensions, which defy simple classification. These include:

- a) ambivalent feelings about their families and their localities. A key theme in the young women's accounts was the significance of kith and kin and the need to 'stick together' and/or 'stand up for' extended family members. Yet this sense of familial and territorial affiliation was often accompanied by serious and recurrent family problems and changes to their main carer and their address. A large number of young women were victims of physical and sexual abuse, and had witnessed the same against their siblings and especially their mothers within the family home. The majority reported previous social work involvement and more than half had been looked after by their local authority. Thus, rather than being cared for and protected by their families, most young women described experiences of abandonment and maltreatment, alongside overwhelming feelings of anger and pain.
- b) complex attitudes regarding risk and risk-seeking behaviour. Young women attempted to cope with these painful experiences by engaging in a range of risk-seeking behaviours. Most of the young women were persistent truants who spent their teenage years 'hanging about' the streets with their peers, often fighting with other young people, drinking and taking drugs. Initially these activities were enjoyed for 'the buzz' or as a means of fitting in with (older, often residential) peers. However, as their use of drink and/or drugs progressed, the young women increasingly came to rely on risky behaviours as a means to block out unpleasant memories and emotions or, alternatively, to express emotional pain. Looking back at these events, the young women described a complex entanglement of active participation and helplessness.
- c) contradictory views about the use of violence. Whilst they adhered to a legal definition of violence as an act of intentional interpersonal physical harm, the young women also acknowledged the longer-lasting and more damaging effects of verbal abuse. In general, they possessed negative views towards violence, yet believed that there were certain situations in which the use of violence was justifiable, or even prescribed. In addition, they held contradictory views about whether violence was essentially masculine or whether it could be used to express a particular form of 'bad girl femininity.'

- d) a confused sense of gender identity. The young women generally rejected most aspects of emphasized femininity and valued traditionally masculine traits, i.e. bravery, physical strength, toughness, risk-taking and emotional stoicism. Yet they denied that they were unfeminine, and often claimed to be offending in order to fulfil norms traditional femininity, notably loyalty, selflessness, and caring for others.
3. The meanings that the young women gave to their involvement in violence were similarly paradoxical. They represented their engagement in violence as both:
- a) a loss of control and an expression of control;
 - b) a source of pride and intense shame;
 - c) a means to pre-empt violent victimisation and a source of sustained victimisation;
 - d) a predominantly masculine activity and a particular expression of femininity;
 - e) an active choice and something that was imposed on them.
4. Alienated from their families – and subsequently their peers – young women experienced feelings of anomie, chaos, and emotional detachment. Within the interview setting they attempted to account for their actions by employing two key discursive strategies:
- a) they challenged the definition of their behaviour as violent by drawing on (sub)cultural norms and values to demonstrate the normalcy of their activities. Violence that was prescribed included that which was motivated by the defence of self and others and physical assaults against persons deemed deserving victims.
 - b) they challenged the notion that they themselves were violent by attributing their offence to experiences of victimisation and the intoxicating effects of drugs and/or alcohol. Those young women whose offences transgressed proscribed codes of conduct excused their actions by depicting them as

symptomatic of individual pathology or, alternatively, as the result of circumstances beyond their control. Unable to appeal to the 'code of the street,' these women fell back on dominant discourses of women's violent offending.

5. Taken together, these findings provide a powerful and sophisticated challenge to essentialist arguments about the emergence of a new breed of 'girl thugs' who simply seek to emulate the violent behaviour of young men. The main conclusions can be expressed succinctly in five pivotal points.

a) The thesis challenges the notion that young women's violence is a new and growing 'problem.' Analysis of the official statistics relating to female violence in Scotland demonstrates that, while violence represents an increasing proportion of offences for which young women are convicted, these percentage rises represent fairly small numerical increases to low base rate numbers. Furthermore, these increases tend to be in less serious offence categories, such as common or 'petty' assault, and not in the more serious 'Non sexual crimes of violence' grouping. As the analysis of violent offence types in Chapter Four demonstrated, even within this custodial sample one third of the women convicted of a violent offence were convicted of simple assault, rather than serious assault or homicide. Only 14 of the women, then, could accurately be described as 'violent' offenders and even within this group the majority would be better portrayed as drug offenders, insofar as their offence was either committed while under the influence of illicit substances, or during the commission of a crime carried out to fund illicit drug use. It is argued, therefore, that what we are witnessing is not an increase in violence among young women per se, but an increase in illicit drug use and dependency, a correlate of which is involvement in violent offending.

b) This context -- of increased drug use and, in particular, drug dependency -- gives lie to the myth of 'equal opportunity violence' and associated theories

of individualism and self-reflexivity. Stereotypes of the liberated violent female offender were not substantiated by this study. Rather, the findings demonstrate the violent family and community context of women's violence and, in doing so, the continuing salience of gender inequality and oppression. Analysis of narrative data from the interviews suggests that the social, material and ideological contexts in which the young women were brought up were characterised by: exposure to routine physical violence, particularly domestic violence; sexual abuse; family breakdown and disruption; childhood experiences of institutional care; substance abuse; self-harm; poor educational experiences; unemployment and poverty. These backgrounds severely limited the young women's choices and options, and contributed to the acquisition of a worldview in which physical force was deemed an obligatory response to intimidated or actual harms. The young women also adhered to stereotypical views concerning gender roles. They perceived a 'good' woman's place to be in the home and her responsibilities to be focused on the children and the family. In short, the study demonstrated that criminally violent young women are not liberated young women, but young women who are severely constrained by both their material circumstances and attendant ideologies of working-class femininity and kinship.

- c) While the thesis acknowledges the gendered context of female offending, it does not portray women as being determined by that context. Consequently, it challenges discourses which explain women's violence solely in terms of their own violent victimisation – a portrayal that confuses victimisation with victim identity and thereby denies women any agency and responsibility. By pointing to the risk-seeking nature of young women's violence, this study demonstrates the positive contribution violent behaviour can have in terms of young women's sense of self and self-efficacy. The thrill of transgression was a central theme in the young women's accounts and a number of participants employed violent behaviour in a deliberate attempt to exert control. Violence also served to maintain group solidarity, reinforce kinship ties, affirm allegiances, and enhance status within the group. These findings suggest that

women's involvement in violence, like men's, has multiple motives and meanings and therefore cannot be captured in a reductionist or monocausal way.

- d) By illustrating the rule-governed nature of much of the violence committed by young women, the thesis also challenges images of female offenders as emotional, irrational and 'out of control.' Within their families and their communities, young women were taught that violence was poised to erupt at any moment and that physical force was an acceptable and necessary means to establish respect and reputation (and thereby ensure self-preservation). Viewed within this context, their violence was neither hysterical nor irrational, but rather a *reasoned* response to intimidated or actual harms. In this worldview certain actions were proscribed: 'jumping in' to other people's fights, violence against vulnerable victims, and the carrying of and intentional use of knives or other weapons.
- e) Finally, the thesis challenges images of violent young women as pathological. The majority of young women did not consider themselves to be 'unfeminine' or 'unnatural,' but rather claimed to be offending in order to fulfil both traditional familial and/or (sub)cultural norms. A central theme in the young women's accounts was a sense of self as protector and caretaker of others. The participants often drew on their identities as sisters, daughters, girlfriends or mothers to justify their acts and protecting kith and kin was often cited as a key reason for involvement in violent behaviour, and in some cases, offending more generally. Accounts often also directed attention to perceived threats to their status as women, in particular their sexual reputation and their competencies as a mother. This demonstrates that violence can be used as a means of 'doing' femininity, albeit a particular form of femininity. Middle-class, middle-aged women may well experience violence as a loss of control, but for young working-class women brought up in a context of domestic violence and abuse it offers a normal, justifiable and sometimes necessary way of demonstrating that you are 'a woman to be reckoned with.'

By acknowledging that subordination and agency are simultaneously realised in young women's lives, the study transcends dominant representations of violent young women as either helpless victims or volitional agents in favour of a more complex understanding of processes of investment and negotiation. In short, the study demonstrates that there is no such thing as the essential violent young woman.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Access letter

Dr Jim Carnie
Scottish Prison Service
Room 312 Cailton House
5 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh EH12 9HW

21 June 2000

Dear Dr Carnie

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH ACCESS: 'PATHWAYS THROUGH VIOLENCE: YOUNG WOMEN DETAINED BY THE STATE IN SCOTLAND'

Thank you for considering research access for the above study. As requested, I enclose an up-to-date copy of my research proposal, along with my CV and a letter from Dr Michèle Burman, my supervisor. Also enclosed are copies of the references used to support my ESRC studentship application from Professor Betsy Stanko (Director of the ESRC Violence Research Programme) and Professor Tony Jefferson (Head of Department, Department of Criminology, Keele University).

From my previous experience as a Research Officer in CRU and a Research Assistant at Glasgow University, I am familiar with the sensitivity of the proposed research topic, as well as the associated ethical and methodological issues. I am also aware of the Committee's need to weigh up the possible benefits of the research with the possible burden on prison staff (as well as prisoners). As a result, I wish to highlight the following.

Specific access requirements

Full details of the proposed research design are described in my proposal. My main access requirements are as follows.

- The proposed study is directed at a very small section of the prison population. I do not want open access to Cornton Vale, but would like to speak to a maximum of 15 young women (aged 16-24) receiving an immediate custodial sentence for non-sexual crimes of violence or petty assault. Respondents, who would be identified in consultation with SPS, would be interviewed in July/August 2001 and November 2001. Each meeting would last for approximately one hour and would take place at a pre-arranged time. Interview themes would be made available to the prison authorities, as well as to potential participants, in advance.

- Semi-structured interviews would be carried out with five members of the prison staff, again at pre-arranged and convenient times. These interviews would last for 30-45 minutes and interview themes would be made available in advance.
- Access is also sought to collect data from prison records and the case files of the young women taking part in the research. Access to Saughton House would be required for up to two weeks in May/June 2001.

Implications for policy and practise

The proposed study is not only timely but will fill a significant gap. It ties in with self-contained emerging areas of policy not yet covered in the official research programme and offers further exploration of promising leads which have emerged from earlier research.

The 1998 Joint inspectorates review recommended that The Scottish Office should ensure that 'by the year 2000, young women under 18 years of age are not held in prison establishments'. Recent statistics, however, suggest that the number of females aged under 18 in prison have doubled. There has been an increase in the number of young women receiving custodial sentences, for violent offences in particular. That said, there is very little information available about women's offending and, as a result 'the nature of women's offending is not readily visible or understood'. This is particularly the case for women who commit violent offences precisely because the numbers are so small.

Drawing on the insights offered by the earlier work of Pat Carlen and Nancy Loucks, the proposed research will examine the factors that put young women at risk of becoming violent offenders, as well as the criminal justice response. In doing so it will assist in the development of policy and practice. In terms of useful output, a condensed report of the findings will be made available to SPS on completion of the research, along with regular feedback should that be of interest. If there were any immediate matters of concern that could be usefully incorporated into the research, I would be happy to consult with the Scottish Prison Service.

I hope the information supplied will help the Research Access and Ethics Committee in its deliberations and look forward to hearing the outcome of meeting in due course. In the meantime, please get in touch if you have any queries. I can be contacted by telephone (0141-339 8855 ext. 0941) or e-mail (s.batchelor@socsci.gla.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

Susan Batchelor

Appendix 2: Notice to prisoners

NOTICE TO PRISONERS

RESEARCH PROJECT

Susan Batchelor, a student from Glasgow University, will be carrying out some research in Cornton Vale over the next couple of months.

The purpose of her research is to explore the views and experiences of **young women who have a history of violent offending**. Taking part in the study will involve being interviewed in private. This should take 1-2 hours, depending on how much you have to say! All information which is collected will be kept strictly confidential.

Susan will be writing to you individually to tell you more about her study. If you are interested in taking part, please give your name to your Unit Officer.

If you have any questions please ask to speak to the House manager or to me.

Alan Hamilton
Head of Residential

Appendix 3: Letter to prisoners

3rd August 2001

Dear [NAME]

Research Project: 'Pathways through Violence'

My name is Susan Batchelor and I am a student from Glasgow University. I am writing to you because I am doing a research project on young women and violence and would like to ask for your help.

The purpose of the research is to explore the views and experiences of young women who have a history of violent offending. The violent behaviour of young women has been talked about a lot recently – in newspapers, magazines and on TV. So far no-one has asked young women what *they* think about things, as most studies of violence have focused on young men. I am interested in talking with you to find out what *your* views and experiences of violence are.

I am hoping to speak to about 15 prisoners in total, and have written to everyone serving a sentence related to violence. Taking part in the study will involve being interviewed, in private. This should take about an hour, depending on how much you have to say! If you give your permission, I would also like to look at your prison social work file and your other prison records. All information which is collected about you will be kept strictly confidential.

I will be in Cornton Vale for the next couple of months and you may see me in [INSERT NAME] House. If you are interested in taking part in the study, please approach me directly or give your name to your Unit Officer. I will be coming round to tell you more about the study (and who I am) in the next week or so.

Yours sincerely

Susan Batchelor

Appendix 4: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the 'Pathways through Violence' research being carried out by Susan Batchelor (University of Glasgow). I have made this decision based on the information provided in the Information Letter. I understand that all information gathered on this project will be will be considered confidential and I will not be identified in the thesis, report or publication. I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

I agree to be interviewed (*Please tick your choice*)

YES

NO

I also give my permission for access to my file (*Please tick your choice*)

YES

NO

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____

Prison identification number: _____

Appendix 5: Interview themes (Young women)

Introduction

Thank participants for agreeing to speak to me. Describe study, why chosen, confidentiality (and its limits), oral history method (and importance of *her* views and experiences), seek permission to use tape recorder and ask participants if they have any questions/ concerns about taking part in the study.

Personal history and family background

First of all I'd like to ask you some questions about your life outside prison:

Tell me a bit about your life before you were arrested.

Probe: community, friends, family, education, employment, experience of Children's Hearing System, residential care, truancy. For example:

What was it like growing up in your family?

How did you find being at school?

Have you ever been to a Children's Hearing? Why? What happened?

Experiences with and/ or involvement in violence

What was your first experience of violence? [Probe: as an offender/victim]

Tell me about the events leading to your current offence?

How would you explain how you got involved with offending/ violence? [Probe: role of peer pressure, drugs and alcohol etc.]

Is there anything that would have stopped you following this route?

Experiences of the criminal justice/ penal system

How did you feel when you were arrested/ sentenced/ arrived here for the first time?

Is violence/ bullying/ self harm a problem in Cornton Vale? Is it a problem for you, personally?

What help have you been offered to address your violent behaviour since being in prison? Do you want help to address to address your offending behaviour?

Views on the social acceptability of violence

What do you think of when you hear the term 'violence'?

Describe the situations where you think using violence is justified/ necessary.

What are the rules of fighting?

Some people say that fighting/being violent is unfeminine, or unnatural. What do you think?

In what ways is violence perpetrated by women different from violence by men?

Self and identity

What single thing (e.g. event, person etc.) has had the most significant impact on you/ your life/ who you are today?

What kind of person would you say that you were? How would other people describe you?

What are your hopes for the future?

Closing

Go over confidentiality etc. again. Ask participants if there are any other issues that they would like to raise. Questions or concerns about taking part in the study? Ask if there are any issues they would like to discuss with staff. Hand out help-lines info. Thanks.

Appendix 6: Warm down questionnaire

YOUR VIEWS ON VIOLENCE

1 A lot has been said in the newspapers and on television about young women acting violently. Please give me your views on the following.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
I am a violent person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can be violent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends can be violent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young women need to be violent to show they can't be pushed around	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is okay for young women to be violent towards one another	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is okay for young women to be violent towards young men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is okay for young women to be violent towards adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violence by young women is not as serious as violence by young men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violence by young women is not as serious as reported by the media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Violence by young women is not feminine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 The following things have been described as violent behaviour (e.g. in the newspapers, on television, or by other people). Please tick those which you find acceptable (okay) or unacceptable (not okay).

	Okay	Not okay	Don't know
Young men physically fighting other young men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young women physically fighting other young women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People deliberately hurting animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young women taking part in boxing or wrestling matches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smacking children when they are naughty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young women physically fighting young men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women hitting men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Men hitting women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sentencing somebody to death for a serious crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (please tick boxes)

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
It's okay to hurt someone if it was an accident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's okay to fight with someone if they hit you first	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's okay to fight with someone if they insult your family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's okay to fight with someone if they steal your boyfriend/girlfriend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It's never okay to hurt or fight someone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MORE ABOUT YOU

4 When you get angry what do you normally do? (please tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cry | <input type="checkbox"/> Take it out on someone else |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottle it up and keep it to yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Hit someone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shout and scream | <input type="checkbox"/> Get your own back |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Break things | <input type="checkbox"/> Go into a bad mood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk about it (to friends, family etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Take it out on yourself (e.g. eating, hurt yourself) |

Other (please write in) _____

5 Feeling or doing something aggressive makes you feel... (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Better | <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Tearful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respected | <input type="checkbox"/> In control | <input type="checkbox"/> Out of control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited |
| Happy or depressed depending upon whether I won or lost | | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these |

Other (please write in) _____

6 How would you describe yourself? (please tick all that apply)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easy going | <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive | <input type="checkbox"/> Happy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Shy | <input type="checkbox"/> A worrier |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Popular | <input type="checkbox"/> A loner | <input type="checkbox"/> Streetwise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive | <input type="checkbox"/> Violent | <input type="checkbox"/> A troublemaker |

Other (please write in) _____

7 If you have any further comments that you would like to make, please write them below:

Appendix 7: Glossary

A'body:	everybody
Aboot:	about
ABS:	Anti Bullying Strategy
Acid:	LSD
Act it:	to behave in a deliberately obtuse manner, to try it on
Aff:	off
Aff ma heid:	off my head, intoxicated by drugs or alcohol; out of my mind, crazy
Afore:	before
Ah:	I
Ain:	own
Airm:	arm
Arenae:	are not, aren't
Auld:	old
Auld dear:	old woman, mother
Awfie:	awful, very
Aye:	yes; always
Ayeways:	always
Bairn:	child
Back cells:	segregation cells
Batter:	to physically assault
Bam:	a person who is unable to stick up for themselves and is viewed as 'soft' (see also: 'Daftie')
Bawl:	to cry; to shout

Beast:	person who has committed an offence against a vulnerable victim, especially a sex offender
Bevvy:	alcoholic drink
Bird:	female, woman
Bitch:	to talk about someone behind their back (see also: slag, slagging)
Bitch fight:	fight involving the use of stereotypically feminine fighting techniques, e.g. scratching, nipping, biting, and pulling hair
Blade:	knife
Boak:	sick
Bobble:	hair elastic
Brand new:	excellent, really nice
Buckie, Buckfast:	tonic wine
Buzz:	thrill, rush, good feeling
Cannae:	cannot, can't
Chib:	knife or a blade; to slash, stab; to cut with a sharp object
Claites:	clothes
Cosh:	heavy stick or a bar used as a weapon; to hit someone with a weapon
Couldnae:	could not, couldn't
Con:	convict, a person serving a custodial sentence
Da:	Dad
Dae:	do (sometimes: don't)
Daein:	doing
Dae ken:	don't know
Daftie:	a daft person, an idiot, someone who is unable to stick up for themselves (see also: 'Bam')
Deck:	to knock down

Deid:	dead
Didnae:	did not, didn't
Dinnae:	do not, don't
Doesnae:	does not, doesn't
Doing:	physical assault
Dole:	benefits
Doon:	down
Doon ma way:	the area I come from
Dyke:	lesbian
E, Eccie, Ecstasy:	MDMA
Fae:	from
Fag:	cigarette
Faither:	father
Feart:	scared
Fer:	for
Fucked:	intoxicated; overwhelmed, disorientated
Fucked up:	mentally disturbed
Gaun:	going; gone
Gie:	give
Gonnae:	going to
Gran, granny:	grandmother
Granda:	grandfather
Grandwean:	grandchild
Grass:	informant; to inform
Greet:	to cry
Growl:	to give someone dirty looks

Guid:	good
Gurn:	to make involuntary facial expressions as a result of taking drugs
Habit:	drug addiction
Hadnae:	had not, hadn't
Hame:	home
Hard:	tough, aggressive
Hash:	cannabis
Haud:	hold
Haund:	hand
Heid:	head
Hoor:	hour
Hoose:	house
Isnae:	is not, isn't
Jag:	to inject
Jakey:	homeless alcoholic person
Jellies:	temazepam
Joint:	Marijuana cigarette
Jump in:	to intervene in someone else's fight
Junkie:	heroin addict
Ken:	to know, to understand
Kit:	heroin
Lad, Laddie:	young man or boy
Lassie:	young women or girl
Lib:	liberty
Libbed:	released from prison

Lifted:	arrested by the police
Ma:	my; mum
Mad for it:	kccn, cager
Mad with it:	drunk or drugged, intoxicated
Mair:	more
Maist:	most
Mascl:	myself
Maw:	mum
Mebbe:	maybe
Mental:	insane, crazy
Messages:	groceries
Mind:	remember
Motor:	car
Nae:	no
Naebody:	nobody
Naw:	no
Name:	reputation (e.g. for violence, sexual promiscuity)
Nane:	none
Neck:	to swallow
Ned:	'non educated delinquent,' derogatory term meaning a young, poorly educated, working-class person who wears branded sportswear
Nip:	to 'pull' someone
Noo:	now
Nut:	no; head; to headbut
Nuttred:	headbutted; intoxicated (i.e. 'out your nut')

Nuttin:	nothing
OD:	overdose
Pansy:	derogatory term meaning: effeminate, feeble, weak-willed male; homosexual
Patter:	talk
Papa:	grandfather
Polis:	police
Poof:	homosexual
Potty:	mad, insane, crazy
Puff:	to smoke, usually cannabis
Punter:	a man who pays for sex
Pure:	absolutely, very
Put it about:	to sleep around
Rattling:	suffering from physical effects of drug withdrawal
Red face:	embarrassment
Sair:	sore
Scheme:	council housing estate
Schemie:	a person who comes from a council housing estate
Scrap:	to fight
Screw:	prison officer
Shag:	to have sex; a sexual partner
Shitebag:	coward
Shite yourself:	to be terrified
Skelp:	to slap, to hit
Slag:	to verbally put someone (or something) down (see also: bitch)
Sleekit:	sly, two-faced

Sleepers:	sleeping tablets (see also: jellies)
Slug:	to punch
Smack:	heroin; to punch
Snide ride:	derogatory term meaning bad sexual partner
Speed:	amphetamines
Spew:	to be sick
Square go:	fist fight, punch up
Square up:	to take an aggressive position, prepare to fight
Steaming:	drunk
Stick the nut in:	to head but
Stick up:	to defend, stand up for
Tae:	too
Take a len of:	take a loan of, take advantage of
Take the bile:	to feel sick
Tax:	to rob
Tenncr bag:	bag of heroin costing £10
Thegither:	together
Toon:	town
Toot:	to smoke or otherwise inhale (i.e. snort) drugs (usually heroin)
Trackies:	tracksuit bottoms
Trainees:	trainers, sports shoes
Two-ed up:	sharing a cell with another prisoner
Vallics:	Valium
Wan:	one
Wance:	once
Wasnae:	was not, wasn't

Wasted:	intoxicated
Wean:	child
Wee:	small
Whit:	what
Whitey:	pale facial complexion, as when all the blood drains out your face when you get a shock; also: an undesirable reaction to smoking cannabis
Willnae:	will not
Wimmin:	woman, women
Wimp:	feeble or ineffectual person
Wis:	was
Works:	equipment used to inject drugs
Work the toon:	to work as a prostitute
Wrang:	wrong
Wrecked:	intoxicated
Ye:	you

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