Performances of masculinity: The impact on boy’s experiences of youth justice

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Abstract

There has been a lack of research into constructions of masculinity within youth justice practice settings. Within this thesis, the perceptions of boys and the professionals who work with them are examined to understand how boys make sense of their masculinity and how this sense making impacts on their experiences of youth justice services (YJS). There has been a lack of insight drawn from boys regarding their experiences of youth justice and this thesis is the first to include a sample of boys from across different sectors of, or, working in conjunction with, the youth justice system (public, private, voluntary) and adds new insights to the growing area of men, masculinity and youth justice practice.

The study is theoretically underpinned by Bourdieu's theory of social class relations and, in particular, his concepts of 'habitus', 'capital', and 'field', for their use in analysing how class and institutional structures (e.g. school, police, social service) intersect with the subjective experiences of boys. Based on semi-structured interviews with 24 boys aged between 14-22 and two focus groups with six YJS professionals, three key findings are proposed. First, masculinity is embodied by boys through offending behaviour as a means of managing themselves in their communities but, simultaneously, this helps cement their marginalisation. Second, despite the multiple disadvantages they face, the study uncovers forms of reflexivity and agency deployed by participants concerning their offending behaviour, factors which can be overlooked or downplayed. This strand of argument highlights some participants' critique of the structural/class-based constraints they face on developing a valued identity. Also, there were notable ambivalences that portrayed much more

diverse male practices than has previously been associated with boys who offend, including the sensitivities and vulnerabilities that exist and intersect with their constructions of masculinity. Although adverse circumstances predispose boys to offend and guide their everyday behaviour toward anti-authoritarian thoughts and practices, this is not definitive of them. Indeed, the link between masculinity and crime revolves around continuity, contradictoriness and change in thought and practice. Third, authoritarian approaches are proposed as mismatched with the boy's habitual ways of being, which helps reproduce and reinforce a conflicting relationship between the 'street' and the 'system'. However, findings from the third sector mentoring groups and alternative education providers show that boys respond more productively to egalitarian services that are more rehabilitative and rooted in the men's capacity to change.

Contents

Chapter One *8*

1.0 Introduction and thesis structure *8*

1.1 Overview of youth justice in England and Wales **14**

2.5 Youth justice approaches to working with young people **22**

1.3 The work of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant as a theoretical framework **30**

to analyse constructs of masculinity in the field of youth justice **30**

1.4 Structure of the thesis **38**

Chapter Two: Literature review – Men, masculinity and offending behaviour *38*

2.0 Introduction **42**

2.2 Social class and social constructions of masculinity **50**

2.2 The Criminalisation of boys **57**

2.1 Engendering disengagement **63**

2.4 Bourdieusian analysis in a criminological context **72**

2.6 Conclusion **77**

Chapter Three: Methodological rationale and methods *80*

3.1 Introduction **80**

3.2 Methodological rationale **81**

3.3 My position as a researcher **85**

3.4 Gaining access to participants **88**

Gatekeepers .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Place sampling 91

Organisation sampling 93

Participant sampling method 94

3.5 Data analysis **100**

3.6 Ethical and political considerations **103**

Chapter Four: Products of our environment – male habitus in the street field *113*

4.0 Introduction **113**

4.1 Disrupted family relations **115**

4.2 Education: Rejection, negotiation and attitudes **119**

4.3 Subordination through adversity **124**

4.4 Managing and policing performances of masculinity **130**

4.5 Alternative economic capital **140**

4.6 Conclusion **145**

Chapter Five: Ambivalent masculinity – the limitations and possibilities of youth justice 147
5.0 Introduction ... 147
5.1 Mismatched services ... 149
5.2 Forming trusting relationships ... 155
5.3 Engagement and understanding ... 165
5.4 Changing performances of masculinity: Contradiction, change and continuity ... 176
5.5 Conclusion ... 179
Chapter Six: Practitioners' accounts of the boys they work with: challenging identity ... 181
6.0 Introduction ... 181
6.1 Forming relationships ... 182
6.2 Performances of masculinity ... 189
6.3 Different approaches to service provision ... 201
6.4 Conclusion ... 208
Chapter Seven: Concluding discussion ... 210
7.0 Introduction ... 210
7.1 Men, making sense of their masculinity ... 211
7.3 Autonomous action within social and structural constraints ... 219
7.4 Masculinity in youth justice practice settings ... 224
7.5 Beyond the conflict between the 'street' and 'penal' fields ... 234
7.6 Professionals' perspective – reinforcing or challenging masculinity ... 239
7.7 Recommendations for practice ... 245
7.8 Concluding remarks ... 246
7.9 Reference list ... 248
Appendix A – table of boys ... 268
Appendix B - table of professionals ... 269
Appendix C – Semi-structed interview guide for boys ... 270
Appendix D – focus group questions ... 271
Appendix E -Thematic analysis table ... 272
Appendix F- professional information sheet ... 275
Appendix G – Professional consent form ... 277
Appendix I – over 18 information sheet ... 279
Appendix J – Over 18 consent form ... 282

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in any other form of award of a higher degree at any other educational institution.

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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction and thesis structure

This thesis examines a paradox that exists within the youth justice system: one that concerns the predominance of male service users yet does not, in policy or practice, explicitly address thinking about masculinity (Baumgartner, 2014; 2020; Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019). Although it has been argued that the justice system was 'designed with men in mind' (Corsten, 2007; Elfleet, 2017 p.1), the social construction of masculinity – and how that construction shapes the practices of the system's core population, men – remains an aspect that has so far been overlooked concerning both policy and its potential for rehabilitation in practice.

At present, male service users account for 85% of the young people involved in the youth justice system (Youth Justice Board, 2020). Even so, there remains a dearth of research into why boys dominate this type of service and how they experience it through a gendered lens. As such, the role masculinity might play in both boys' offending and their experiences of youth justice provision has been neglected (Baumgartner, 2020). In terms of youth justice policy, there are no gender-specific approaches to working with young people; instead, the system is characterised by a sort of 'one-size-fits-all' methodology. Yet it has been argued by Fitzpatrick (2017), as well as by Gelsthorpe and Sharpe (2006), that the youth justice system is inherently gendered: that it regulates 'appropriate' gender-role behaviour, as evidenced by different responses to male and female offending.

Female offending, for example, is often understood as related to women's perceived vulnerability and as a violation of normative gender-role expectations (Simpson and McNulty, 2008; Hine, 2019; Povey, 2019). Where there have been attempts to explain and devise genderised responses to youth crime these have predominantly focused on females. In contrast, male offending is associated with the negative masculine connotations of aggression and violence, without any explicit practical focus on issues of masculinity or the link between masculinity and offending itself (Copes and Hochstetler, 2003; Boeuf, 2020). Theoretically, the discussion of masculinity has advanced substantially, coming to include how gender-based behaviours are both diverse and dependent on situations and constructs that are socially learnt, rehearsed and performed within different contexts (Butler, 2009; Maor, 2019). Masculinity and offending have received some empirical attention, including the establishment of an implicit link between offending behaviour and shared male practices and notions of aggression and violence (Hearn, 2004; Cowburn; 2005; 2010; Gelsthorpe and Sharpe, 2006; Beesley and McGuire, 2009; Messerschmitt and Tomsen, 2018). Nevertheless, insights from boys themselves on how their constructions of masculinity translate into the context of youth justice practices – including their potential as mechanisms of rehabilitation – remain limited (Claussen, 2017; Baumgartner, 2020).

Thinking more broadly about the adult-centric nature of youth justice, policy and practice there is no input from children about how services might best meet their needs. Instead, interventions are designed by adults and based on miniaturised adult models (Case and Hampson, 2019: Case at. el. 2020). This assumption that children are simply putative adults has neglected the fact they are individually distinct both physically and mentally (Case, 2020). What has resulted is neglecting that young

people are ‘children’ and responses toward their behaviour should adequality consider their status as children (Creaney, 2020). Coupled with this is how historical social constructions of youth crime have been andro-centric (primarily concerned with men), yet despite research often focusing only on males, masculinity issues are not sufficiently considered as a factor in policy or practice (Baumgartner, 2020). It could be that the stereotypical assumptions of boys being naturally inclined toward crime overrides the conscious questioning of issues relating to masculinity.

The lack of focus on boy’s experiences of youth justice through a gendered lens formed the contextual rationale for focusing on masculinity as an explanatory concept (Baumgartner, 2014). Identity led insights of boy’s lives could has the potential to better inform genderised youth justice responses in work with boys. Exploring how masculinity as a social construct intersects with and guides responses to criminogenic influences experienced in life could provide much-needed variation in how masculinity and crime are currently studied. Recent research by Vuattoux, (2017) found that in the French youth justice system a form of hegemonic masculinity consistent with fixed presumptions of deviance, violence and aggression effectively homogenises the perceptions of boys and their behaviour. What this results in is limited social constructions of masculinity that fail to consider the complexities, ambivalences, sensitivities/vulnerabilities that might factor into a boy's behaviour and decision making at any given time (Haines et al 2021).

The limited focus on the masculinity of boys in the youth justice system justified the rationale behind adopting masculinity as an explanatory concept. Pursing a genderised perspective offers something different to the adult-centric, supposedly scientifically objective, risk-led approaches designed with identifying, preventing and

predicting the likelihood of offending (Baumgartner, 2020; Case, 2020). Instead, an identity-led focus which has been adopted for this study focuses on the subjective experiences of boys navigating through the youth justice system and emphasizes the interactions between structure and agency - namely their responses to systemic barriers and processes of criminalisation that engender disengagement and marginalize children's voices (Creaney, 2020). Focusing on masculinities provides an alternative explanation for offending by exploring the lived realities of boys and their experiential knowledge. Significantly there is scope to explore how they self-identify in contrast to state labelling as an 'offender' (Deakin, Fox, Matos; 2020).

A key tenet of the rehabilitation process is that change in a person's narrative identity is required, and for men, this means a change in their socially constructed male identity (Fortune, 2018; Warr, 2020). For boys in the justice system, socialisation with other men, experiences of incarceration, and interactions with prison institutions, guards and inmates are the conditions that control their identities and available outlets of masculinity (Goffman, 1961; Warr, 2020). Recent research into the impact of incarceration on the formation of boy's identities has highlighted the struggles such men face in understanding, as they are instructed to change their ways but not given any tangible advice or guidance towards a productive alternative, who they are meant to be (Warr, 2020). What follows from this is that the significance of focusing on this ambiguity of identity is perhaps underexplored as a potential key factor in the rehabilitation of boys who offend. This sentiment is echoed in other studies (Smith, 2010; Crew, 2017; Warr, 2020), but the issue remains inadequately investigated as a matter of practice.

Recently, there have indeed been more calls for initiatives to promote pro-social, crime-averse constructs of masculinity by engaging boys in discussion regarding both their identity and, more specifically, components of masculinity that contribute to offending (Claussen, 2017; Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019). At present, however, professionals within the youth justice system are offered no formal training as to identifying or developing ways of addressing troublesome elements of masculinity that are linked to offending (Claussen, 2017; Whitfield, 2018). The consequences of this failure are twofold. First, scholars and professionals are left short-sighted with respect to men's perceptions of how masculinity is socially constructed in relation to their offending and their perceptions of the youth justice system. Second, and correspondingly, there is a crucial lack of professional awareness of, and efforts towards, the potential that formal training on masculinity-based challenges could have in practice.

Considering just how little questions of masculinity are factored into the policy and practice of youth justice, this thesis seeks to expand recent efforts to place masculinity on the 'map' of youth justice practice (Baumgartner, 2014; Dominelli, 2002, p. 8; 2016; 2020; Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019). In particular, focusing on boys' perceptions of their own experiences with youth justice have received little consideration. This thesis aims to make original contributions in this area. Previous work has focused on how practitioners envision the masculinity of the men they work with (Baumgartner, 2012; 2014; 2020), finding that practitioners' conceptions of boy's masculinity are limited to its link with their offending and the stereotypical assumption of men as violent and unable to articulate their emotions. Particularly significant in this research was that practitioners' evaluations of masculinity were not considered

relevant by practitioners beyond the negative connotations ascribed to them – and as such, not deemed as an important avenue of exploration in terms of rehabilitation. In this sense, male offending behaviour is 'taken for granted' and not explicitly challenged as a salient factor (Bourdieu, 1998; Moffir, 2018). More recent work from third-sector organisations has emphasised the importance of working with boys on issues of masculinity related to forming a male identity, including increasing their awareness of how their social construction of masculinity limits their possibilities and highlighting the value of addressing the practical link between gender roles and offending behaviour to help men author new, pro-social identities (Blagden and Perrin, 2018). Indeed, in other third-sector studies, male mentors have been highlighted as critical in working with boys on issues of masculinity – for example, discussing emotions relating to fear or helping to deconstruct the male 'street identity' in a non-judgemental environment (Robb et., al 2015; Harris, 2019). These promising developments, all in the past decade, give weight to the necessity of beginning to incorporate concepts of masculinity into the design, targeting and implementation of youth justice at large. Most importantly, though, they highlight the importance of initiating discussions with men about being 'men' in order to understand the situational and social construction of masculinity and its role in offending.

The argument pursued throughout this thesis is that insufficient attention has been paid to the influence of constructions of masculinity on boys engaging with youth justice services. This study brings the voices of those boys to the forefront of youth justice to highlight the potential of integrating the concept of masculinity, challenge men's thoughts of what it means to be a man and help professionals acknowledge and better understand the men with whom they work. However, the backdrop of the study

must be established by carefully considering some key barriers within the youth justice system. Developments within England in Wales over the past 40 years have shaped how children who offend are treated (Case and Haines, 2020), and an exploration of those developments is important to contextualise the study. To that end, the next section overviews the youth justice system and the complexities that surround shifting ideologies of welfare and justice, clarifying these key issues and their implications for advancing more gender-specific approaches to working with men.

1.1 Overview of youth justice in England and Wales

The youth justice system in England and Wales is a complex system that has historically been subject to the impacts of politics, media and public opinion. These forces have also shaped (and continue to shape) the social conceptualisation of children who offend and the systems that have been in place to 'handle' them. The purpose of this section is to critique how the current system, though it is not without merit, fundamentally fails young people. This failure is particularly pronounced in the area of capturing young people's voices, but it is also evident in the system's underestimation of the importance of gender (Baumgartner, 2020).

The past 40 years have seen dramatic and often contradictory changes in the way young people who have offended are treated and worked with. In the 1980s, the UK adopted a pro-social approach to the rehabilitation and reintegration of young people who offend (Case and Heines, 2020). These measures included an emphasis on

diversion from trial and custody, instead favouring community-based alternatives. At the time, the common sentiment towards young people was they were innocent, vulnerable and in need of care and support for their well-being (Case, Creaney, Deakin and Heines, 2015; Phoenix, 2016; Case and Haines, 2020). The diversion movement proved a success: both the number of recorded offences by youth aged 10–16 and the total youth prison population fell (Phoenix, 2016). Yet despite this apparent success, several incidents transpired that changed both public opinion and political and media coverage of youth crime. For example, notable riots – in 1981 in Toxteth and 1991 in Tyneside –gave the impression groups of dangerous young people were out of control (Marron, 2016). Exacerbating this perception were sensational tabloid stories of 'one-boy crime waves' and criticisms that the police and justice system was unable to control troublesome youth under the age of responsibility (Scraton, 2007).

The incident perhaps most profoundly transformative for the landscape of youth justice in England was the tragic murder of toddler James Bulger at the hands of two 10-year-old boys. The incident was met with national outrage and the politicisation of youth crime, which equated to the need to toughen approaches to young people who were 'out of control' (Stanley, 2001; McAra, 2004; Andow, 2013). In the aftermath of the murder, the furore evoked in the media, politicians and the public proved detrimental to the rights of children in the UK as attitudes lost their sympathetic care for youth in favour of a vilifying portrayal of youth as vicious and dangerous (Andow, 2013). In practical terms, one significant implication was the abolishment of *doli incapax* (incapability of committing an offence). Although the age of criminal responsibility had been 10 years of age for some time in the UK before 1998,

children under the age of 14 could be tried only if the prosecution could prove that they had the capacity to understand the wrongfulness of the criminal conduct (Stanley, 2001; Goldson, 2009), the abolishment of *doli incapax* meant that children aged 10 and above could now face conviction for their offences, just as if they were adults. The aftermath of the CDA (1998) resulted in a major shift away from welfare-oriented approaches to young people who offend and towards justice-oriented approaches, which were principally rooted in punishment, criminalisation and *responsibilisation* (Goldson, 2000; Case, Creaney, Deakin and Heines, 2015; Phoenix, 2016; Case and Haines, 2020). This shift had a drastic impact on how young people who offended were treated. Youth were now depicted as hardened criminals for whom there was little hope of rehabilitation and formalised punishment-led responses to youth crime became a priority on the political agenda.

The social construction of youth crime becomes more complex when one considers how boys can be criminalised in the youth justice process, particularly by schemes such as anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) which were in existence until 2014 (Goldson and Muncie, 2015). ASBOs, which came about in the aftermath of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the subsequent Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, could be made against anyone over the age of 10, provided that person had been deemed to have behaved in an anti-social way. Crucially, however, the person need not have committed a crime to receive an ASBO. This expansion of vulnerability can be understood as a net-widening process that criminalised greater numbers of children by entering them into a system that they would not otherwise have been a part of. A particularly striking factor connected to these ASBO orders was the ‘naming-and-shaming’ tactics adopted by British tabloid papers, which publicly outed both

individuals and families. Such tactics stigmatise young people and help perpetuate negative associations between youth and lawlessness. It could be argued that these approaches help to shape the identities of boys and their perceptions of the youth justice system.

During the 1990's the youth justice system was heavily criticized for its emphasis on welfare and justice approaches which were rendered ineffective in the Audit Commission's (1996) report 'Miss Spent Youth'. What was prized here was a proposed shift to Hawkins and Catalano, (1992) risk-based models of assessment. These changing perceptions eventually culminated with the introduction of New Labour's Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (CDA, 1998), which dramatically altered the approach to youth justice. The pursuit of 'new youth justice' that was 'tough on crime' and 'tough on the causes of crime' signalled a move away from welfare and justice approaches in favour of a risk-led neo-liberal form of correctionalism (Case and Hampson, 2019). This focus included a shift in the youth justice system's professional knowledge base, its occupational cultures and the diverse ways of working with young people that were evident in what were largely community-based alternatives to custodial sentencing. What succeeded this welfare-based framework was a heavily audited, target-driven, national management system for dealing with 'troublesome youth' that centred on a risk paradigm (Muncie, 1999; Haines and Case, 2015; Phoenix, 2016). The failure of this transition was the shift from discretionary professional judgement to a more abstract, de-professionalised workforce that operated under a punitive ideology and focused on risk assessments and performance targets in which maleness was identified as a risk factor for offending (Field, 2007; Pitts, 2013). It is argued by Phoenix (2016) that this transition to New Youth Justice

and the resulting youth justice system are *unjust*, entailing deleterious approaches to youth crime that criminalise young people and widen the net – through overly authoritarian methods – of those who can be criminalised (France, 2008; Case and Haines, 2009; McAra and Mcvie, 2018).

The use of risk as a primary tool for assessing children who offend became a mainstay in youth justice since The Risk Factor Paradigm (RFP) was introduced in 1998 (Case and Hampson, 2019). The RFP took an alternative approach to the pendulum of welfare and punishment responses to young people who offend in favour of a risk-led style of managerialism which was lauded as scientifically objective through using quantitative methods to identify predicted risk factors for offending (Case, 2021). Risk-focused approaches target the criminogenic role of risk factors to reduce recidivism by predicting the likelihood of future offending. However, risk-focused approaches have been heavily criticised as both conceptually and ethically flawed and derived from a weak evidence base (Case, 2021). One of the flaws of the evidence base is a clear psychosocial bias underpinned by the findings of a longitudinal study: Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development (West and Farrington, 1973) that established a set of psycho-social risk/protective factors (Case, 2007). What has been prioritised is a focus on biological, individual, family, peer, school and neighbourhood factors at the expense of wider macro, structural and political factors (Case, 2007; Smith, 2016).

By focusing entirely on the perceived risk of offending, risk-focused research on antisocial behaviour fails to explain the causes of offending and neglects social-structural or situational influences which effectively individualises the offending behaviour of young people. (Case & Haines, 2009; O'Mahony, 2009). For example,

RFA proposes that when identified risk factors are evident in young people's lives, it is more likely that those youth will offend. However, despite giving some consideration to one's peers, family and environment, RFA tends to overemphasise psychological factors: an individual malfunctioning, impulsive behaviour and lack of social control, which again feed into the individualising of youth crime (France, 2008; Gray, 2009; Mcara and McVee, 2018). Indeed, the wider structural factors of the state and the community are considered only as predictors of low risk, and although RFA has played a central role in youth justice policy, it displays weakness when it comes to understanding the role in youth offending played by socioenvironmental contexts (France, 2008; Case and Haines, 2009).

The impact of focusing too strongly on the individual downplays the influence of social inequality, social deprivation and marginalisation, which together constitute part of the root causes of offending (France, 2008; Phoenix, 2016). Despite RFA's prevalence in youth justice, the technique also has a flawed conception of how young people construct their identities: it does not recognise how young people's capacities to make decisions are limited by the wider structures that affect their lives. Focusing too heavily on risk and prevention denies the complexities of young people's lived experiences and individualises the outcomes of their offending behaviour by emphasising perceived individual deficiencies or an inability of self-control. In effect, young people are simultaneously responsible and irresponsible. There is an urging need to move beyond thinking in terms of risk to a social constructionist lens as such an explanatory approach can better establish, consider and understand the multifaceted causes and causal mechanisms of offending (Case & Haines, 2009; O'Mahony, 2009). The rationale here is to advance traditional and current

explanations of offending dominated by risk-led, adult-centric approaches that try and simplify complex behaviours using actuarial methods to assess the probability of offending.

A pertinent issue that continues to trouble the youth justice system is the lack of autonomy afforded to young people in the form of ‘choice’. It has been argued that voices have essentially been – by design – cut out of youth justice (Creaney, 2020). For some, this is justified in part by the belief that young people forfeit their right to a voice when they commit a criminal offence. However, I argue that in understanding the root causes of young people’s behaviour, greater value should be placed on their own knowledge and experiences. Recently, discussions between youth justice professionals and young people have described their respective experiences with youth justice supervision as disjointed, and young people report feeling that their voices are undervalued or seldom heard at all (Haines and Case, 2015; Clinks, 2016). Despite this, there have been some promising developments in youth justice in recent years, centring around a ‘child first, offender second’ that humanises the offending individual rather than emphasising their offence (Taylor, 2016). This approach, in theory, returns to the principle of upholding the welfare of children in need. However, in a system that has historically proved to be dominated by adult-led punitive approaches, the inclusion of children’s voices is much more complex. In 2016, The Taylor Review published a significant document evaluating the current youth justice system and recommending an approach that emphasises the needs of children and the importance of recognising relationship-based practices. According to the report, such practices would promote self-esteem and build confidence in young people, helping them to make progress on a more positive trajectory (Taylor, 2016). However,

the focus on gender remains absent as a salient factor for working with young people who offend.

The absence of masculinity is a gap in knowledge that this thesis seeks to address: the absence of work relating to social constructions of masculinity within the policy and practice of youth justice. Boys make up the majority of young people within the youth justice system and this thesis argues that masculinity is a key issue deserving of exploration to reveal what it is, explicitly and implicitly, about men that leads them to predominate in youth justice services.

However, there are some key implications as to why masculinity both currently and historically has been overlooked as a significant exploratory factor in both understanding boys' offending behaviour and their potential for rehabilitation. Male offending is homogenised and today, the structure of the youth justice system does not productively accommodate the social construction of masculinity (Baumgartner, 2020). Apart from specific programmes that address domestic violence or sex-based crime, gender-specific work with the masculinity of men who offend has not been prioritised either in criminal justice or youth justice practice (Scourfield, 2003). Instead, young people who offend are often met with standardised, supposedly gender-neutral approaches that are predominantly based on measurable outcomes. Approaches often focus, for example, on the costs of crime, stressing awareness of and sympathy for harm to victims and communities. Yet without acknowledging the link between these costs and the beliefs embedded within social constructs of masculinity – such as the need to provide, the need for peer approval, and the need to be strong and

show no fear – that often reinforce offending behaviour, areas of potential change and improvement are and will remain underexplored (Baker and Levon, 2016).

One of the primary factors contributing to the lack of consideration of masculinity, it could be argued, is the youth justice system's structure. In the youth justice system, offending remains largely approached and understood from the standpoint of risk, without any explicit link to gender. As a result, masculinity is reduced to no less or more than a risk factor, and no further thought is dedicated to social constructions of masculinity as a priority in work with boys. The approaches used to work with young people in the youth justice system have been by-and-large influenced by the broader notion of risk-led prevention programmes and this has been argued as ineffective.

2.5 Youth justice approaches to working with young people

Although this study was prompted by a lack of research focusing specifically on how masculinity affects engagement with the youth justice system, there has been considerable attention devoted to general engagement between young people and the youth justice system and an analysis of what works (Little et al., 2004; Mason and Prior, 2008; 2010; Creaney, 2012; 2020; Millward and Senker, 2012). In attempting to identify the relevance of masculinity, it is important to explore the existing empirical evidence of how youth justice broadly attempts to engage with young people.

Youth offending teams (YOTs) are multiagency organisations that bring together several distinct professions, including policing, education and social welfare, to help people avoid custodial sentences and re-offending. In such multi-agency

organisations, there are increased pressures and limitations when it comes to engaging with boys (Mason and Prior, 2008) – strict guidelines mandating the use of evidence-based practices override developing techniques that could sustain engagement. For example, Mason and Prior (2008) further report that despite the emphasis on engagement, a lack of integrated practices has resulted in poor communication, in turn presenting logistical limitations for youth justice practice that may hinder engagement.

Youth justice professionals have several interventions/approaches to engage with young people who offend. These include intensive supervision and surveillance programmes (ISSPs – most common for persistent offenders); rehabilitation programmes that help promote personal development and reflection (Millward and Senker, 2012); education, training and employment (ETE) programmes that seek to reintegrate young people into conventional pathways (King, 2012); community-based programmes, including the assignment of mentors for young people (Rob, 2015; Harris, 2019); and restorative justice, which aims at repairing relationships (Smith, 2009). Although each approach has its strength, they are collectively limited with respect to how engagement is measured, and the lack of feedback from people who use these services seems to be a recurring theme across each. As a consequence, practitioners have little information on young people's perspectives of how services may be differentiated to meet their needs – an area this study aims to illuminate by investigating the dynamics of youth justice practice.

Several practical suggestions have been advanced by Millward and Senker (2012) to help facilitate the needs of young people in the youth justice system. First, the pair

proposes an emphasis on one-on-one work and exploration of individual identity. Second, they suggest that practitioners should strive to create environments that meet the principles of autonomy, relevance and competence to harness intrinsic motivation and effect long-term change. Finally, they advocate for the presence of positive male role models. These suggestions highlight the need to include boys in youth justice research to understand underexplored dynamics beyond the simple fact of their offending. Further, the three proposals implicitly support the potential efficacy of a more egalitarian approach to working with boys. In the context of this study, understanding how habitus predisposes boys to oppose rules and authorities highlight the challenges of engaging men through punitive methods. If punitive, authority-based approaches are disjointed from the habitus of boys, it is necessary to conduct additional research to better understand how boys make sense of their masculinity. Doing so will clarify which approaches better align with boy's habitus.

A theme frequently highlighted in the literature on youth justice practice is that young people value caring relationships and, accordingly, that those workers who listen to young people and consider their feelings are particularly effective in promoting a more positive trajectory (Narco, 2005; Hart and Thompson, 2009). To achieve a positive outcome, young people working with YOTs may be intensively supervised through an ISSP (Youth Justice Board, 2005). ISSPs have been found to be effective in building the trust of young people (Little et al., 2004) by developing structure and routine; however, young people's own perceptions of ISSPs remain to be explored.

Rehabilitation programmes have similarly been shown to be effective in helping young people to author new identities by engaging in self-refection (Millward and Senker, 2012). This rehabilitative approach is important for the present study as it

sees masculinity as multifaceted, emphasising the impacts made and limits imposed by social constructions of masculinity on boy's behaviour. Thus, both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators (e.g self-reflection programmes) can be seen to contribute to changes in identity formation, suggesting that some progress has been made in moving away from essentialist views of the masculinity of boys who offend.

For young people, trust is a key aspect of a caring relationship, yet data indicates that trust is lacking in offender–practitioner relationships, sometimes as a result of logistical limitations such as short assessment periods that offer little opportunity to build up sufficient levels of trust (Anderson et al., 2004; Macdonald, 2006; Naylor et al., 2008). Indeed, young people engage better with those service providers with whom they have had longer contact and developed deeper relationships (Anderson et al., 2004; Macdonald, 2006; Naylor et al., 2008). Although trust seems an obvious basis for engagement, the reality of establishing trusting relationships between boys who offend and youth justice professionals is in fact quite challenging, given the former party's historical disregard for authority. That disregard for authority, a component of the habitus frequently developed by young people who offend, shapes the possessor's reactions to justice professionals, and as a consequence, those who work with boys who offend must depart from traditional authoritarian stances if they wish to facilitate engagement. Those who retain such authoritarian approaches reinforce the dispositions of marginalised men by engaging in what Wacquant (2009) terms 'punishing the poor': perpetuating the cycle of offending and punishment.

Subjectivity, personal qualities [humility and respect] and managing style [egalitarian] have also been identified as factors contributing to change (McCormack, 2001; Collins and Kay, 2003; Flint, 2011; Coalter, 2012; Morris, 2015). To achieve meaningful

change, meaningful engagement must first be promoted, and for this, a working relationship is vital (Flint, 2011). Studies indicate that for services to be effective, it is key that the motivation and personality of the service provider encourage engagement and provide a platform for change (McCormack, 2001; Collins and Kay, 2003; Flint, 2011; Coalter, 2012; Morris, 2015). Also, critical when engaging with young people and their families are characteristics such as persistence, tenacity, assertiveness, empathy and being non-judgemental (McCormack, 2001; Collins and Kay, 2003; Coalter, 2012; Morris, 2015). In this regard, further attention is required to understand the concept of masculinity, both in relation to offending and as a contributor to change. If professionals are to be more subjective in their work with boys, an understanding of those men's lived realities – including their potential triggers, areas of vulnerability and the kinds of pressures they face – is key to meeting their needs.

Meeting the needs of young people through youth justice can prove difficult. Service providers may be motivated and passionate about their work, but these qualities, while important, do not guarantee that the services will be well-received (Morris, 2015). Furthermore, such factors are only one aspect of the complex process of providing effective services to young people. Multiple dynamics are at play, and effective engagement depends in part on the management style of the service practitioner and in part on the extent to which a trusting relationship is formed (Collins and Kay, 2003; Coalter, 2012). Once a base level of rapport is developed, boys may eventually 'drop their guard', which could be accompanied by a shift from the display of masculine traits such as aggression or anger towards a calmer, more reflective state (Collins and Kay, 2003; Baumgartner, 2014; Morris, 2015). This suggests that although boys display certain (i.e. aggressive) masculinities in the

street field for purposes of conformity, they need not engage in such displays in the penal field when they feel that they are working with one or more trusted partners. The establishment of trusting relationships is therefore essential, and discussions with boys about masculinity are needed, as questioning their ideas of what it means to be a man, and how these perceptions shape their identity, could spark a reflective process on why they offend (Blagden and Perrin, 2018).

Within restorative programmes, an emphasis on inclusivity, reciprocity and the repairing of relationships has been championed, but while paramount in changing the behaviour of young people who offend, restorative justice also presents certain issues (Smith, 2009). Part of the trouble is that restorative interventions are focused on the responsibiltisation of young people (Gray, 2005). This focus entails an overemphasis on young people's acceptance of responsibility for their actions, placing sole blame on the individual, perpetuating the idea of their moral deficiency and feeding into a neoliberal approach to penal policy that fails to consider the wider structural and social pressures that contribute to crime. This restorative, reintegrative style of intervention may appear proactive; in practice, it can be counter-productive and stands to benefit from consideration of both individual and social aspects (such as peer or family influences).

The emphasis on responsiblitisation is one of the main flaws that engenders disengagement in the youth justice system with the assumption that young people make rational choices to offend and are therefore responsible for their contact with services. Responsibilitisation focuses on the psychological deficits of the individual and their moral choices as a target area for developing recidivism (Haines, et, al 2021). In a study concerning the responsibilitisation trend adopted in youth justice

policy Barry (2013) argues that the youth justice system appropriates aspects of Rational Choice Theory to problematise personal deficits in young people. As a result, this narrow viewpoint which has characterised policy strategies, neglects social-political aspects that might contribute to the causes of crime. The proposed evidence base has been criticized as confusing correlation with causes and damagingly this decontextualises choice by characterising young people by their perceived risk of offending (Mahoney, 2009). Both in turn neglect the limited choices available to young people and the age-crime curve evidence which shows offending decreases with age regardless of risk factors - seriously questioning the validity of the risk-modal based.

Another significant flaw have been the quantitative reductionism that has dominated the empirical evidence base used to inform youth justice policies guiding practice interventions (Case, 2021; Case and Hampson, 2019; Haines et al 2021). The main issues here are the oversimplification of complexity in understanding offending behaviour by young people and the restrictive conceptual lens from which policy and practice recommendations are derived - effectively hegemonizing quantitative-reductionist approaches at the exclusion of competing explanatory paradigms. The reduced scope highlights the questionable validity of policy and practice recommendations that have been utilised over the past two decades.

The advent of designing youth justice policies and practices based on empirical research should be something that is commended, however when the purported evidence base informed practices are engulfed in partiality – that is both biased and limited, critique and revaluation are needed. The hegemony of positivistic social constructions of youth crime and youth justice evidence-based designed to explain

offending behaviour have privileged the quantitative over qualitative - the statistics over stories. This is often in response to the need for simple and clear evidence from a political and bureaucratic sense that can be implemented in practice. However, approaches artefactually restrict the evidence which generates explanations of youth offending - narrowing the scope toward risk-led practices that validate political, economic and strategical policies. In, this respect what is being researched is neglected as the saliant factor for best practice in favour of the type of research and how this is utilised.

At present, the approaches to working with boys are varied; they are useful in some cases but commonly flawed insofar as their understanding of both the complexities of why men offend and the approaches that will deliver the most benefit. Flaws are evident in how engagement is assessed and measured, just as well as the ideology that governs restorative programmes, as outlined above (Smith, 2009). However, some rehabilitation programmes do show promise for working with marginalised boys: those that focus on creating a new, pro-social identity for boys in question (Milward and Sanker, 2012). This identity-reshaping approach stands to gain from the present study's efforts to understand masculinity and offending as deeply ingrained in habitus and not easily addressed in short-term programmes (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Habitus is influenced by each field that it enters, egalitarian approaches, as opposed to traditional, authoritarian methods, could be key in promoting a masculinity other than the habitual and dispositional expression that boys already know and live.

The limitations and conclusions from previous academic research have highlighted the lack of consideration into a social constructionist lens of understanding young

people's offending and more specifically the significance of masculinity as a social construct. This lack of social constructionist insight justifies exploring the stories of boy's experiences of crime and youth justice rather than statistics around their risks of offending. In doing so, there is scope to explore the interactions between agency and structure to provide a more nuanced account of boys offending.

1.3 The work of Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant as a theoretical framework to analyse constructs of masculinity in the field of youth justice

> Male domination is so rooted in our collective unconscious that we no longer even see it. It is so in tune with our expectations that it becomes hard to challenge it. (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 1)

As Bourdieu notes above, that which becomes socially embedded becomes accepted as normal. It could be argued that one reason constructions of masculinity are largely ignored in youth justice policy and practice is that the assumption that men commit crime is 'taken for granted', being so deeply rooted in our unconscious that it goes unchallenged (Bourdieu, 1998). After careful consideration, the work of Bourdieu and Wacquant was selected as useful for the support of this thesis's investigation, particularly given their focus on the inequality and structural disadvantages experienced by groups with low socio-economic status and how the reduction of state support impacts marginalised groups the most acutely.

In drawing on the key concepts of habitus, capital and field to understand men's practices, there is room to build on understandings of shared practices of masculinity by analysing the hidden influences that shape how masculinity is socially constructed structured and then restructured through different fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In particular, this (re)structuring refers to how men negotiate their practices in fields – autonomous domains in which social interaction takes place – to which they are accustomed (and those to which they are not) and how entering the youth justice field reinforces or challenges these practices.

What Bourdieu offers is a more holistic way of analysing social practice – one that does not divorce subjective experiences from objective constraints but instead focuses on their interconnectedness (Bourdieu, 1998). By uncovering the inner 'logic' and dispositions that shape men's habitus – their thoughts and practices – we can derive insights into how men perceive their positions in society, including their perceived limits and possibilities. Capturing men's perceptions of their experiences within youth justice settings serves to uncover how they interpret the approaches, expectations, relationships and bureaucracy that exist in the youth justice field. The goal of this unearthing is to address gaps in understanding between masculinity and crime by unpicking the experiential knowledge of men involved in crime and criminal justice processes to establish what works for them. By acknowledging and analysing the interrelated nature of agency (Bourdieu, 1990) and the structures that exist in the lives of men who offend, the complexities, constraints, inequalities and possibilities of those lives can be conceptualised to offer a bespoke view from the seldom-heard voices of marginalised men about the conditions of their lives and their interactions with the justice system (Scraton, 2007). The following section draws on the work of Bourdieu

and Wacquant to conceptualise how their ideas can assist in better understanding the social construction of masculinity by boys who offend.

Bourdieu proposed four distinct, but interlinked, forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986). This idea challenged intellectual thinking that understood capital solely in economic terms by positing that in a society, the accumulation of power is not limited to wealth (economic capital) alone; rather, wealth exists alongside social and cultural forms of capital that reinforce social structures and reproduce both privilege and inequality (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Social capital refers to one's social networks and connections and is best represented by the phrase, 'It's not what you know, it's who you know.' This adage, like social capital, concerns the resources available from social networks, or the 'more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 119). The idea of social capital is useful in this study as it lends itself to an understanding of how networks of peers facilitate and police the construction of masculinity (Bourdieu, 1992; 1993; 2005; Grenfell, 2014).

Symbolic capital, meanwhile, is a person's status – their accumulated prestige within their field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). A person who is respected or feared, for example, possesses symbolic capital. Indeed, to be feared proved an important form of symbolic street capital to the interviewees of this study.

Cultural capital consists of resources that are made available by one's social status or class positioning; among other non-economic resources that facilitate social mobility, it incorporates one's education, spoken language, and even their tastes in fashion, entertainment and music (Bourdieu, 1992; 1993; 2005; Grenfell, 2014). As such,

cultural capital exists in many forms and can be significant in understanding how individuals handle certain circumstances in their personal lives. For example, a young person may lack the forms of cultural capital related to education and societal knowledge required to 'get on' in the conventional opportunity structure. Cultural capital is a crystallisation of how culture becomes embodied within different groups, coming to serve as a form of capital that can enable its possessor to dominate a particular field. Cultural capital also has the potential to expand, or restrict, opportunities for social mobility.

The lack of certain forms of cultural capital is, in itself, directly related to the marginality of disadvantaged boys. This relationship is perhaps most evident in the education system, which often disadvantages young people from marginalised backgrounds most keenly. As argued by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977; 1990) and Willis (1977), institutions such as the school system add to the cultural capital of the middle and upper classes, in part by prizing intellectual white-collar jobs over manual blue-collar jobs, which in turn helps to reproduce class-based societies (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Simmons, Connelly and Thompson, 2019).

The purpose of involving the concept of capitals in this study is so that they may serve as a tool for understanding boy's perceptions of what, according to their lived experiences as men in their spatial domains, is valuable. Consideration of what boys value as forms of capital enables an exploration of the possibilities that particular capitals facilitate or hinder when it comes to boy's involvement with youth justice services.

The focus of this study is the lived experiences of marginalised boys in Merseyside involved in various youth justice services. Their perceptions of masculinity – in

particular, what being a man means to them and how this conceptualisation both is shaped by their external environments and shapes their internal habits of thought and practice – are analysed concerning their offending behaviour. In striving to go beyond individualistic notions of why men offend, the work of Wacquant (2001; 2008; 2009) was particularly appealing as a resource because of its focus on the impacts of neoliberal economic policies on marginalised communities and its attention to both the rise of the penal state and the reduction of state welfare. The neoliberalism movement has resulted in a diminution of the traditional role of the state in assisting the rehabilitation of its needful citizens; instead, the focus has shifted towards the identification and management of risks of social insecurity. As argued by Wacquant (2008), the state entities of the police, courts and prisons are core components of neoliberalism that produce and manage inequality and marginality in the penal field. Understanding, then, how these structures intersect with the subjective experiences of men who offend was a key aim of this study, the purpose being to better understand how men make sense of their masculinity.

Useful in this pursuit is the concept of 'street habitus': a man's habitually learnt ways of managing himself in the 'street' (Wacquant, 2002; 2019; Sandberg, 2008; Fraser, 2013). This idea will be drawn on throughout the study to point to the possibilities available to, and limitations on, marginalised boys in Merseyside. Street habitus is shaped by early experiences and prejudices later experiences of successful social interaction; its common characteristics include violence, drug use and offending (Sandberg, 2008). In this theory of development, the unconscious dispositions produced by the street economy are an 'acquired system of preferences' that guide thought and practice in social situations (Sandberg, 2008; Fraser, 2013; Wacquant,

2019). Crucial for this study is the understanding that any change in a person's habitus suggests a change in their nature – or their 'second-nature', as dispositions are long-lived and attuned to specific fields, making the probability of successful social action in other fields less likely (Wacquant, 2002; Fraser, 2013).

For this study, the significance of street habitus is the argument that youth justice services are effectively 'mismatched' with men living predominantly in the street field: the very nature of youth justice services, which operate through punitive sanctions, is problematic, as they demand a change in habitus, which is naturally resilient (Wacquant, 2002; 2009; Bourdieu, 2008). What this suggests is that youth justice services should avoid reinforcing criminogenic aspects of habitus relating to issues of masculinity and possibly, thereby become more effective as a rehabilitative approach. Such an approach could, rather than making the cost of the crime and the imposition of retribution the most salient issues, help tap into the origins of boy's offending behaviour and begin to dissolve their social constructions of masculinity by understanding the significance – the meaning – of their behaviour, including the rewards that boys seek in offending.

To better understand the application of the concepts developed by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), the concept of 'fields' merits further explanation. Fields are governed by rules and logic that determine how agents behave; this behaviour is thought to be both spontaneous and structurally influenced. Within a field, agents compete for different forms of capital – economic, social and cultural – that allow them to dominate and direct that field (Wacquant, 2014; Shammas and Sanberg, 2016;

Sanberg and Fleetwood, 2017). This notion is useful in exploring boy's offending behaviour within the field of criminality and helps to establish which resources are valued when constructing masculinity, as well as how the interplay of structural and social disadvantages influences boy's thoughts and practices. In addition, the concept of fields provides scope for understanding the impacts of entering the penal field that is the youth justice system. As Wacquant (2014) argues, agents are inevitably affected by each field they pass through, and though durable, habitus, too, is influenced by each field. Understandings fields are important in exploring how notions of masculinity both impact, and are subject to change through, engagement in the penal field.

To help transcend the structure-versus-agency divide and offer a different, and more holistic, investigation into the relationship between boy's gender formation, social contexts, social actions and crime, this thesis is underpinned by Bourdieu's concepts of habitus (habits of thought and action), capital and fields, as well as Wacquant's (2001; 2006; 2008; 2009) application of Bourdieu's concepts in his work on the impact of neoliberal economic policies on marginalised groups and the penal state. The significance of Wacquant's work to the present study is his analysis of the long-term decline in both skilled and unionised work as a result of the reduction of state and social welfare, which has been replaced by the privatisation of state assets and the expansion of the penal system. What Wacquant (2009) argues is that there has been a shift away from protecting marginalised groups and supporting the rehabilitation of those who have offended – a past focus represented by several community-based alternatives to incarceration introduced to the UK between the 1980s and 1990s

(Gottschalk, 2006) – to a narrow focus on risk and risk management, with the police and courts actively producing and managing inequality and marginality.

Considering habitus, which according to Wacquant (2006, p. 267) is ‘the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which we perceive, judge and act in the world’, can help to examine the internalising process of social constraints and possibilities generated in early childhood. Whilst habitus is ‘endlessly transformed’, it is the early years of life and their repeated exposure to social conditions that form a durable lens by which the social understanding of the world and actions are shaped. In this way, the concept of habitus offers a more holistic means of explaining the relationship between male identity formation and crime, as it considers both subjective and objective factors that shape action. The concept of habitus can explain the failure of youth justice programmes that require a rapid change in a person’s nature over a short period: given the durable nature of habitus, the probability of a sudden change is low.

Despite a growing body of research that considers the voices of young people, young people’s perspectives on youth justice remain more or less absent – a fact that points to the need for a timely study such as this one (Creaney, 2018; 2020). By bringing boy’s voices to the forefront of youth justice and discussing the links between how boys make sense of their masculinity and the role it plays in their involvement in crime, it is hoped that this study can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. These boy’s insights can be of great value in understanding first-hand not only their experiences with and relationships to crime but also their desistance from crime and how justice services could better meet their needs.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Throughout the seven chapters of the thesis, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How do boys make sense of their masculinity?
2. What impact does masculinity have on engagement in youth justice practice settings?
3. How do professionals reinforce or challenge aspects of masculinity in their work with boys?

Below, each of the chapters to come is briefly outlined.

Chapter Two: Literature review – Men, masculinity and offending behaviour

Chapter Two sets the scene for the thesis by providing the reader with a critical analysis of how the masculinity of boys who offend is currently understood in the context of youth justice. The primary finding is that within youth justice, masculinity is understood through essentialist assumptions that limit constructions of masculinity to certain distinct traits, such as offending, violence and limited capacity to display emotions. This limited view of men constitutes a knowledge gap when it comes to how men make sense of their masculinity and what hidden nuances might surround, outside of the stereotypical traits of male toughness, sensitivity and vulnerability. The chapter introduces the theoretical underpinnings of Bourdieu and Wacquant and clarifies how they help to inform the thesis and facilitate a more complex understanding

of how masculinity is internalised and influenced by engagement in youth justice practice settings.

Chapter Three: Methodological rationale and methods

This chapter outlines the steps taken to complete the research. First, a methodological rationale is outlined, including my own epistemological and ontological stances and a section on reflexivity that contextualises my position and how it impacted the research process. Second, the methods of data collection, data analysis, recruitment and sampling are discussed, as well as the study participants and the ethical considerations and limitations that govern this research. Included in this discussion are details outlining how I gained access to the study population and ethical issues that arose during the study and how they were addressed.

Chapter Four: Products of our environment – male habitus in the street field

Chapter four details the first analytical theme, which concerns how the interviewed boys perceive themselves as products of their environments. Four subthemes – disrupted family relations; rejection, negotiation and attitudes toward education; policing and managing masculinity; and the alternative strategies for economic capital – are also discussed. The chapter elaborates how the boy's habitus developed in response to the marginalisation they have experienced. Crucially, the findings expose how the particular type of male habitus that is developed in the street field is mismatched with mainstream society (including school, social services, the police) and highlights an oppositional relationship between the street and the system. This mismatch is in part due to the punitive approaches taken by youth justice, which help reproduce the status quo that characterises authority figures as adversaries but which

is also a result of the deep-rooted dispositions that form the boy's habitus. The chapter presents a number of original insights with respect to how boys make sense of their masculinity beyond their association with crime, revealing more nuanced perspectives around vulnerabilities and sensitivities that are rarely discussed in existing scholarship.

Chapter Five: Ambivalent masculinity – The limitations and possibilities of youth justice

Chapter Five examines the boy's responses to youth justice services. First, the critical views of state-provided services held by the boys are explored and noted as being discrepant with the habitus discussed in chapter four, particularly with respect to participants' perceptions of professionals as detached from their lived realities. How these disparities indirectly reinforce certain aspects of masculinity are also explored. Second, the chapter explores the sub-theme of forming relationships. To varying degrees, the boys were able to form relationships with professionals, and these relationships could be considered more closely aligned with the boy's habitus. I also discuss the overlap between 'fields of existence' navigated by the study participants.

Chapter Six: Practitioners' accounts of the boys they work with

Chapter Six examines the perceptions of professionals who work with boys in youth justice practice settings. Although the focus of this study is the voices of boys, it was important to also gain insights from professionals in different sectors to compare them with the men's constructions of masculinity. The narratives in this chapter present masculinity as multifaceted and support the idea of masculinity being ambiguous: contradictions are evident in how men present themselves in their communities and within practice settings. I also explore professionals' discussions of occupational limits

in their work and how, in their experience, they attempt to engage with boys and to question stereotypes of male offenders, particularly through working relationships based on equal understanding and respect.

Chapter Seven: Concluding discussion

This chapter discusses the findings concerning the literature and highlights the original contributions made by this thesis. The chapter outlines how men make sense of their masculinity and reveal how disenfranchised boys cannot be captured by stereotypical notions of masculinity that centre aggression and violence. The chapter also highlights the potential value of incorporating the concept of masculinity into practice settings by detailing how men's masculinity is better understood as conflicted, featuring notions of contradiction, change and continuity. The chapter proposes that two usually opposed fields of the 'street' and the 'system' can be transcended by the adoption of more egalitarian approaches and that discussing issues relating to masculinity – both commonalities and differences – could be key in promoting the rehabilitation and re-authoring of male identities that shy away from crime. Key recommendations are made in this section for policy and practice.

Chapter Two: Literature review – Men, masculinity and offending behaviour

2.0 Introduction

The below literature review analyses four key issues connected to men, masculinity and offending behaviour, highlighting existing gaps in understanding. The primary challenge identified in this section is the view that children's behaviour 'need not be understood, but must simply be controlled' (Smith, 2009, p. 4).

The second section focuses on social constructions of masculinity in the youth justice system and how these constructions are largely viewed by the notion of risk which helps to portray an essentialist understanding of men who offend. Then social class, hegemonic masculinity and the criminalisation of boys are discussed highlighting a gap in this area of research: the impacts of disadvantage, poverty and state function of criminalising boys. These factors are typically downplayed, and instead, men's offending tends to be viewed as a consequence of individual deficiencies.

The fourth section discusses the recent application of Bourdieu's concepts (capitals, habitus and fields) to the criminological field of masculinity. It also explores how understandings of masculinity and crime are rooted in essentialism (that is, the presumption of innate characteristics) and portray a homogeneous view of men as aggressive and violent, raising questions about whether masculinity is innate or socially constructed. The trouble with the essentialist understanding is that it ascribes

little or no agency to boys who offend, implicitly denying their capacity for change. Crucially, if this perspective is accepted, it challenges the very notion that youth justice can promote change.

The third section discusses how youth justice services currently approach boys arguing that approaches effective engender engagement. The section identifies the current policy focus on risk factors as problematic as it attempts to quantify the likelihood of offending and categorises groups of boys according to risk factors.

2.1 Defining masculinity

Masculinity can best be described as ambiguous and subject to interpretation, it is therefore key that the author defines both their definition of what masculinity is and what masculinity the boys in the study adopted. I define masculinity as the embodiment of dominant accepted/expected norms and behaviours of men within a given societal group (Connell, 2005). For the above reasoning, I ontologically favour socially constructed definitions of masculinity like those that Connell (2005) and Messerschmidt (2016) engage with. In this sense, I believe masculinity is socially constructed but individually negotiated by men within the limits of their social position. Whilst, I understand certain physical differences between men and women I am opposed to essentialist understandings that crime is innate within men or a result of being exposed to psychosocial risk factors in adolescence. Instead, I emphasize socioenvironmental factors in shaping a man’s identity but do not see this as a passive process but rather ever-fluctuating with meaning and adherence to norms evolving over time and context. Therefore, masculinities in this study are defined as constructions within a given gender order and these constructions reflect the social

diversity (inequality, social/environmental factors) that influences the boys' lives as they forge their pathway into adulthood (Connell, 2005). In this respect, I adopt Connell's (2005) definition that masculinities are not static entities that can be simplistically defined but rather they are complex, context-specific and ever-changing. For the boys in this study masculinities are appropriated through their encounters within adolescent gender orders; thus, encompassing a transitional stage of their lives where they begin to experience the adult world.

The masculinity the boys who took part in the study adopt is a type of dominant masculinity that is socially constructed and influences many aspects of their identity including aesthetics, behaviour, lifestyle and perceptions around authority. Their masculinity is characterised by a prized reputation as someone who can be violent, has loyalty to their locality, harnesses a criminal craft for monetary gain (selling drugs, robbing) and rejects mainstream opportunities and support (or lack thereof) that have been a source of marginalisation for them (Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2018: Messerschmidt 1999; Wacquant, 2009). However, the masculinity they adopt is both ambivalent and contradictory as vulnerabilities and sensitivities exist and influence their inhibition of the dominant influences/pressures in the gender order. In what can be linked to findings of the maturation process and desistance from offending as the boys become older and wiser (better understanding of consequences) with time and experience (often adverse incidents) their adoption of masculinity evolves and the emphasis shifts from their perceived “street” persona toward family and being a sufficient provider (McCuish, Lussier and Rocque, 2020). The boys defined their masculinity as an integral part of their social identity, developed within their locality with adolescence significantly impacting the making of these masculinities.

Thinking about my definition and the perceptions of the boys in the study - the quantitative tools adopted within policies and interventions devised by the youth justice system to assess, prevent and predict the possibility of offending mean the dynamic nature, contingency and nuance of boy's relationship with crime through a gendered lens is significantly overlooked (Heines et. al. 2021). Despite being male identified as a risk factor for offending there is no further exploration into aspects of masculinity linked with offending. In a study by Baumgartner (2014; 2020) Youth offending service workers found that they limit the masculinity of boys to essentialist characteristics of aggression, violence and inability to articulate emotions. These perspectives are largely spoken of in risk-orientated language without adequate consideration to the complexities that influence behaviour at any given time. Due to the narrow conceptualising of offending behaviour through risk-led approaches opportunities to develop child-led genderised responses are missing.

At present boys who commit crime are understood as sources of risk and labelled as 'offenders', 'deviants' or 'delinquent' - the criminogenic labelling of young people projects psychosocial deficiencies and detracts from their status as children at a transition stage of their lives (Deacon, Fox and Matos 2020). One impact of young people becoming labelled as 'risky' and as an 'offender' is the stigmatization of them being othered as deviant. The criminalising, monitoring and surveillance methods compound existing inequalities - often isolating people and reducing their life opportunities (Deacon, Fox and Matos, 2020). Their experiences are framed within a theoretical understanding of stigma as a construct of power, with clear power

differentials between young people and authority (individuals, systems and the state) providing the conditions for stigma to produce and reproduce.

In policy and practice, interventions have been found to be ineffective as rather than adopting a social constructionist perspective, allowing for a greater depth in understanding of how different influences interact, the youth justice system has for too long adopted deterministic risk factor theories (as discussed in chapter one) (Hampson and Case, 2019; Smith 2009). For the above reasons the masculinity discussed within this study differs significantly from the youth justice systems interpretation – which, hardly considers the complexities of masculinity as a social construct at all (Baumgartner, 2014). Instead, is a limited perception of essentialist understandings of masculinity centred around aggression, violence and being emotionally distant, yet no practical guidance of how to discuss and work on criminogenic issues relating to masculinity (Baumgartner, 2014; Blagden and Perrin, 2020). Having established both my definition of masculinity and a brief interlude of the perceptions of masculinity the boys who took part in the study adopt the next section focuses on how masculinity and crime are theorised and the theoretical approach adopted for the study.

2.2 Theorising masculinity

Masculinity has distinct norms, beliefs and expectations which are subject to change over time and age. Within theories of masculinity, the most influential concept of the last three decades is hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (2005) developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a theory of unequal gender relations, both between men and women

and between men alone. Connell's hegemonic masculinity considers unequal gender relations within a structured, male-dominated social system, otherwise known as a patriarchal society (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Within this structure, men vie to reach the top and stay there, where they can strengthen their masculinity by engaging in what Messerschmidt (1993; 2016) describes as 'doing their gender', seizing legitimate opportunities to reinforce gender inequality. These men often benefit from successful parental figures, who encouraged them to strive for success in sport and academics. As a result, boys of such a background are better prepared for school, feel that they are entitled to an education and 'do their gender' by conforming to the rules to succeed. In contrast, those boys who lack the resources and knowledge to progress in the approved manner are marginalised; they may resort to 'doing their gender' through physical displays of violence or use crime as a means of achieving economic success.

Men position themselves in reference to the masculine ideal that is most widespread at any given moment – the socially dominant male position in society, obtained most frequently with the help of cultural, financial, and educational privileges (Connell, 2005). There is an important distinction to be made, however, between dominant masculinity and hegemonic masculinity. The latter refers to practices that sustain gender inequality, whereas the former refers to the male practices most accepted and celebrated within a given society (Messerschmidt, 2018). Few, if any, can enact hegemonic masculinity, but most are complicit with or affected by it in some way. This relationship may take the form of any of the multiplicity of existing masculinities, as expressed via three core forms: subordination, complicity and marginalisation.

Subordinate masculinities refer to those that do not embody the hegemonic ideal. Men with subordinate masculinities may lack resources, they may be considered ‘gentle’ or non-macho, or they may identify as gay men, who have historically experienced political and cultural discrimination (Connell, 2005; Cleland, 2018; Barrus, 2019). In the context of men who offend, crime is used to achieve a subordinate masculinity, as these men lack resources and compensate by achieving economic gain and social status through crime.

Complicit masculinities characterise men who benefit from patriarchy while neither embodying nor challenging the hegemonic ideal. Men who achieve complicit masculinity rely on the compliance of women and subordinate men: without a subordinate or marginalised group, there is no masculine hierarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Marginalised masculinities, the final form, involve the interplay between dominant and subordinate masculinities and the intersection of social structures. Such masculinities belong to men who do not embody the hegemonic ideal – owing to characteristics such as the ‘wrong’ class, race or level of ability – but still believe in and reflect certain aspects of that ideal, including physical strength or aggression (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). For example, a complicit working-class man might use aggression and strength to construct his masculinity, but he cannot achieve hegemonic masculinity as he lacks the necessary economic, political, social and cultural capitals. Therefore, while only achievable by a minority of men, hegemonic masculinity acts as an ideal that regulates male behaviour and is a signifier by which society assesses successful masculinity. Even lacking the cultural and economic resources necessary to achieve this masculinity, men continue to aspire to it (Connell

and Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity theory is useful in identifying multiple masculinities currently unrecognised in youth justice policy (Baumgartner, 2020). Indeed, subordinate masculinity is one way to explain why most boys who offend seem opposed to education, which compounds their subordination, as conforming to the rules of teachers and authority figures would be an attempt to achieve a more middle-class version of masculinity. In addition to serving the needs of this study, hegemonic masculinity has been influential as a conceptual framework for a variety of men's studies, including social inequality in high schools (Light and Kirk, 2000), areas of sexuality (Edwards, 2005; Anderson, 2012; McCormack, 2012), media representations of male athletes, advertising campaigns and men's health practices, the latter including men's perceptions of risk and their tendency to conceal vulnerability and outwardly understate injuries (Coalter, 2007).

Hegemonic, subordinate, complicit and marginalised masculinities have also had a significant influence on criminology (Messerschmidt, 1993; 2012; 2016; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017; Stanko 2017). The studies in question highlight that in general, men commit more serious crimes, and engage more in organised crime, than do women (Stanko, 2017; Tomsen, 2017). Other studies have focused on dominant masculinity in prison settings, whereby physical violence, rather than economic or political power, is used to enforce the dominant masculinity and ensure the subordination of 'weaker' men (Messerschmidt, 1993). However, although these concepts help to explain variants of masculinity within the hegemonic structure, how masculinity is navigated in practice is still lacking. While hegemonic masculinity and its associated concepts have been widely utilised, they provide limited scope for

understanding how men make sense of their masculinity. Even so, hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework for understanding relationships between gender and power within a social hierarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). However, as they rely on structural explanations relating to capitalism and political discourse, conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity are of little use in exploring negotiations of masculinity in practice (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). While such structural explanations are important in understanding how social structures affect men's behaviour, they are unable to explain the subjective experiences of groups of men in relation to the societal structures inhabited by each group.

2.3 Social class and constructions of masculinity

Definitions of masculinity vary both culturally and historically, however, at the centre of the discussion of masculinity and crime are boys from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds (Wacquant, 2009; Hinton, 2016; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2018; Barrus, 2019). For men, gender norms are matters of how masculinity is acted out. This 'performance' encompasses the interplay of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. Studies of gender norms have found that aggression and violence, anti-feminist beliefs, individual autonomy and dominance over women are typical male gender norms (Jewkes, Flood and Lang, 2015; Young,2016; Baker, 2017). Men from working-class and low-status socio-economic backgrounds have been found to be predisposed to enact their masculinity through aggressive, violent acts (Bandura, 1973; Young, 2016). Men at the higher end of the social hierarchy, in contrast, have greater access

to financial, educational and political means of legitimately achieving their goals and need not, unlike those lower in the hierarchy, act physically to construct their masculinity (Winlow, 2002; Clinard, Quinney and Wildeman, 2014). Men without these means are more likely to engage in violence and aggression which suggests that those behaviours may be learnt from and imposed by social and cultural conditions, including by family and peers.

Findings suggest that working-class men are less capable of articulating their thoughts in order to peacefully resolve conflicts and are more likely to use aggression or engage in fighting to settle disputes (Carlsson, 2013). Aggression, fighting and 'hardness', then, are signifiers of working-class masculinity and means of exerting control. In contrast, middle-class masculinity is considered individualistic and rational; its signifiers are educational and financial success (Carlsson, 2013). As argued by Skeggs (1997), Messerschmidt (2016) and Tomsen (2018), the white, working-class, masculine identity is a social position signposted by legitimate and illegitimate practices. There is an important distinction to be made here, however: unlike middle-class masculinity, working-class male activities (particularly fighting) are associated with the wider male culture, in which aggressive male behaviour is considered normal (Winlow, 2002; Reed, 2018). Therefore, aggressive and violent male behaviours are viewed as viable avenues of affirming a man's positions in the social arena (Reed, 2018) – or, as Winlow (2002, p. 45) suggests, as a way of 'not being subjected to the will of others'. This objective offers notions of honour and the avoidance of vulnerability. A man who struggles to protect himself or his family may be perceived as weak, feminine and subordinated (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), and as such, aggressive actions and displays of the ability to defend oneself are means of

preserving one's image through masculine prowess (Messerschmidt, 2012). This perspective offers one insight into why boys may incorporate violence into their constructions of masculinity: by doing so, they can control their image within their contextual street field.

Male behaviour, thus understood, is a socially constructed means of managing and surviving disadvantages and adverse social circumstances. Circumstances of this very sort contribute to displays of masculinity in which extreme violent behaviour is normative (Messerschmidt, 2012; Holligan and Deuchar, 2015; McLean et al., 2018). A UK-based study by Holligan and Deuchar (2015) of 40 Scottish teenagers in prison for serious violent crimes explored psychosocial influences on the teens' masculine identities. The study identified many difficulties that people face when it comes to changing their reputations as violent criminals. For example, the root of many of the young people's offences lay in adverse social circumstances, including mental health issues and disrupted family relations. Respondents cited how traumatic experiences of violence and exposure to drugs within their communities were incorporated into their constructions of masculinity, which normalised offending behaviour. The normative nature of extreme violent behaviour (Holligan and Deuchar, 2015; Deuchar, Harding and Densley, 2018) has been further confirmed by studies suggesting that adverse social circumstances can catalyse offending (Callaghan et al., 2003; Stallard et al., 2003; Bekaert, 2004; Carswell et al., 2004; Paton et al., 2009; Cruise and Ford, 2011; Messerschmidt, 2012; 2016). Participants in Holligan and Deuchar's (2015) study described childhood histories of domestic abuse and neglect – as well as the momentary relief offered by regular drug use, gang violence and loyalty to their peer groups. However, the teenagers also exhibited awareness that their constructions of

masculinity acted as a barrier to their perceptions of themselves as men beyond their street persona. The youth displayed examples of marginalised masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), professing that their gender limited the spectrum of behaviour available to them.

Whilst Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) applied their conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity to clarify the relationship between crime and the constructions of masculinity of boys who offend, more remains to be learnt about how masculinity impacts other aspects of those men's lives, such as desisting from crime (Carlsson, 2013; Holligan, 2015). Exploring the lived realities of boys who offend and how they make sense of their masculinity has the potential to generate insights into this area – and to offer more pragmatic and impactful guidance to professionals working with men in the penal system – by better understanding the nuances that govern those areas (Carlsson, 2013).

Further research is needed on the motivations of boys who want to leave behind lives of crime and establish a more positive form of masculinity, e.g., by obtaining employment and providing for one's family (Holligan, 2015). Currently, in-depth explorations of how such changes in motivation arise are lacking. However, addressing these underexplored areas will require more than merely exploring the link between masculinity and offending behaviour. To achieve a sophisticated understanding, it will be necessary to explore how masculinity is constructed, translated and understood within the two conflicting fields of the street and the youth justice system. For example, analysing the impact that constructions and self-perceptions of masculinity have on engagement, and the capacity of boys as agents

to reflect on their own space within their field and desist from offending could usefully challenge seldom-questioned aspects related to offending.

However, several authors do give additional consideration to the interplay between social conditions, beliefs and practices, highlighting the links between boys from more socio-economically disadvantaged areas and their constructions of masculinity (Collison, 1996; Earl, 2011; Hinton, 2016; Goody, 2017), how boys construct their masculinity in relation to how they might be perceived by others (Collison, 1996; Earl, 2011; Carlsson, 2013; Goody, 2017), and, in turn, how boy's views of what it is to be a man influence their actions. The above studies form a solid foundation for the current study by establishing masculinity as a social construct and identifying how familial, social and structural circumstances predispose boys to offend (Goody, 2017; Collison, 1996; Earl, 2011). This premise also enjoys the support of the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which highlights a clear correlation between social class, the extent of deprivation, and the likelihood of committing a crime (ONS, 2019). Context-specific norms, therefore, play a significant role in constructing masculinity, and status and financial gain are particularly important.

Having money – or being perceived as having money – is important for a man's image (Collison, 1996; Goody, 2017). Consequently, when boys are unable to achieve this desirable quality through conventional means, they may seek to achieve it by criminal means instead (Collison, 1996; Earl, 2011; Hinton, 2016; Goody, 2017). For boys, social (or status) benefits derive from activities that impress peers (Cohan and Prusak, 2001). Earl (2011, p. 136) argues that the pursuit of financial gain and the corresponding increase in social status is described as a symbolic quest represented

by throw-away lines, such as 'get rich or die trying' and 'live fast and die '. These sayings are a display of complicit masculinities (Connell, 2005; 2011), in which men identify with a dominant male ideal but have limited resources with which to realise that ideal. This symbolic representation of ideal maleness offers marginalised boys a 'macho' shield for their struggles, but one that limits their ability to conform to mainstream society and highlights the clear absence of stability, structure and future security. For example, suppose that the dominant ideal is to become financially successful, certain men simply do not have access to legitimate means of achieving this position, but they nevertheless subscribe to the ideal, and accordingly, they suggest that they will 'die trying' to realise it. In the context of the present study, this observation provides a complex insight into what it is like to operate in the 'street field' and the potential ambivalences that exist between toughness and vulnerability, coupled with ownership and despair (Wacquant, 2002). This suggests that more nuanced experiences of accruing 'street capital' could be brought further to the forefront by understanding how masculinity is socially constructed through boy's perceptions.

Indeed, the maintenance of one's image, as by purchasing expensive clothing, cars and drugs, serves as a significant social and cultural resource to construct symbolic street capital (Collison, 1996; Coops and Hochstetler 2003; Earl, 2011; Carlsson, 2013). The aspirations expressed by such behaviour could be defined as conventional – financial security and ownership of luxury goods are hardly unusual pursuits – but the men in question lack the resources to reach these goals legally. In response, some men may turn to risk-taking, a means of demonstrating one's masculinity just as common as consumption. Fighting, street robberies and burgling houses are all part

of this form of ‘gambling’ with danger, which some may find intrinsically satisfying. Men of this sort receive excitement, or a ‘buzz’, from engaging in risky behaviour, and the sensation stands in contrast to lives that may otherwise be desolate (Collison, 1996; Earl, 2011; Carlsson, 2013).

Similarly, excessive consumption of drugs and alcohol has been noted to provide an emotional release from personal situations and to function as a form of ‘protest masculinity’ (Carlsson, 2013; Coops and Hochstetler, 2003; Connell, 2005; Earl, 2011). Boys describe this sort of action, which also includes decisions to leave school and break the law, as taking control of their lives (Collison, 1996; Connell, 2005; Earl, 2011; Carlsson, 2013). They also describe feelings of hopelessness and emptiness, explaining that drugs and alcohol provide a momentary relief in which struggles can be forgotten. Once again, control and hopelessness exist side by side, suggesting that boys are ambivalent towards the conceptualisation of masculinity, as evidenced by factors that predispose males to crime but also render them vulnerable. Conceptualising masculinity in this way, focusing on the ambivalences that exist, is a key contribution of this study as it takes into consideration the underexplored nuances that exist beyond the façade of male toughness.

Despite the singular concept of masculinity seen in the youth justice system, scholars have analysed more broadly both the commonalities and the differentiation in men’s behaviour (Pringle, 2013; Plummer, 2016; Cleland, 2018). Findings indicate that specific resources allow men at different stages of their lives to construct masculinity in different ways (Pringle, 2013; Jackson, 2015; Plummer, 2016; Cleland, 2018). Teenage boys, for example, may lack financial capital but not consider it an essential

part of their masculinity. Yet upon the transition into adulthood and the experience of significant life changes, including employment and the possibilities of marriage and children, those same individuals may develop substantially altered perceptions of masculinity, coming to integrate wealth into their imaginings of masculinity (Jackson, 2015).

Boys who face multiple disadvantages – as the men included in this study – can, however, be denied access to legitimate opportunity structures because of their lack of cultural capital (Wacquant, 2016). Previous studies, including those by Cleland (2018), Plummer (2016) and Pringle (2013) have brought to light the complexities of men's practices and clarified what practices are available to men when age, sexuality, ethnicity and social class are considered. What is important about the above studies is the recognition of varied male practices. Regrettably, intersectional approaches such as these, which address differences in men's practices, are scarce in the extant literature on youth justice (Pringle, 2013; Baumgartner; 2014) – a fact that reinforces essentialist views of men and offending (Pringle, 2013; Stanko, 2017), leaving a gap in understanding of how boys make sense of their masculinity and the variation of practices influenced by their constructions of masculinity.

2.4 The Criminalisation of boys

As highlighted in the previous section boys may offend for many reasons, but the environment in which they live can play a major role in offending behaviour. In deprived areas with limited employment opportunities, crime and gang involvement offer a

different choice to marginalised boys. This ‘alternative society’ comes with opportunities for financial gain, a sense of belonging and the potential to recoup a measure of meaning for one’s identity (Wacquant, 2001; 2008; 2009).

Although it may seem that opportunity, through education and employment, is universally available, the truth is that not everyone has the resources necessary for progress in this conventional structure (Bourdieu, 2000). Bourdieu (1998), coining the term ‘meritocracy’ to describe an ‘egalitarian’ (equal to all) society that doles out success according to merit or talent, heavily criticised the idea, arguing that in fact, society is unjust and disadvantages the poorest most acutely. There are certain aspects over which young people, owing to their age, have little control but which nonetheless have significant implications for their opportunities in life. Young people are unable to vote, for example, leaving them powerless to object to decisions that directly affect them, such as austerity measures and funding cuts to community services they consider vital. Young people also experience various disadvantages connected to poverty and inequality, and they are often unable to escape abusive parental environments (Phoenix, 2016; Robinson, 2016). As a result, some young people are in weak positions – politically, economically and personally – to have their voices heard. Thus, it is difficult to avoid or even recognise their criminalisation through classification, which is realised by policies and practices led by adults (Scraton, 2007).

Wacquant (2009) observes that in response to marginalising social conditions – as well as personal disadvantages such as living in care, living in a deprived community, and exclusion or expulsion from school – boys, develop an alternative economic and moral structure through crime. This structure features a disregard for authority, education and social services, and a normalisation of violence and crime as

occupations. Indeed, rather than competing for employment in the job market, marginalised men compete for 'street capital' (Wacquant, 2002), the accumulated experience of how to survive in the street. Street capital is gained through various means that correspond to Bourdieu's (1984) class analysis. The symbolic acquisition involves developing one's status; it concerns inspiring fear and earning respect for risk-taking. Economic acquisition, simply put, is the generation of income through crime. The cultural acquisition is created and expressed through dress, behaviour, drug use and attitudes – especially contempt for authorities and loyalty to one's area of residence. Finally, social acquisition amasses street capital through networks of friends or affiliation with gangs.

Research into the structural inequalities faced by certain groups has highlighted that those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds are more heavily monitored, policed and be subject to state punitive measures, which help perpetuate a cycle of crime and poverty (Wacquant, 2009; 2014; O'Malley, 2016; Reiner, 2017; Soyer, 2016). Neoliberal government policies that include 'zero tolerance' on crime have led to the disproportionate policing and punishing of those residing in the most deprived communities, and as a result, more crime is detected in those communities, leading in turn to more frequent contact with authorities and, eventually, mass incarceration of marginalised men (Wacquant, 2009; 2014; O'Malley, 2016). The obvious contrast between this cycle and the 'lad culture' found at some universities attended by upper-middle-class men, where sexual offences have received little sanctioning (Craig, 2016; Phipps et al., 2017), points to a potential discrepancy in how the behaviour of men from different social groups is viewed and tolerated.

It is clear that when boys are pushed out of conventional opportunity structures construct, as Wacquant (2002; 2009) observed, their own (sometimes criminal) structures, they are in fact developing their habitus in response to the multiple disadvantages they face. These disadvantages are forms of what Bourdieu (1989) describes as 'symbolic violence', unconscious oppression by the state, media and policymakers, whose perceptions of, policies for and approaches to working with marginalised groups are authoritarian, punitive and stigmatising. In addition, media and political discourse previously described certain areas as 'sink estates' (Tyler, 2013; Slater, 2018), arguably perpetuating the poverty, crime and addiction that plagued areas mostly inhabited by welfare recipients by casting individual blame and exaggerating the deficiencies of the people who live there. These portrayals become the socially accepted (and largely uncontested) views of certain groups (Scraton, 2007; Slater; 2018). Whilst not downplaying the prevalence of youth crime, greater scrutiny must be paid to the social, environmental and political conditions that play a significant role in the criminalisation of young people and particularly boys.

Symbolic violence, therefore, stigmatises individuals both through the media and in daily life, tarnishing entire areas and the individuals who live there. Extending Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence', Wacquant (2009) sees the stigmatisation of the new urban poor as violence from above, as observable in neoliberal government policies shifting towards increasingly punitive approaches: reduction of welfare, imposition of stigma and the mass expansion of prisons. In conjunction with these measures, an emphasis on personal responsibility attempts to shift the blame for poor social conditions onto individuals. By no means is this stigmatisation of marginalised groups a new phenomenon; in fact, it is akin to the distinctions between the 'deserving' and

‘undeserving’ poor evident in the 19th century, which caused division and resentment between those already living at society’s lowest rung.

Particularly damaging to marginalised groups is that stigmatisation is used to justify increasingly punitive measures, legitimising the reproduction of social inequalities. As argued by Klein (2007) and Tyler (2013), meagre social spending and the elimination of public services fuel the stigmatisation of marginalised groups. As programmes are cut, working-class members of society begin to feel anxiety and hostility towards the unemployed, the disabled, ‘feral’ youth and migrants, perceiving them as a ‘parasitical drain upon scarce resources’ (Tyler, 2013, p. 211). Further, Tyler’s (2013) work on stigmatisation indicates the function of ‘symbolic violence’: merging actual disadvantage with the portrayal of boys as a problematic element of society, rather than a problem created by society (and which could be solved by offering support to disadvantaged individuals).

These assumptions intimate the need not only to change the way youth justice approaches working with boys but also to change society’s perception of boys. Coinciding with this need is the lack of boy’s inclusion and consideration for their perceptions of masculinity and experiences of marginalisation (Johnstone, 2001; Baumgartner, 2012). To develop an understanding of how ‘territorial stigma’ and ‘symbolic violence’ affect constructions of masculinity, it is vital to bridge the theoretical and practical gap, long called for by Johnstone (2001), by including the lived experiences of male offenders in efforts to better meet the men’s needs.

During their teenage years, marginalised boys can be shaped into criminals by notions of aggression and offending that are considered to signify male norms (Messerschmidt and Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2016; Collier, 2017; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017). This is to say that boys may, in conforming to male norms, engage in criminal activity to demonstrate maleness; they may commit a crime when that crime equates to 'doing' masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2016). It is important to recall, of course, that although most crime is committed by men, most men do not commit a crime. Given this, one must take care not to simply view crime as a male norm, which risks essentialising the relationship between maleness and crime and denying the diversity of masculinities by suggesting that men are fully subordinate to nature (that is, a hard-wired, innate masculinity) or culture (through socialisation into communities thought to represent an 'underclass') (Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017).

It is part of this study's work to diversify the concept of masculinity and youth crime and to better understand the complexities and nuances of boy's realities, beyond structure-versus-agency debates. To that end, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and fields (that consider subjectivities of both masculinity and youth crime within social constraints) were adapted to understand how structure intersects with experience (Collier, 2017; Tomsen, 2017). Men who face multiple disadvantages at home, at school, in the community and from the state respond to their restrained social positions by developing, through crime, their own structures of economics, morals and opportunities, which are embodied in their habitus (Collier, 2017; Tomsen, 2017). Indeed, an intersectional approach focused on habitus within specific fields could help to explore differentiated social dimensions, promoting specific masculinities through

forms of capital, which may encourage or discourage offending behaviour. This could advance the study of men, masculinities and crime by introducing the plurality of men and masculinity as a topic. As Dominelli highlights (2002b, p. 159), the masculinity of boys in the youth justice system is viewed as an 'undifferentiated mass'; commonalities, rather than differences, are focused upon. From this perspective, it is perhaps pertinent to explore the lived realities of boys who offend and the significance of masculinity in both their offending and their subsequent experiences of the youth justice system. In discussing the limitations of an essentialist understanding of men who offend, the necessity of an intersectional approach that considers subjective experiences and objective constraints becomes apparent. The present study offers a path beyond the existing knowledge of stereotypical male norms: through the seldom-heard voices of men involved in the youth justice system.

2.5 Engendering disengagement

This section argues that the youth justice system's understanding of masculinity as a social construction is limited from a policy and practice perspective. These limitations are particularly evident in how masculinity impacts boys who offend with insights from boys who access justice services lacking.

This failure to hear from boys leaves a knowledge gap concerning what they believe is successful in youth justice services. Similarly left unknown are what attempts, if any, are made to challenge how masculinity is internalised through thoughts and practices. This section highlights the strengths and limitations of the current youth justice approach to working with boys and asserts the need to move beyond the

commonalities of offending to an analysis of individual, subjective experiences and the ability to change.

Marginalised men are often understood, through stereotypical male norms, as 'dangerous' and 'wild', and this understanding forms the basis of marginalised men's stereotypical portrayal (Baumgartner, 2014; Hinton, 2016). Within the youth justice system, the dominant view of men and offending is through an essentialist lens where boy's behaviours are viewed as innate, rather than socially constructed, which raises several issues for this study (Hinton, 2016). Such understandings are problematic as they downplay the effects of external societal pressures and policies that tend to criminalise boys (Wacquant, 2014; Goody, 2017; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017). For example, marginalised boys often live in areas that are crime 'hotspots', are subject to injunctions such as anti-social behaviour orders and come into frequent contact with authorities who assume they are criminally inclined (Scraton, 2007; Wacquant, 2009; Slater; 2018). Therefore, policies and approaches whose stated goal is to counteract youth crime instead serve to criminalise young people by labelling individuals, and indeed entire areas, as problematic, whilst downplaying the environmental and systemic factors that create conditions conducive to crime. Risk Factor Analysis approaches, for example, label individuals (and indeed entire areas) as problematic and dangerous (Case, 2020). Meanwhile, the youth justice system's 'offender-first' attitude, as exemplified by the abolishment of *doli incapax*, sees as criminals youth who might once have been considered victims of happenstance or failed parenting.

Despite this, young people's voices are absent in the design, targeting and implementation of the youth justice system, further contributing to homogeneous portrayals of masculinity and offending behaviour (Baumgartner, 2014; Tomsen, 2017; Smith, 2009). In consequence, young people's behaviour is approached and addressed through adult-centric rules that are not of their making, which in turn results in the underestimation of young people's capacity to make decisions (something made particularly clear by experiences of supervision) (Creany, 2020). This theoretical approach is problematic because the perception that criminal activity is innate and naturally attached to masculinity continues to prevail within the youth justice systems – thus engendering disengagement (Hood-Williams, 2001; Bottoms, 2018). In contrast, the existence of men who grow up in similarly disadvantageous circumstances yet do not turn to crime indicates that masculinity can be expressed in different ways (Dominelli, 2016). Current research promoting 'male-friendly' approaches, however, focuses on commonalities between men rather than on the diversity of male practices (Dominelli, 2016). Such thinking criminalises boys and reinforces gender essentialism - overlooking the idea that masculinity is complex, multidimensional and ever-changing.

The lack of insight into the social attainment of male power within marginalised male groups ignores how value and esteem are produced in communities that have poor access to conventional opportunity structures (Messerschmidt and Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2016; Collier, 2017; Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017). These limitations risk engendering disengagement by reinforcing essentialist gender norms and demand further exploration into the gendered practices of boys who offend. Smith (2009) concurs that it is troublesome for the youth justice system to reinforce

essentialist gender norms as doing so denies boy's capacity to change: suppositions that men's behaviour is innate call into question the effectiveness of crime-intervention programmes aimed at reforming individuals (Smith, 2009; Collier, 2017). The alternative, recognition of boy's capacity for agency – to reflect, rethink and change – is paramount to the success of rehabilitation programmes (Collier, 2017; Messerschmidt, 2016; Tomsen, 2017). In practice, awareness of boy's agency can affect service implementation and success (Greener, 2002; Harris, 2019), raising some key questions about how youth justice services should approach boys who offend. The need to understand how boys make sense of their masculinity is, therefore, essential in looking beyond the innate characteristics often ascribed to boys who offend to better help the youth justice system to meet their needs.

Although various criminological studies have examined gender in several contexts (e.g., sex offenders, domestic abuse), there has been limited focus on gender, much less masculinity, within the youth justice system (Scourfield, 2003; Cowburn, 2005; 2010; Wright and Cowburn, 2011; Robb et., al 2015). Some studies in social-care settings, however, have begun to explore ideas surrounding masculinity and working with boys that are of use in this study (Scourfield, 2003; Cowburn, 2005; 2010; Wright and Cowburn, 2011; Robb et., al 2015). For example, Cowburn's work in 2005 and 2010 indicates that masculinity plays an important role for boys, affecting the likelihood that certain masculine behaviours – including the tendency to conceal vulnerability – act as barriers to accessing support. Cowburn (2010) also argues that men must be considered socially-constructed, gendered beings, rather than asexual, passive beings, emphasising the necessity of considering issues of masculinity in youth justice practice and policy.

Indeed, some findings have highlighted how boys are well aware that adhering to masculine expectations hinders their access to services and can lead to criminal activity, poor scholarly attainment and limited future prospects (Scourfield, 2003; Cowburn, 2005; 2010; Wright and Cowburn, 2011; Robb et., al 2015). For example, a UK-based study on masculinity, male identity and role models conducted by Robb (2015) found that 'at-risk' men often experience troubled family relations, particularly negative relationships with fathers. Another finding was that participant's masculine identities were defined by local cultures of hypermasculinity that overemphasise stereotypical male behaviour (Millward and Senker, 2012), often leading to negative consequences such as violence and crime. This work suggests that whilst the attention paid to structural influences on boys within the penal system has been problematic, it is increasingly necessary to learn how boys make sense of their masculinity. Such investigation would improve understanding of how the structures in question intersect with men's experiences and the influence of specific masculine identities.

These structural impacts can be positive, however, as in the case of Robb et., al (2015) interview-based study. The men reported perceiving support services as a vital 'third space' (away from both the community and youth justice services) where emotional support could be received and men could distance themselves from negative hyper-masculine practices (Robb et., al 2015). Furthermore, the experiences and social backgrounds shared between boys and staff allowed the effective development of positive relationships through which the boys could be assisted in transitioning from 'localised' masculinities (masculine traits related to their specific contexts) to a more pro-social masculine identity (Robb et., al 2015). Robb argues that troubled family backgrounds and peer influence place greater pressure on boys to exhibit hyper-

masculine practices but also observes that positive relationships between people and social workers are capable of encouraging a more positive trajectory. It is, therefore, apparent that masculinity is an important social determinant for boys who engage in delinquent acts and that the structures of the penal system can influence and reinforce both positive and negative connotations of masculinity. Yet practitioners regard male role models as facilitators of productive masculinity (Robb et., al 2015), this belief has not translated into consideration of boy's own insights into how they make sense of their masculinity.

The potential for positive reinforcement through role models is demonstrated by the effectiveness of male mentors with criminal pasts (Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Robb et., al 2015; Harris, 2019 Holligan and Deucher, 2014) in promoting engagement (Harris, 2019). Boys view these mentors as role models to whom they can relate – and who understand, from first-hand experience, the consequences of crime. Furthermore, boys place value on shared social and masculine capital, which they can accrue through their work with perceived role models (Harris, 2019). However, it also became apparent in Harris's study that some male mentors with criminal pasts reinforced certain traits of masculinity, including sexism and street justice. These findings suggest that while using role models within the penal system may improve offender engagement by introducing a figure with whom the boys are compatible, it may also reinforce certain aspects of masculinity. Even so, alternative approaches such as this one constitute a significant move beyond the essentialist understanding of masculinity and the limitations of relying on authoritarian approaches in the pursuit of punitive youth justice (Collier, 2005; Robb et., al 2015; Harris, 2019). This understanding strengthens the case for adopting multidimensional approaches to working with boys

in the penal system and demonstrates how voluntary-sector organisations have a vital role alongside state-dispensed youth justice.

One study that focused specifically on masculinity in a youth justice setting is that of Baumgartner (2014), who explored how youth offending team (YOT) practitioners envision the masculinity of the boys with whom they work with. Baumgartner found that practitioners' conceptualisations of masculinity were reductive, defining masculinity by certain bodily traits, and emotions such as aggression or violence, that equate to 'doing masculinity'. In this view, the behaviour is often understood in terms of commonalities, and little attention is paid to the differences of individual agents, reaffirming previous innate understandings of masculinity and offending (Hearn, 2007). It is also evident that YOT practitioners inexplicably include gendered approaches in their work with men: the use (when possible) of sporting activities to appeal to boys seems likely to be a gender-targeted approach (Baumgartner, 2014). Professionals interviewed by Baumgartner described boys, when discussing sensitive issues, as often responding in a volatile manner, using aggressive language. Those same professionals reported that women, in contrast, were calmer and better able to articulate themselves (Baumgartner, 2014). It could be argued that such difficulty with expression stems from characteristics that proscribe male displays of sensitive emotions (Lambourn, 2009), but outside of proxy accounts (Paton et al., 2009; Walsh et al., 2011; Heath and Priest, 2015), this possibility remains underexplored. Indeed, focusing solely on YOT practitioners leaves out boy's perspectives on the relationship between their masculinity and their offending and how that relationship plays out in youth justice practice settings. Further investigation is necessary, therefore, to explore how masculinity is constructed during practitioner-service user interactions and what

impact it has in terms of engagement (Baumgartner, 2014). Baumgartner's (2014) recommendation that boys be involved in the discussion of masculinity and youth justice practice was a key factor contributing to the undertaking of this research, which hopes to extend what is already known from a practitioner perspective by seeking out and representing the perspective of the male offender.

In other forms of justice-service provision, considerable focus has been placed on the masculinity of boys in prison (Messerschmidt, 1999; 2000; Walsh et al., 2011; Phillips, 2012). For example, data from institutions for young offenders sheds light on boy's internalised identities (Messerschmidt, 1999; 2000). Less muscular boys may experience verbal abuse – often homophobic – related to their physical lack of strength (Messerschmidt, 1999; Messerschmidt and Connell, 2005). Further studies confirm that boys who do not embody the hegemonic masculinity, that is, physical traits such as being tall, muscular or athletic, often compensate for this disparity by engaging in destructive behaviour, including fighting, risk-taking or criminal acts, in efforts to gain respect from peers and increase their social status (Messerschmidt, 1999; 2000; Phillips, 2012). Research from young offender institutions provides insight into boy's experiences that can be complemented by research with boys in the community. For example, research into gang-involved men in Merseyside has highlighted that being the most masculine it is not necessarily about who is the most physically adept but rather who is the most reckless and willing to carry out extreme, armed violence (Robinson, 2019). These points, including increased male scrutiny of the body and destructive behaviour as a means of compensating for inadequate 'masculine' psychical characteristics (Messerschmidt, 1999; 2000; Phillips, 2012), constitute another gap to be explored with regard to community-based offenders.

How such issues translate into the engagement of those offenders with community-based services also bears investigation.

In other UK-based studies of young-offender institutions, inmates have described how a masculine ethos within the institution prevents them from seeking help for their mental health needs (Woodall, 2007; Penner, Roesch and Viljoen, 2011; Casswell, French and Rogers, 2012). Owing to the very nature of being incarcerated, it is difficult for inmates to achieve mental well-being. Woodall (2007) highlights the difficulty faced by young offenders in accessing services: to do so would be perceived by others as weak and outside expected gender norms, and such perceptions are obviously undesirable. Reluctance to access mental health services in such cases is an example of masculinity in action – not as a way of asserting manhood, but rather as a barrier to accessing services as the boys prioritise their masculine images over seeking help. With respect to the present study, these findings highlight the extent to which masculinity shapes engagement with services in a prison context and, further, the need to incorporate concepts of masculinity into work with boys (Casswell, French and Rogers, 2012). In this sense, masculinity has become the proverbial elephant in the room. It acts as a major factor in regulating behaviour, but it is seldom discussed or addressed in youth justice practice – except to the extent that being male is a risk factor for offending.

Despite research exploring the link between masculinity and offending, links between masculinity and youth justice practice settings remain underexplored. There is, therefore, a gap in the literature when it comes to the relevance of masculinity from an engagement perspective. Indeed, the context of the three youth justice services

– from the private, voluntary and public sectors – provides an appropriate environment in which to begin exploring the link between masculinity and engagement. The need for a social constructionist perspective is clear and the next section explores the potential of this perspective by drawing on the work of Bourdieu in a criminological context and how it can be of use in youth justice research.

2.6 Bourdieusian analysis in a criminological context

More recently, studies have used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field in criminological contexts, including criminal offending (Lilan, 2013; Fleetwood, 2014), policing (Dandoy, 2015), sentencing and imprisonment (McNeil et al., 2009; Caputo-Levine, 2013), and probation (Deering, 2011), suggesting that Bourdieusian theoretical approaches are of use in analysing contemporary issues within the criminal and youth justice field. However, Bourdieu's (1986; 1998) concepts remain underapplied in studies exploring masculinity within the criminal and youth justice field.

Nonetheless, it is useful to examine previous studies (Lilan, 2013; Fleetwood, 2014;) to gain insight into how habitus, capital and field may be utilised in the present study. For example, the anti-dualism of Bourdieu's ideas, which allow for the interplay of subjective and objective factors (Bourdieu, 1986; 1998), allows this study to consider masculinity without being theoretically limited by the divide between internalised and externalised accounts of social action. This approach, therefore, is more sophisticated than the mere essentialism of men and offending: it offers valuable theoretical space by including men's lived experiences and how they make sense of (and navigate through) circumstances in their lives.

Much like Bourdieu's ideas, the concept of 'street habitus' – first developed by Wacquant (2002) to characterise the dispositions of marginalised, young working-class, African-American males in deprived inner-city ghettos – has been examined in various domains since its inception. Fraser (2013) used the concept to explore how working-class youth in Glasgow responded to structural disadvantages with limited spatial autonomy; Bucerius (2014) focused on whether the habitus of drug dealers in Germany is influenced by educational discrimination, German immigration policies, unemployment and street culture. Sanberg and Pedersen (2011), meanwhile, applied street habitus to understand the hypersensitivity towards violence and crime that boys embody. The diversity of the concept's application has demonstrated the deep-rooted and multivariate causes that predispose young people to crime. For instance, Bucerius's (2014) study shows that the habitus of local drug dealers limits their positions within the drug-trade hierarchy: one's position is influenced by the discrimination they face and their interpretation of Muslim values. Yet just as habitus can influence one's hierarchical position, one's environmental position can influence their street habitus; the educational policies and employment opportunities of each given setting are particularly influential in doing so (Sanberg and Pedersen, 2011; Bucerius, 2014). Understanding male offending through street habitus highlights the incompatibility of service provision that is based on traditional authoritarian methods and designed around risk management and individual responsibility. It is necessary to better understand and appreciate the nuances in constructing masculinity, which requires moving beyond the essentialist understanding and structural conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity (Bourdieu, 1998; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). By drawing on habitus, theoretical understandings of

masculinity can be better integrated into youth justice practices by allowing the lived experiences of boys to be considered.

The application of street habitus in the present study is, therefore, useful in understanding how boys make sense of their masculinity and how they engage with youth justice practice settings. More precisely, the idea of street habitus can be translated, for this study, into male habitus, on the basis that crime is a predominantly male issue and therefore forms part of the male gender norm. The concepts of habitus and field thus complement hegemonic masculinity by allowing a more nuanced analysis of how men construct masculinity in social arenas (Wacquant, 2014). Habitus is action produced through the accumulation of social history, and in this study, it provides insight into the interplay of internal and external influences for men who frequent both the street field and the penal field (Wacquant, 2014). It is possible to argue that if men are already predisposed to reject formalised rules and norms imposed by authorities and educational institutions, then the very suitability of the youth justice services must be addressed. Research of this type should consult groups of boys, as it is vital to understand their views and how their habitus impacts and is impacted by, their involvement with youth justice.

Shammas and Sandberg (2016) conceptualise the street field as a metaphor for street culture and criminality. They break this metaphor down into five key aspects: conflicting social relations, domination within the field, skilful action, context and the transformative effects of field-bound existence. The integration of these concepts allows data analysis to circumvent theoretical limits that would bind its conclusions either to individual or structural explanations of offending. Thanks to Bourdieu (1986;

1998), the research problem, methodological approaches and analysis can include broader conceptualisations of how boys develop their habitus in both practical and cognitive dispositions structured within social experiences.

Street capital within the street field comprises the skills and dispositions required for survival and the preservation of one's status (McCarthy and Hagan, 2001; Wacquant, 2002; Sanberg and Pederson, 2011; Fraser and Atkinson, 2014; Shammas and Sanberg, 2016). Boys who master the street field must display skilled craftsmanship to use criminality in the acquisition of street capital. Despite its singular name, street field theory in fact pertains to the conflicting interplay between two distinct fields, one being the 'street' and the other the 'system', both of which boys are required to navigate (Fraser and Atkinson, 2014). Those boys are required to traverse both of these fields suggests that they may develop habitus and capitals incompatible with the youth justice field, leading to possible limits on boy's engagement with youth justice professionals.

In the street as a 'field', gangs are often perceived as positive entities. They are understood to offer – within their territory, at least – support from others and a sense of belonging, and their membership is considered contingent yet fluid (Harding, 2014). The perception of law enforcement, on the other hand, is that the gangs are dangerous, violent and static in membership – as reflected by the permanent recording of gang information in police databases (Fraser, 2013). The contrast between the gangs of the 'street' and the gangs of the 'system' demonstrates the conflicting nature of the relationship between the two fields, each of which rationalises the notion of gangs. The logic of the system is bureaucratic; it follows from data fed into the system

by law enforcement officers as to whether certain individuals and groups constitute gangs (Fraser and Atkinson, 2014). Street field theorists have identified notions similar to those in the social field: Harding (2014) describes the street field as a 'social casino' in which individuals are constantly competing for street capital and social prestige by gambling, their wagers being the risk of injury, death or police intervention. Integrating the concept of masculinity in to the street field could be useful in understanding how gender ideology contributes to the conflicting relations between the street and the system. More importantly, it could aid in focusing on the potential common ground between the two fields, which, if it exists, would point to ways of meeting men's needs that are more compatible with boy's habitus today.

Though in practice, police, rival gangs, community organisations and schools all intertwine with the street field, each field is thought to be incompatible with the others. Furthermore, the image portrayed by the state and media of such fields as occupied by an 'underclass' emphasises the fields' monolithic and insular natures, contributing to undertones of division between fields (Fraser, 2013; Fraser & Atkinson, 2014; Harding, 2014). This narrative outlines the conflicting interplay of fields, but it does so by portraying one-dimensionally the perspectives of young offenders and justice professionals as at odds. In this study, a more holistic understanding is pursued and developed, the goal being to analyse potential crossover between fields and unite both the structural and the internal forces at play, which has been repeatedly emphasised in the application of Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu, 1986; 1998). It is necessary to further understand the dynamics of the conflicting fields of the street and the penal system and integrating the concept of masculinity could yield new insights into how

constructions of masculinity bear on interactions, and potential crossovers, between fields.

Throughout the subsequent sections, the concepts of capital, habitus and field are called upon at key junctures to reiterate the objectives of the study. Having established the usefulness of adopting these key Bourdieusian concepts in the current study, the next section analyses how boy's offending behaviour is understood within the youth justice system.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on theoretical and empirical concepts and data relating to men, masculinity and crime. It began by defining what masculinity the author and participants adopted and exploring the differences in how masculinity is defined in youth justice contexts and how the essentialist view of masculinity is problematic for understanding both why boys commit crime and how service provision should best be utilised to reduce offending (Gray, 2005; Smith, 2009). The second section theorising masculinity analysed hegemonic masculinity and its application in criminology (Connell, 2005). Building on this was discussions of social constructions of masculinity and issues of social class and hegemonic masculinity, illuminating the process by which boys are criminalised, mapping the position of men at the bottom of the male hierarchy and illustrating how structural and social disadvantages predispose them to crime (Connell, 2005). focused on the methods used in youth justice services to engage with boys, highlighting the lack of boy's inclusion in the discussion of their masculinity The section found that services adopting more egalitarian approaches were better suited to meeting the needs of the boys than those based around risk management (Millward and Senker, 2012). These findings highlighted the need for

further research into how masculinity impacts and is impacted by, engagement from a public, private and voluntary perspective.

Subsequently, Bourdieu's key concepts – capitals, fields and habitus – and theory of social-class relations were identified as tools with which to challenge the essentialist understanding of masculinity and crime and its various applications in criminology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu et al., 1999). The utility of street habitus and street and penal fields, as first theorised by Bourdieu and Wacquant, was established with respect to understanding the masculinity of boys who offend, which is formed and shaped by the street field and subsequently influenced by the penal field (Wacquant, 2002; Sanberg and Pederson, 2011; Shammas and Sanberg, 2016).

To address current deficiencies in knowledge, the empirical chapters that follow detail a large sample of boys, distributed across three different justice services, who are questioned on how they make sense of their masculinity and how they are influenced by their family, environment and peers. Concepts of habitus, capitals and fields are invoked to explain the men's responses. A second argument concerns how services are designed and implemented. Issues are identified with authoritarian-style services that punish, incarcerate and individually blame. Such styles, driven by the dominant neoliberal paradigm, have been shown to be ineffective (Haines and Case, 2018), and there is evidence that child-friendly approaches are superior when it comes to avoiding further criminalisation of young people. By again using Bourdieu's concepts to focus on the conflicting interplay of the criminal and penal fields, the empirical chapters explore how different services and professionals may engage boys.

The primary issues highlighted in this section are the widespread variation in youth justice practices (Heines and Case, 2018) and the questions raised by this variation about what is effective for engaging young people. Thinking specifically about masculinity, the issues of gender essentialism surrounding stereotypical attributes of aggression and violence, as well as the view of crime as the responsibility of the individual, downplay the complexities of men's practices. To combat such stereotyping, the study considers both subjective experiences and objective constraints through the interplay of habitus, capital and field. Having examined three bodies of literature that bear on this thesis, the next chapter will explain and justify the research design used to assemble participant stories.

Chapter Three: Methodological rationale and methods

3.1 Introduction

In studies such as this one, which rely heavily on subjective reporting, it is important to demonstrate that the research remained rigorous and systematic. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to do so by critically reflecting upon the steps taken to complete the research. First, I demonstrate that the study was methodologically sound by outlining the rationale that governed it. Second, I explain the research methods employed and justify the use of semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth, first-hand accounts of boy's experiences (Braun and Clark, 2013) with youth justice services; and focus-group interviews with the professionals who work with them (Carey and Asbury, 2016).

Also, within this chapter, I critically reflect upon my experience undertaking the fieldwork over the course of sixteen months from 2017–2018. Included in this reflection is the process of gaining access to the three justice-service organisations and the working relationships I established with the gatekeepers who granted me access to the study participants. I consider how the exploratory study captured rich, detailed accounts of the boy's life experiences including their involvement with youth justice services.

A key aspect of this chapter is the explanation and justification of the data analysis process, which used thematic analysis and concepts of habitus, capital and field to produce and interpret the study findings (Bourdieu, 1993; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Finally, both the ethical and political issues associated with the study are then considered – including questions of consent, risk of harm, confidentiality and anonymity – to ensure that the research was conducted in accordance with the highest possible ethical standards.

3.2 Methodological rationale

This study focused on the lived experiences of boys and sought to understand how their identities as men, including the meanings they attribute to their beliefs and practices, are socially produced. By capturing the voices of boys and the professionals who worked with them, I hoped to clarify how boys make sense of the world they live in, emphasising the multiple realities and truths of social actors, but also to understand how boy's experiences can be constrained by wider societal structures that limit their ability to make choices and access opportunities (Bourdieu, 1990).

Ontologically, given the aim of gathering rich data about thoughts, feelings and personal worldviews, my stance was rooted in subjectivism. I was not concerned with creating a hypothesis per se, as one would in a quantitative approach, or with establishing absolute knowledge. Rather, my objective was to focus, with the assistance of Bourdieu (1990) and his concept of habitus, on the aspects both subjective and objective that guide men's habits of thought and practice (Fraser, 2013). This reflects my belief that boys are not passive victims of inequality; rather, the boys in this study actively constructed their own identities, had to some extent control over their own lives and would have developed their own coping mechanisms

for combatting structural and social barriers. In recognising this, however, there remains room to acknowledge that wider societal structures imposed certain limitations and constraints on these men.

Subjectivists' idea that individuals attach meanings to social phenomena, which are developed through their perceptions and actions, is known theoretically as social constructionism (Creswell, 2014). The perceptions of both masculinity and society held by boys who offend may differ from those of other groups within the same society, and their thoughts and actions are influenced accordingly. This study will, therefore, explore these subjective perceptions of masculinity and the social interactions that structure (and restructure) them (Bourdieu, 1993). As noted by Creswell (2014), in conducting an in-depth analysis of social phenomena, it is critical both to listen attentively to participants' accounts and, crucially, to use these narratives to better understand and explain the participants' experiences. In this study, understanding how boys perceive and construct their masculine identities is central to discovering what prompts them to engage, or not to engage, with youth justice professionals.

Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is formed and how we understand the world around us. In this domain, as I believe that social actors construct their world, I take up an interpretive position, mirroring with the study objectives of seeking to understand how men make sense of their masculinity and how this sensemaking may be influenced by their involvement with youth justice services (Bulmer, 2017; Blackstone, 2018). It is a core tenet of interpretivism that individuals interpret and re-interpret the ever-changing world around them, and this principle is key in

recognising boy's agency and comprehending how their habitus is influenced by different fields (Bourdieu, 1990; Blackstone, 2018). Interpretivism stands at odds with other philosophical paradigms, such as positivism, which believes that knowledge can be objectively observed and bases its methods on scientific, quantifiable means. Although quantitative data can lay claim to statistical validity, its use in this study would be limited to demonstrating a cause-effect relationship, which would simply reinforce the essentialist views discussed in the literature review.

Instead, this study emphasises the notion of 'social actors' – a metaphor for the roles people play on different social 'stages' (fields) – when looking at the experiences and emotions of boys who offend, as these require a qualitative approach quite distinct from a scientific, laboratory setting (Bourdieu, 1990). The chief benefit of adopting Bourdieu's concepts was that they transcend agency–structure dualisms by offering an analytical model that considers not only perceptions, thoughts and actions but also the ways in which social structures can guide, limit and constrain those phenomena (Bourdieu, 1990). To make use of this mode, I opted for a mixed qualitative approach, holding semi-structured interviews with the boys and focus groups with the professionals.

In deploying a subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, I recognise that I cannot be cleanly separated from the subjects of the research. Even so, this perspective, along with my own lived experiences, enabled an empathetic approach to working with the boys in question. As the lives of boys who offend are often complicated by multiple disadvantages, it was crucial to gain their trust by demonstrating sensitivity to these circumstances. In addition, I adopted an inductive

approach to the research, seeking to develop, from a limited number of subjects and interviews, a broader understanding of the hidden influences that govern identity construction. A deductive approach, which would better align with positivism and the identification of cause-effect relationships between variables, was deemed less suitable for an investigation into how variables – or rather reports of experience – are interpreted in practice.

Having considered the factors specified above, I selected a qualitative design to capture boy's experiences with youth justice services. The objective of this design was, by focusing on the boy's relationships with professionals, to realise a better understanding of how and why particular constructions of masculinity are either challenged or reinforced by different types of service provision. The qualitative approach enables in-depth exploration, rather than measurement, of social phenomena (Graton and Jones, 2010; Silverman, 2019); in the case of this study, that exploration took the forms of semi-structured interviews and focus groups that probed how social actors construct their worlds. The semi-structured interviews offered participants the opportunity to speak in-depth about their life experiences and the impact of those experiences on their behaviour and identities as men. That the interviews could capture the boy's voices, particularly their interpretations of their masculine selves, helped, in turn, to bring much-needed nuance to understandings of constructions of masculinity, which extend beyond shared male practices and cause-and-effect assumptions of masculinity and crime.

To complement the interviews with boys and represent both sides of the offender–practitioner relationship, it was important to also hear the perceptions of

professionals working with the boys who offend. The focus groups with these professionals provided invaluable insights into how representatives of the youth justice system perceive and reinforce or challenge issues around masculinity, that generated useful implications for improving practices. The study priority, however, remained the voices and experiences of hard-to-reach boys. It was a privilege to gain access to this group and speak with them directly on issues surrounding masculinity and how services might better meet their needs.

3.3 My position as a researcher

To contextualise the study, it was important to understand my own position and personal biases. I grew up on a council estate in Liverpool and was raised by my mother, a single parent after my father passed away. Although my mother is employed as a teacher and would likely be identified as middle-class, the years of my upbringing were nevertheless financially difficult. I became a persistent offender during my teenage years, 14–17, and underwent YOT supervision. Reflecting on my offending, I now understand that they were predominantly driven by the need to fit in, to adhere to group norms and, in some cases, to derive financial benefit – motivations well established in previous literature (Collison, 1996; Robinson; 2019). My past experiences have made me naturally empathetic and informed my commitment to helping children and young people avoid custody, involvement with crime and contact with the youth justice system. They similarly motivate my interest in working with professionals to design better ways of engaging with young people. I currently pursue these goals in a number of capacities: as a board member at a youth offending team, a volunteer mentor for young people recently released from

custody and a freelance consultant delivering workshops to professionals who work with young people (teachers, community support officers, and those in social and youth justice services).

Literature on qualitative research emphasises that the participants guide both the information collected and its interpretation, Bourdieu would argue that social science is naturally laden with biases (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In identifying and maintaining awareness of my personal biases, I aspired to allow participants' narratives to breathe while avoiding the imposition of my own views, which are coloured by experiences on both sides of the youth justice system (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Archer, 2007). Considering both my experiences as a man and the professional capacities in which I work today, I recognise that I do carry personal biases with me in this research. I argue, however, that this is both an ethical and an empathetic strength. My unique, in-depth insight into the circumstances experienced by the participants, alongside my professional training, allowed me ways to work with the participants in a child-friendly, non-judgemental way. Never did I set out to obtain objectifiable, unbiased evidence; rather, I set out to give voice to marginalised boys and to document their perspectives on what life is like as a man and the societal pressures they face.

I am aware that my presence at the three organisations from which participants were drawn, as well as the above personal history, which I shared with the boys, may have affected the boy's behaviour and comments during interviews. Though I could not entirely obviate these effects, I was mindful of how I designed and conducted other aspects of the research, including the questions I asked and how I conducted myself.

Remaining calm and non-judgemental even while hearing shocking narratives, for example, allowed me to avoid imposing or revealing my presumptions through body language and asking 'loaded' questions that may have guided participants to answers that fitted my presumptions. For example, one question I asked was: what is it like being a man growing up in your area?

It has been argued by Bourdieu that each field favours those who possess the dispositions required by the context of that field (Clark and Zukas, 2013). In this study, I presented myself to participants as the sort of insider-researcher that Chammas (2020) argues is key in earning the acceptance and engagement of vulnerable groups. That such a researcher shares an identity, language and experiential base (Chammas, 2020) with study participants allow participants to be 'more open … so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 58). As Ellis (2016) highlights, when engaging with marginalised boys, who tend habitually to feel disregard for authority figures, it is vital to possess forms of social and cultural capital. I believe the language aspect mentioned by Chammas (2020) – in this case, my possession of a 'Scouse' accent – and an identity that was at least somewhat shared with the participants granted me, in their eyes, some of the cultural and social capital required to gain their trust and be perceived as approachable and relatable. As this capital could not otherwise have been gained through formal education or training, the contextual addition to this study of my bespoke insight and experiences amounts to my own life: an example of change and of the ability to adapt to different fields. This insight and experience fuelled both the motivation to undertake this study and my belief in the potential for change among other boys involved in youth justice.

3.4 Gaining access to participants

During the research process, I worked with an alternative education provider, a youth offending service and a volunteer mentoring service, all in Merseyside, Northwest England. As part of a purposive strategy, I wanted to access boys involved in a range of services – hence the approaches to the public-, private- and voluntary sector organisations – in order to achieve a broader perspective on how youth justice is delivered across different sectors, each of which has a different agenda for and approach to working with young people.

Gatekeepers

To recruit participants I relied on three individuals as gatekeepers, who facilitated my access to organisations and the study participants. I approached some professional contacts I had gained through my previous volunteer work experiences. Initially, via email, I contacted the managing director of an alternative education programme who took referrals from youth offending services about the possibility of undertaking research with his students. This individual was a former college teacher/colleague at an institution where I had both studied and went on to teach myself. He had since left the said institution and developed his own business as a private education provider and he was intrigued by the study and agreed to be a part of it. Subsequently, I was invited down to speak with the gatekeeper and his colleagues and gave them information packs which they agreed to distribute to the young people in their service. In addition, I had at the time of conducting the research been working as a volunteer mentor for young people who have offended and some who had been recently released from custodial sentences. I spoke to my manager about the

possibility of speaking to some mentees that other colleagues worked with. This was agreed and the manager approached prospective mentors about promoting the study to the people they work with. As I was working for the mentoring service, I had also developed some professional contacts within youth justice services and I contacted an individual who was a youth offending service worker at a service on Merseyside about possibly recruiting young people at their service. Here, I was invited down to discuss with staff members working with young people regarding what the study entailed and gave them copies of the information packs which they agreed to promote and share with people they worked with.

Through these gatekeepers, I was granted access both to practitioners and to the people whom they deemed appropriate to take part in the research. The gatekeepers were pivotal in the recruitment process: they approached and distributed information packs and consent forms after I explained the purpose of the study in detail to the individuals whom they felt would be most useful, but not adversely affected by becoming, participants. Indeed, as per the guidelines for possibly vulnerable participants highlighted by Kay (2019), a couple of prospective participants were considered but ultimately not included in the study, owing to their vulnerability and the risk of harm posed by discussing sensitive issues.

Once the gatekeepers distributed the information packs to the boys the ones who wanted to take part had their consent forms signed by the guardians or themselves depending on their age and handed them back to the gatekeepers. I then arranged with the gatekeeps to meet each boy at their service facility often in place of the usual session they would otherwise be there for. The gatekeepers' selection of the

participants was a necessity in this process; although I decided upon the final participants, the pool from which I selected was predetermined (Andoh-Arthur, 2019). The balance of power is an important consideration in research, and while this balance fluctuated between me and the research subjects throughout the process, its consideration also extends to the broader context of the study. In a sense, I was powerless before the gatekeepers, and the process of gaining access was complex: many boys rejected the opportunity to participate, exercising a form of their own power. Vulnerable groups are often difficult to access – a fact that may contribute to their omission from academic research (Aldridge, 2016; Girling, 2016; Kay, 2019). For this reason, the gatekeepers were invaluable in allowing me to reach these vulnerable groups and in exercising their professional discretion in selecting appropriate participants to minimise potential risk to the boys.

Many boys within these services were, understandably, weary to work with professionals and to be interviewed by a stranger. Such reluctance, which is already reported in the literature (King, 2012), came as no surprise. Indeed, asking these men to take part in an audio-recorded interview may have provoked memories of police interrogation. I was invited to the alternative education provider to speak with the boys who had agreed to take part in the study about what the research process entailed. I was made aware of the boy's views on the matter when one called me a 'grass' [a person who informs the police of criminality] and questioned my status as a researcher, asking if I worked for the police or the youth justice services. To ease their concerns, I shared the fact that I had once been a recipient of youth justice services myself, having grown up in circumstances much like theirs, and was simply interested in their views on how services could be better designed to help them. In

this fashion, I presented myself as an insider-researcher, with a type of hybrid male identity who had navigated through the street and penal fields and into the field of education (Bourdieu, 1993). As Chammas (2020) argues, significant concerns can be raised regarding the positionality and neutrality of insider-researchers. I observed that the interest in assuaging the boy's concerns – thereby avoiding anxiety and establishing trust – was greater than the interest in avoiding a biasing effect on their responses. However, I understand my biased position; I was not (nor am now) attempting to be objective but rather to capture the authentic voices of vulnerable young people in the most ethical way. Sharing my own experiences with them, then, served to help dissolve any uncertainty around my presence and my intentions for the study.

Place sampling

Sampling considers not only people but also places and social spaces used and inhabited by particular groups. Additionally, to allow continued analysis along Bourdieusian lines, I wished to understand the street field, and it was, therefore, important that the participants, and the area they lived in, reflected this. Merseyside was thus selected for its high rate of crime, gang affiliations and socio-economic conditions. Youth gun crime is particularly prevalent in the area: five fatal shootings of men under the age of 18 were recorded between April 2016 and April 2017, earning the city of Liverpool the moniker 'Triggerpool' (Thomas, 2017). Why boys have access to (and choose to use) these weapons on city streets – more precisely, whether gun crime can be partially explained as driven by challenges to masculinity or the need to establish masculine status – thus became an additional point of interest for this study.

Merseyside comprises five boroughs: Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral and St Helens. Like many other areas of the UK, Liverpool suffered from deindustrialisation, deprivation and poverty in the 1970s and 1980s, leading to long-term unemployment. Once the British Empire's largest port of export, it experienced a significant decline in the 1980s, taking on some of the highest unemployment rates in the country – at times up to 40% (Parker, Newcombe and Baxx, 1987). The downturn in the industry located near the docks produced a mass of unskilled male workers under the age of 40 and fuelled by an influx of cheap, potent heroin from the Middle East, large populations of, young unemployed drug addicts propelled an unprecedented rise in crime (Parker, Newcombe and Baxx, 1987). This drug epidemic paved the way for the rise of a black-market economy in which boys were able to combat the effects of economic deprivation by selling drugs, and Liverpool became recognised as one of the principal centres of drug importation, wholesale distribution and more recently county line drug distribution operations in the UK (Bollan, 2008; Robinson, 2018). The presence of this robust illicit economy marks Merseyside as an appropriate area in which to study the criminal field.

With the decline of working-class jobs came a transformation of working-class masculinity. Traditional masculine values such as pride and identity, which had been closely tied to labour-intensive work, dissipated, and the expected pathways into working-class jobs observed by Willis (1977) all but disappeared with the shuttering of docks, factories and the mining industry. For many men, this departure left a void of direction, identity and purpose. Although Liverpool has, over the past two decades, transformed its city infrastructure with the help of significant investments of

European Union funds, the surrounding areas remain deprived. As observed by Sykes et al. (2013), Liverpool is among the lowest-ranked areas in the UK for health inequality, with life expectancy varying by up to 30 years between the wealthiest areas and the poorest. A disproportionate number of children in Liverpool are raised in poverty; 20 of its local districts are among the most deprived in the country (Sykes et al., 2013). These social dynamics have had major impacts on the educational attainment and personal aspirations of young people, helping in turn to reproduce inequality and marginalisation. These demographics, along with the high levels of crime among Merseyside's young people, further justify the area's selection as an appropriate source of participants.

Organisation sampling

Three different organisations (one public, one private and one voluntary) were sampled in order to more widely reflect the experiences of boys, which is particularly important when considering the discussion of 'occupational discourses' and 'work practices' (Scourfield, 2003) and in light of the fact that organisations enable or disable certain constructions of masculinity according to their varying ideologies and aims in working with boys. The study seeks to understand how each organisation is designed to help boys desist from offending and how its dynamics, aims, ethos, funding sources and workforces affect their approaches. This is a particularly important original contribution, as other studies have tended to focus on state-run youth justice services, often highlighting that fact as a limitation (Baumgartner, 2014). By incorporating public, private and voluntary organisations, this study captured the potential value of integrated practices, how boys perceive the different types of

services and how aspects of masculinity are challenged or reinforced in different practice settings.

Because of my previous volunteer work at the first organisation, an offender-mentor programme, I was granted access to the site with relative ease. Similarly, an individual who had been my instructor in college oversaw the alternative education provider, and our professional relationship and mutual familiarity made access straightforward. Attempts to gain access to YOTs, however, proved more difficult. After numerous emails and follow-up phone calls, I began to consider removing YOTs from the study design. Eventually, however, through networks forged in the mentoring group, I was able to gain access to a YOT in Merseyside, fulfilling the sampling strategy's objective of reaching public, private and voluntary services aimed at reducing offending behaviour.

Participant sampling method

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who met three criteria (Mason, 2002): being male, having offended and being in contact with youth justice services. To contribute to the assessment of how boys make sense of their masculinity and how this influences their offending and engagement with youth justice services, a (non-professional) participant would need to meet all three criteria, and participants were therefore identified on this basis, creating a sample from which most could be learned' (Merriam, 2012, p. 12). The use of these broad criteria was designed to capture variations in ethnicity, life story and experience but not across the crucial common factors: being male and having been identified as an offender. In other words, the strategy produced a sample of individuals with similar experiences

and backgrounds whilst allowing for explanatory differences among them (Palinkas, 2015).

The 24 participants (see table below and Appendix A) eventually selected in this way were aged between 14 and 22 years. All were of working-class status and lived in social-housing estates with high levels of unemployment, drug or alcohol misuse and gang-related crime. Thirteen were looked-after children in the custody of social services. The crimes in which these boys have been involved range from criminal damage and robbery to gun and drug crimes and attempted murder. The six practitioners were selected and formed two focus groups with three interviewees present in each. All ether worked in the AEP or YOT. See appendix B and the table below.

List 1 - Appendix A – Demographics of boys

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Living situation	Location	Convictions	Service accessed
Daniel	16	Mum and Dad	Liverpool	Arson, criminal damage	AEP
Craig	14	Mum	Knowsley	Assault, theft, criminal damage	AEP
Dean	15	Dad	Knowsley	Assault, criminal damage	AEP
John	16	Mum	Knowsley	Assault	AEP
Peter	14	Mum and Dad	Knowsley	Assault and criminal damage	AEP
Callum	15	Mum	Knowsley	Theft, criminal damage	AEP
Tommy	16	LAC	Liverpool	Assault, racially aggravated assault	AEP
Patrick	15	LAC	Knowsley	Assault, theft	AEP
Chris	22	alone	Liverpool	Domestic violence, dangerous driving, conspiracy to supply class B	MG
Darren	24	Supported housing	Liverpool	Attempted murder, threats to kill, aggravated robbery	MG
James	18	Supported housing	St Helens	Aggravated vehicle taking, burglary, assault	MG
Matthew	22	Supported housing	Sefton	Armed robbery, possession of firearms with intent to endanger life	MG
Ethan	15	LAC	St Helens	Theft of motorbike, dangerous driving, possession of class A intent to supply, possession of a bladed article	MG
Sean		alone	Liverpool	Possession of firearms with intent to danger life, intent to supply class A	MG
Ashley	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, criminal damage, burglary	YOT
Conor	15	LAC	St Helens	Theft, criminal damage	YOT
Daniel	15	LAC	Knowsley	Theft of motor vehicle	YOT
Owen	14	LAC	St Helens	Criminal damage, assault	YOT
Gary	16	LAC	St Helens	Theft, fraud, criminal damage. Assault	YOT
Adrian	17	alone	St Helens	Criminal damage, robbery	YOT
Neil	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, possession of bladed article	YOT
Ray	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, burglary, a fray	YOT
Simon	14	Mum	St Helens	Assault, arson, criminal damage	YOT
Dean	15	Mum	St Helens	Theft, criminal damage	YOT

List 2 – appendix A – Demographics of professionals

Name (pseudonym)	Organization	Role	Time spent at organisation
Helen	YOT	Youth support officer	7 years
Lucy	YOT	Youth support officer	4 years
Steve	YOT	Youth support officer	12 years
Colin	AEP	Teacher	2 years
Jake	AEP	Teacher	3 years
Brian	AEP	Teacher	2 years

Data-collection methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 24 boys, each lasting 15– 60 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate because they afforded participants the opportunity to discuss issues and experiences personal to them. The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews allowed me to then further probe participants' answers to interview questions, capturing the feelings and meanings they attached to their lived experiences as men (McKechnie, 2002). In addition, allowing me to follow up on interview responses, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed participants to indicate what they considered most important by focusing upon that when sharing. I worked to facilitate by emphasising the importance of their experiential knowledge, which also served as a technique of reversing the superior-inferior (or authority–subordinate) power balance that interviewees may feel in a researcher–participant relationship (Bourdieu et al., 1999). To each participant, I reiterated that the interviews were about them, their experiences and an opportunity to voice their concerns.

The interviews were conducted as such that they resembled a conversation with a purpose, leading to an informal and relaxed atmosphere (Bell, 2010). As explained by Bell (2010), semi-structured interviews begin in a basic interview format but then turn to a more informal style, resembling the 'natural' flow of a conversation. The questions initially posed were generic and broad – demographic questions and what the participants' hobbies were, for example – which was effective in building rapport and easing the participant into more specific and personal questions. All questions avoided direct use of the term 'masculinity' because the term itself is ambiguous, and efforts were made to ensure that the interview process was free from jargon. Instead, the men were asked, 'What is it like as a young man growing up in your area?' This open-ended question prompted a range of responses: the men covered various topics related to their identities as men and how the area in which they lived helped to shape this identity. This form of questioning helped to elicit habitual and dispositional information regarding how the men make sense of their masculinity, and it also created opportunities to follow up on the various aspects they mentioned. In several cases, unanticipated responses helped to inform the study; for example, undertones of sensitivity and vulnerability in the participants' responses contradicted the stereotypical assumptions of masculinity, pointing to an ambivalent nature of masculinity itself.

An ethnographic study was considered, as this method ties in with Bourdieusian methodology and would have offered the opportunity to observe participants over time and generate observational data as demonstrated by the Bourdieu-inspired ethnographic research of Wacquant (2011). However, the difficulties encountered during the recruitment process, coupled with limited opportunities to speak with the

boys and time restraints on the completion of the research, resulted in ethnography being deemed unfeasible (and led to the decision to use semi-structured and focus-group interviews). The focus groups aimed to gather professionals' insights on the boys they worked with, their perceptions of masculinity and how the two may be considered, explicitly or implicitly, in their approaches to working with the boys.

These focus groups were held with two groups of professionals, one hailing from the alternative education provider and one from the youth offending team. Although it had been planned to hold a third focus group with the volunteer mentors, this never came to fruition, owing largely to the difficulty of gathering groups of volunteers at a single place and time. Focus groups have advantages over one-to-one interviews in understanding group norms and motivations, and they facilitate interactions between study participants – both in explaining their perspectives to others and in raising different perspectives on the subject topic. Focus-group interviews also elicit a broader range of data than do one-to-one interviews because they generate debate and discussion within the group, revealing how different group members perceive social phenomena. A further advantage of the focus groups was they enabled the direct comparison of the meanings that professional participants ascribed to their experiences, bypassing the need to compare separate interview datasets.

The use of two different qualitative methods mitigates the limitations of each. The semi-structured interviews captured detailed personal narratives of the boy's experiences of service provision, including the social, structural and environmental factors that contributed to their constructions of masculinity. The collection of such detailed and personal narratives would simply not have been possible in a focus-group interview.

Semi-structured interviews have their own disadvantages, however, chiefly what Denscombe (2007, p. 184) describes as the interviewer effect: ‘in particular, the *sex*, the age, and the ethnic origins of the interviewer have a bearing on the amount of information people are willing to divulge and their honesty about what they reveal’. It was impossible to fully assess these effects, but being mindful of my behaviour and avoiding loaded questions, as well as observing hesitations and consistency in the responses, helped to reduce them.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was adopted for this study for its standalone merits in analysing rich data and the compatibility with applying theoretical themes to the data. Throughout the study, Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital and field inform the methodological rationale and data analysis. Because the study considers masculinity a social construct, theories of masculinity are also drawn on at key junctures. Synthesising these theories with Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital and field form the study’s overarching theoretical framework, whose design goal was to represent the range and diversity of experiences within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is positioned between constructionism and realism, acknowledging both the ways in which individuals make sense of their experience and the ways in which the broader social context impacts that sense-making, with thematic analyses seen as reflecting the mediating ‘reality’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The middle ground that thematic analysis offers were appealing – in line with Bourdieu – in considering the interplay of subjective and objective experiences.

In light of the above, thematic analysis was deemed the most appropriate method of capturing the rich, complex meanings ascribed by interviewees to their experiences, simultaneously enabling me to then apply relevant theoretical concepts to engage in more complex analysis of those meanings (Braun and Clark, 2013). Although thematic analysis is often regarded more so as a tool than as a method, Braun and Cark (2006) specify that it is indeed a method of identifying and analysing themes to report on a data set. One of this method's strengths is that while it allows the most prevalent patterns in participants' experiences to be identified and analysed in a systematic manner (Braun and Clark, 2006), it remains capable of engaging with theoretical concepts to help clarify meaning.

Thematic analysis was also selected as a suitable inductive approach to data analysis that conformed to my interpretivist epistemological and subjectivist ontological positions. Although it has been suggested that thematic analysis is a low-complexity form of data analysis, Braun and Clark (2006) argue that the six-step guide is a robust, tried-and-tested approach to generating codes, themes and patterns within a dataset. For this study, two separate analyses were conducted: one focusing on the boys and the second on the professionals. This separation of the data was important to enabling an in-depth comparison.

The first of the six stages were familiarisation with the data, a process that I had already begun by making notes during the transcription of the interviews. I then read and re-read all interview transcripts to generate initial ideas about the data. The second stage was the generation of initial codes. It was important that these codes,

which were related to the research questions and provided insights into how boys perceived their masculinity, were independently meaningful – that they could be understood when considered outside the dataset.

The third stage consisted of organising the codes into potential themes. At this stage, similar codes were clustered together on a thematic map into potential themes that could help answer the research questions. These initial themes were identified according to their usefulness in explaining how boys make sense of their masculinity, the meaning they ascribe to their offending behaviour and their experiences of youth justice services.

Stage four of the analysis saw the beginning of the process of reviewing and refining the themes. This step ensured the themes' accurate reflection of the dataset as a whole and eliminated any duplication, guaranteeing that each theme was distinct. The datasets were read to ensure that they followed coherent patterns in line with each theme, which resulted in some themes being removed and similar themes being merged. Finally, the themes were read once more and assessed for reliability within the whole dataset, ensuring that each theme represented the data accurately. The completion of the fourth stage saw the identification of three final themes for the boys and two for the professionals.

Stage five involved assigning each theme a self-explanatory name that enabled it to stand alone and still signify the essence of the data. All stages through this one were conducted by hand: A3-size paper copies and sticky notes were spread over a large surface to make physical and visual sense of the data.

At the sixth and final stage, I produced a write-up of the thematic-analysis process and added context to the data that comprises the subsequent chapters. Extracts from the data have been carefully selected to form themes that tell a story relating to each research question. In this way, the data was analysed to form arguments in line with the research questions and using theoretical concepts, it was transformed from mere descriptive explanation into an analytical narrative.

3.6 Ethical and political considerations

An essential aspect of social research, according to Bernard (2006), is that research is conducted ethically, so as to avoid harm – as a researcher, one must be able to live with the potential consequences of one's work. Ethical considerations are especially important when working with vulnerable groups on sensitive topics, as was the case in this study. Therefore, procedures addressing both ethical and political considerations were followed, per the guidance of relevant documentation from Edge Hill University, including the institution's Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People (2016a), Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research (2016b) and Framework for Research Ethics (2016c). At the centre of this guidance is the belief that research should be conducted in a manner that ensures that respect and fairness are upheld and that vulnerable participants are protected. In practice, seven core elements are needed to uphold these principles: choice, consent, assessment of risk, protection from harm and distress, benefit, privacy and confidentiality, and dignity. After reviewing the study, the Faculty of Health Ethics

Committee at Edge Hill University granted ethical approval of its undertaking. As the study did not fall into a medical category, no further official approvals were needed. Given the sensitive topics of the study and the vulnerable nature of its participants, however, I took a number of steps to ensure that the highest ethical standards were upheld at every stage of the study process

To honour the core ethical principles of consent, choice and benefit, it was essential that during the recruitment stage, prospective participants were aware of their right to choose whether to become involved, of the benefits of being involved and that only their freely given consent was asked for. Keeping the variety of participants in mind, four different information sheets and consent/assent forms were drafted, one for each of the following groups: those younger than 16, their parents, young offenders 16 and older, and professionals. Edge Hill University guidance (2016a), which advises that information should be age-appropriate and use language accessible to the party from who consent is sought, informed the decision to draft different information sheets and consent/assent forms.

The vulnerabilities of the participants kept me mindful of the power imbalance that can exist between a group of disadvantaged young people and a PhD researcher. One step taken to mitigate this situation was the provision of simplified information sheets, which contained illustrative pictures, to those aged 14–17. Those aged 18 and older also received a somewhat simplified version of the form, but this version contained additional detail and forwent the use of pictures. These amendments to the information packs, by making the information therein more accessible, were aimed at accounting for any learning difficulties that the participants may have faced, as it has been observed that those in the youth justice system are amongst the most disadvantaged,

experiencing a high incidence of difficulties with learning, language and communication (Barnardos, 2018). To ensure participants' dignity, I also asked if they wanted me to read the information out to the participants before the interview commenced to confirm their understanding and avoid any potential awkwardness.

The boy's competence to consent was also a point of concern. As per the Edge Hill University ethical guidelines (2016a), which state that young people must be 18 or older to give consent, many of the sample's interviewees – who were aged between 14 and 24 – fell below the age at which consent could be given. Being aware of potential sensitivities around complicated family dynamics, I turned initially to the Gillick and Fraser competence guidelines (Bernard et al., 2012), first adapted as a mechanism by which doctors could prescribe contraceptives to children younger than 16 without parental consent. This guidance holds that children under the age of 16 if deemed competent, can consent and would thus obviate the need for parental consent. However, during the ethical-approval process, panel members advised that it was necessary, given the minor status and potential vulnerability of some participants, to adhere to the consent process laid out in Edge Hill University's ethical guidance (2016a).

During the process of requesting consent, the gatekeepers described in section 3.4 acted as facilitators, distributing consent forms from the boy's parents and confirming their authenticity. In addition to parental consent, it was important to consider the wishes of the interviewees. Assent forms were administered to give participants themselves the final say over whether to be involved.

A period of 14 days was deemed adequate time for participants to decide whether they wished to be involved. Establishing for participants the benefits of involvement was

important not only because it is a key principle of ethical practice but also because it forms the core purpose of the study (Silverman, 2019). I explained to the participants that their involvement was a unique opportunity to help improve the outcomes of future recipients of youth justice services by discussing what has and has not worked well in their experience of youth justice practice. In addition, I explained that I wanted to know what being a man means to them and what these services might do to better meet their needs as men.

Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study, if they wished to, up to three weeks after their involvement; if any participants decided that they did not want their information to be included in the study, that information would have been removed at this stage. In practice, no participant exercised this right. Furthermore, before the commencement of interviews, participants were asked what the study was about to confirm – and if necessary, clarify – their understanding. Participants were also asked at this time to verbally consent to their participation. This step was included as good practice generally, and in particular to ensure that participants understood what they were consenting to and to ensure that they felt control over and responsibility for their participation.

Avoiding potential risk, harm and distress

An important principle when conducting research is to minimise the risk, harm and distress, which could arise for the participants and researcher. Working with vulnerable and young people can cause emotional and psychological distress as a result of questions that arouse suppressed feelings or difficult memories and, although the best efforts are put in place to minimise any risk, harm or distress, it is difficult to eliminate the risk of potential incidents entirely (Bos, 2020). Participants were informed that

participation in this research was a unique opportunity for their voices to be heard and that their lived experiences could help influence how these services work with other boys. As such, the questions asked were aligned with the research aims and, if any questions did provoke potentially sensitive responses, the men were reassured they did not have to answer if they did not wish to do so. These incidents arose at times when discussing family matters, as some of the participants were looked after children and responded by saying, ‘I don’t want to talk about that’. However, the benefits associated with the research, coupled with purposive sampling by the gatekeepers, were perceived to outweigh the potential risks involved. The risks identified by the boys were the potential that they could be identifiable by other boys and legal concerns about divulging information of a criminal nature. These risks were mitigated by ensuring the participants of the use of pseudonyms and confidentiality.

To ensure the safety of both the participants and me, several measures were put in place. In line with Edge Hill University (2016a) guidance around security screening, I had enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) that was supplied to each site. I adhered to Edge Hill University’s lone-worker policy at all times, which included informing a colleague of my whereabouts when collecting data. As an additional precaution to ensure both their safety and mine, in view of the potential risks caused by the boy’s involvement in gangs, I confirmed with the gatekeepers that there was no additional risk to them or me if I spoke to them on their premises. A distress protocol was designed to cover possible incidents including disclosures of abuse or risks of harm or danger to themselves or others.

Due to the nature of the research topic, the sample accessed was involved in criminality and some participants disclosed information on gangs and serious criminal activity. During data collection, I had to access the distress protocol on two occasions, as serious criminal activity was disclosed of firearm incidents and an ongoing court case regarding a violent attack. While I did not want to lessen my integrity with the participants by, in their view, 'grassing them up', I also needed to ensure the validity and transparency of this research. I told them that I had to break confidentiality and inform the relevant people about this disclosure. I was careful of how I worded this to them and talked of needing to prevent any accusations of unethical practice both men in question accepted this (Ryen, 2016). After following the protocol and informing the gatekeepers of these disclosures, the information was deemed to be hearsay in the case of the firearm disclosure and an ongoing police matter in the other. The process of having to use the distress protocol was an invaluable first-hand experience of conducting research with vulnerable groups on a topic concerned with illegal activity and helped me process my position and remit as a researcher, rather than an investigator in a policing sense.

Having conducted previous research on sensitive topics that included distressing details of male rape, self-harm and domestic abuse, I was aware of my own emotional capacity when conducting research with vulnerable and adversely affected young people (Dickinson-swift, 2019). I was fully supported by my supervisory team throughout and had access to Edge Hill's counselling services. As expected, participants did disclose sensitive and emotional experiences they had endured; however, this did not impact my ability to conduct the research.

Confidentiality and data protection

The confidentiality of interviewees was paramount to the ethics of the study and is a promise made by me not to divulge the personal details of participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were especially pertinent due to the research topic of masculinity and boys who offend, as it was expected that criminal activity would be discussed (Barnard et al., 2012). Participants were asked to be careful with the information they disclosed, including any aspect which might make them identifiable. Safeguarding the young people was of the utmost importance and I reassured them of my obligation to ensure this. As mentioned, two disclosures required me to break confidentiality to safeguard the young people involved and ensure I adhered to ethical guidelines (Bos, 2020). On reflection, these incidents arose during my first interviews and helped shape my discretion for the remainder of the process, when I heard numerous accounts of criminality, which would be considered hearsay rather than evidence.

The collected and storing of data from the study adhered to the UK's Data Protection Act of 2018 and followed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to ensure the information was used fairly and lawfully, stored safely and retained for no longer than was necessary. The personal data collected from interviewees included their name, age and who they lived with. All the data were kept on a password-protected and encrypted computer and USB, which were securely locked away when on campus and at home. The personal information of the participants was kept separate from their interview transcripts to minimise the potential for them to be identified. The interview recordings and personal data were accessed only by me and will be retained for up to 12 months after the thesis is complete to comply with GDPR requirements of not retaining data for longer than is necessary.

Limitations

All though best efforts were made to ensure the study was robust and rigorous there were nonetheless some limitations that arose during the research process. Methodologically and theoretically, there were some limitations with the way I adopted Bourdieu as I did not undertake any observations or collect any quantifiable data. Using mixed research methods when collecting data is something that Bourdieu advocates in order to properly analyse social phenomena and question the logic of separatism and dualities of paradigms (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In this study using only semi-structured interviews and focus groups interviews could be perceived as both a methodological and theoretical limitation for the sole focus on in-depth individual stories that held little statistical validity. I could have therefore undertaken some participant observations and distributed a questionnaire to adhere more strictly to Bourdieu's mixed-method stance and explore the structural relations that exist. However, as reported by Grenfell and Lebaron (2014) it is not uncommon for Bourdieu's theory to be solely applied in qualitative terms concerning the collection of rich in-depth data which is reliable, valid and trustworthy.

In an ideal context, it would be possible to also collect quantifiable data and undertake observations of study participants to fully assess from all available avenues an in-depth exploration this is complimented with statistically valid data and observational reports. However, it was important to acknowledge my remit as a researcher and the realistic possibilities of designing and undertaking research. I aimed to collect in-depth data from boys as this was what had been lacking from youth justice research, particularly in terms of discussing masculinity and what role this played in engagement

(Baumgartner, 2020). In this sense, the chosen research methods were appropriate for the study at hand (Dean, 2017). Whilst future research could be advanced by including other methods, the qualitative approach adopted in this study collected some in-depth accounts of boy's experiences which were then analysed through Bourdieu's analytic model to present valid, original insights from participant narratives.

While one cannot ignore the limitations associated with employing one type of data collection method it is important to acknowledge the stand-alone strengths of solely applying these methods to a topic area that has for too long been dominated by quantitative reductionism (Case, 2020). The study deliberately avoided following the direction of much of the research around youth justice that has used quasi-quantitative methods to produce artefactual data that have been continuously regurgitated since the advent of risk factor analysis in 1998 (Case, 2020). A limitation of semi-structured interviews is they involve reflective accounts which rely on memory, which is often selective or too subjective and difficult to replicate (Densley, 2013). However, I was not concerned with collecting large amounts of quantifiable data but rather to give participants a voice by exploring their lived experiences of youth justice service provision.

Another limitation was the issues I faced with participant recruitment - I was unable to organise a focus group interview with groups of mentors from the mentoring project. There had been a couple of attempts to organise an interview with mentors of the mentoring group however, due to the nature of this organisation using volunteers with sporadic working patterns coupled with time constraints of data collection this ultimately did not come to fruition. Although this was more of a logistical problem than a limitation per se, not having a focus group interview with the mentoring group meant

the study lacked some vital insights from a bespoke service that the boys were involved with. For the above reasoning, the quality of the data collected could have been better if I was able to access this group. However, as argued by Perez et. al. (2021) it is common for researchers to be faced with limitations during recruitment - owing to the many different factors at play when logistically trying to organise interviews with multiple professionals.

In terms of my sample population, the group of boys would be considered a hard-to-reach or vulnerable group. Most participants had experienced trauma related to violence and it was important to be sensitive to this and avoid adversely affecting the boys involved. As argued by Davies and Peters, (2014) vulnerable populations such as children and young people, victims of abuse and offending populations are of significant interest to criminologists because of their experiences however there is a need to minimise any potential harm toward them. Being sensitive toward the boys in the study and seeking to minimise any potential harm was a key priority of the study and was facilitated in different ways. The gatekeepers used the professional discretion of the gatekeepers to introduce me to whom they deemed suitable for the research. Although this was a necessity to gain access to the population the compromise was that I conceded some control over who was included in the study.

Reflecting on my actions and thoughts throughout the process I felt I built up a rapport and developed trust with participants by objectifying myself and sharing with them my own life experiences and perspectives. By offering some sort of similarity I believe I presented as friendly and approachable which enabled the collection of rich in-depth

data. In addition, I designed a distress protocol with guidance and details of relevant agencies to signpost participants to.

Chapter Four: Products of our environment – male habitus in the street field

4.0 Introduction

This section introduces the first theme that coalesced during the thematic analysis. Within the section, the concept of Bourdieu's primary habitus is used to explore participants' childhood experiences in their family homes and the possible influence of these experiences on their habits of thought and practice. The boy's primary habitus, or male habitus, develops out of this experience and this is then shaped by their situational contexts and socialisation with male peers. Thus, follows the first theme to emerge from the data: the idea that boys viewed themselves as 'products of their environment'. This idea encapsulated the boy's reported perceptions of their life histories, which focused on the three interlinked elements of family, environment and peers. The data encompassed within this theme address the first research question – *How do boys make sense of their masculinity?* – by exploring domains of life that are important to them, namely their family homes, the areas in which they live and the peers with whom they interact. Together, these domains help to form the key factors that contribute to the boy's constructions of their masculinity.

This chapter focuses first on disrupted family relationships in which injurious behaviour is common, including how the experience of being in care has shaped some boy's thoughts and practices. Exposure to various adverse circumstances in the family home, including domestic abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and

incarcerated parents or siblings, had a significant impact on how the boys constructed their identities and contributed to the reproduction of injurious behaviour, widening the gap between conventional opportunity structures and the affected lives. Second, the chapter examines the boy's habitus through their experiences of schooling, highlighting how their cultural capital (or lack thereof) limits their ability to conform and achieve in education. Third, the chapter assesses the impacts of the boy's environments and peers. Environmental factors play a significant role in appropriating displays of masculinity and, when compounded with adverse circumstances within the family, provide insight into how these men make sense of their masculinity and why they offend.

The chapter concludes by arguing that by the time the boys come into contact with the youth justice system, they have been socialised to reject authority, whether it takes the form of school, social services or the police. In other words, their habitus is developed in the context of opposing mainstream society and the marginalisation they experience there. In response, boys develop an alternative moral, economic and cultural value structure, which is consistently reproduced and reinforced through wider structures, including school, social services and youth justice. The boys adopt a form of protest masculinity that affords them a sense of ownership over their situation yet simultaneously ensures their marginalisation through social exclusion. This process yields what is described throughout as a mismatch: a conflicting relationship between the street field and the penal field (explained below), with constructions of masculinity at the centre.

4.1 Disrupted family relations

The first component of this first theme, ‘product of our environment’, is disrupted family relations. Several boys spoke of experiencing violence or abuse in the family home, either receiving it at the hands of siblings or witnessing it between parents. These incidents can normalise violence, leading to its reproduction, as in the cases of participants Owen and Dean:

> The way that I’ve been brought up is, if someone gives you shit, you give them shit back and if it leads to a fight, then you fight. And if you get battered [beaten up] you get battered … I used to get battered off me brother, like all the time, badly though, even for nothing. But like, it was him who actually taught me how to fight. So, I look up to him, but if anyone says anything about me, it doesn’t bother me, it’s as soon as you mention my family. (Owen, aged 14 years, YOT)
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> I’ve like battered my own dad but like he used to do it to my mum and that. I was just like having none of it one day and battered him completely, even one of my mates jumped in as well. Obviously, he’s hurt my Mum and that and I wasn’t having it. (Dean, aged 15 years, YOT)

Violence, an ever-present feature of the narratives of the boys involved in the study, serves as a dispositional form of street capital (Wacquant, 2002). Owen, for example, perceives the violence he endured at the hands of his brother as necessary for his development and survival, rather than as domestic abuse. The affection and loyalty Owen professes for his brother in the very same segment in which he discusses his brother’s domestic abuse demonstrates the habitual and dispositional normalising of violence reproduced across generations. This insight into Owen’s primary habitus emphasises how violence predisposed him to act violently himself, using violence as a means of self-management in the deeply embodied

culture of toughness and family solidarity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1993; France, 2015).

Similarly, Dean's witnessing of domestic abuse both normalised violence in the family home which was then reproduced in his practices. Again, the boy's narratives generate a sense that this is simply how things were. Violence and adversity were habitual, lived with and spoken of unexceptionally, influencing the boys' habitus, their thoughts and practices, as when Dean, having witnessed his father physically abuse his mother, chose, in turn, to protect his mother by acting violently towards his father. In examining how boys make sense of their masculinity, it is significant that violence is used as currency and power, being harnessed at an early age to respond to disrupted family relationships.

As well as violence, early exposure to drugs also normalises injurious behaviour in the family home. Many participants discussed exposure to drug use in their early teens, and some reported being exposed when they were 12 years old:

> All's I've known is, fight to survive, it's just been hard in general, like I have to put up with certain stuff like me, my mum, my brother and my sister we've all like, we've all had a bad past. Like, before I actually started smoking weed, my mum, my brother and my sister were on spice… To be honest, I think I was only seven or eight at the time when they were doing that, so to me it didn't really bother me, it was just normal. But then obviously I started realising what the dangers were, because I smoked it myself. I was twelve and I fitted [allergic reaction] and choked on my own sick (Simon, aged 14 years, YOT)

Simon reported that for a time, the fact that his mother and siblings smoked synthetic cannabinoids (informally known as 'spice') was simply the way things were, even

going as far to describe it as ‘normal’. Though once a legal high, spice – which sedates its users, inducing a ‘zombie’-like state (Wheatley, 2016) – is now banned, but it leaves behind a legacy of death and addiction over the last decade. Its use was particularly pronounced in prison settings, owing to the drug’s undetectability by common tests.

Drug use and violence were common through the boy’s narratives which painted a picture of poor-quality family relations. As a result of injurious relationships like these, many of the participants lived in care at the time of the interviews and had limited or no contact with their parents or family. For some boys, being in care contributed to the formation of masculinity expressed through offending. Gary, aged 16, who is serving a youth offending order for assault, spoke about his experiences in care after he was separated from his parents:

> I don’t know, when I was a kid, I didn’t use to have any troubles but when you go in care you have to fend for yourself, do everything yourself. You have to do your own shopping and your own cleaning and cooking … You have to grow up as fast as you can … When I was in care, I only had mates, so I was just doing what they were doing but with family there is certain boundaries and stuff you can and can’t do. And I know what will happen if I do it all again. I will just get moved again or worse, go to jail next time. I’ve been to court twice for theft and fraud, criminal damage and section 47 assault. I caused a lad to have four operations on his nose and his spine needed moving over because I broke two of his vertebras. (Gary, aged 16 years, YOT)

For Gary, the impact of being in care is twofold. First, he describes his rapid transition into adulthood, accelerated by the increased responsibilities that came with self-care. Second, and in contrast, Gary states that in care, he was mainly influenced by his peers. His comments on the matter suggest ambivalent masculinity, evidencing a duality of self: Gary conformed to masculine norms among friends

(‘doing what they were doing’), but he also reports a more sensitive, appreciative feeling towards his family, hinting at the complexity of making sense of one’s masculinity. In terms of how these specific circumstances impacted Gary’s perception of self, he characterised the absence of his parents as a contributing factor in his offending, which becomes a significant feature of his displays of masculinity. Furthermore, Gary reveals a void in his attempt at self-valorisation, namely offending, but reflects on his behaviour as an obstacle to his reintroduction to his family. The excerpt also highlights the impact that the care system, as a distinct field, can have on the cultural and social aspects of one’s male habitus.

Other boys in the study were also profoundly affected, in terms of making sense of and displaying masculinity, by the care system. Below, Tommy discusses his experiences in a care home and coming from a ‘rougher background’:

> I’ve been in a rougher background but I’m, like, happy because since, like, I was 12, I’ve grew up myself, I’ve been in a care home, and like I’ve done everything myself and, like, you only get a certain amount of money, when my mates are going out spending £300 getting clothes and that I’ll be having no money so then I’ll have to earn and start like waiting a bit and just … it’s life… Being in care, it’s a bit harder but they respect me the way I am because of being in a rough background they … like they respect me for how I’ve took it and I’m just a stronger person … So, I’ve got the experience, and like kids at my age, 16, who’ve had a good life and are only starting to become a man and starting to know the real world, I’ve sort of had, sort of know half the real world, if you know what I mean? Because I’ve been through a lot. And, like, so I sort of know half the real world plus I’ve got me head on my shoulders, so when I’m growing up, I’ll know what to do and go down the right tracks. (Tommy, aged 16 years, alternative education group)

Tommy’s narrative, too, is complex and contradictory. It speaks of both despair and fatalism but expresses a note of optimism. Tommy’s family life may be injurious as he describes later in his narrative of his Dad being in prison for drug offences and his

Mum suffering from acute mental illness, but he nevertheless manages to see his so-called disadvantages as strengths, feeling optimistic about his future. Tommy also claims that he is respected by his peers for his alternative forms of symbolic and cultural capital, mentioning that though he is excluded from economic opportunities such as shopping with his friends, he remains well regarded by his peers.

At the age of sixteen, Tommy describes having been in a care home for the past four years. Like Gary, Tommy speaks of an accelerated transition into adulthood as a result of living in care and clearly articulates how he has negotiated his masculinity in practice. In response to the limitations he faces, namely economic issues and coming from a disrupted family, Tommy alludes to how he makes sense of his masculinity: reflecting on his offending behaviour and outlook on life, he professes a belief that the added responsibilities and pressures of living in care have served (or will serve) him as an advantage. These findings are significant in that they demonstrate the impacts of disruptive family relations as well as variations in boy's practices, illustrating the ambivalent masculinities that exist among boys who offend. Recognition of these masculinities begins to liberate men from being defined by their offences or by stereotypes of masculinity and offending.

4.2 Education: Rejection, negotiation and attitudes

Boys cannot be expected to be entirely free from stereotypes of masculinity, however, and among participants who perceive education as emasculating and unimportant, it is common to see oppositional attitudes towards, negotiation with and indeed wholesale rejection of education. These reactions can be understood as an

aspect of the boy's habitus, which is primed to reject both education and authority. During interviews, the participants repeatedly emphasised their contempt for attending school: Sean, age 24, insisted that 'no-one cares about education'. Chris, age 22 reported that he 'got kicked out,' and Simon, 14, reported simply, 'I just fucked it off'. None of the boys interviewed had any educational qualifications and all left mainstream education. As Matthew, a 22-year-old participant in the offender-mentoring group, explains, there is a direct link between a lack of educational attainment and a likelihood of offending:

> If they don't do education, then they are all going to be in the gang aren't they? If I am not in education, I am thinking, I am just going to sell smack [heroin], standard. (Matthew, aged 22 years, mentor group)

Matthew describes a polarised existence in which boys who fail to achieve academically are inevitably consigned to involvement with gangs and drug dealing. This short statement hints at the structural disadvantages imposed by the absence of educational attainment – including, according to Matthew, how they perpetuate gang involvement and drug sales as viable alternatives. Carl, age 15 and another member of the mentoring group, confirms Matthew's view, going further in explaining the contextual factors evident in his experiences of education:

> Well, I just fucked education off even before I was ten. I got banned from my own street [via ASBO order]. I wasn't allowed in my own street, I just smashed everyone's windows in my street so then I wasn't allowed in there, then so I just wandered off and then, like.. after that I just couldn't be assed with school. Primary school was sound but when I went to high school they just fucking try and tell you what to do and nobody's telling me what to do … If I don't want to do it, I'm not fucking doing it ... But, I dunno, really, I mean, the reason for me was I was hanging with older lads and they didn't have to go to school, so I thought, well, 'fuck it' then I am not going school if all mates ain't got to, you know what I mean? But, like, mainly everyone they just get kicked out on purpose so they don't need to go in, know what I mean, and then it works out

> you only end up doing about an hour a week, like what I used to do but now, I don't do nothing now. (Carl, aged 15 years, mentoring group)

Carl raises several points: a disregard for education from an early age, delinquent behaviour that hints at issues in the family home, a protest form of masculinity expressed by violating rules and the influence of Carl's peers on his thoughts and practices. These points are interlinked, and they are common in the narratives of other boy's experiences of education, hinting at how boys who offend make sense of the masculinity they develop. Carl begins by highlighting his precocious criminal behaviour as an explanation for his nonconformity to the traditional educational pathway. These early experiences are significant as they begin to establish a mismatch between the habitual expression of masculinity constructed by boys who offend and the conventional opportunity structure of education (and later employment). The mismatch is further exemplified when Carl begins to detail the dynamics of his learning experiences, and particularly how he sees the student-teacher relationship as demeaning as teachers are 'telling him what to'. In response, highly reminiscent of protest masculinity (Connell, 2005), Carl asserts that no one can tell him what to do, asserting his control over his situation. A significant factor that further exacerbates the mismatch is how Carl conforms to social expectations of masculinity by emulating his peers. Peer behaviour is a major impact in regulating masculinity and therefore in delineating the behaviours expected of other boys (Pitts, 2013). In Carl's case, this played a major role in his disengagement from education.

Peter, like Carl, discusses the complicated dynamics between himself and his teachers in mainstream school. Significantly, though, Peter implies that the different approaches taken by the alternative education programme he now attends are more

useful in enabling him to engage, affecting at least a partial reduction in the mismatch previously discussed:

> It's like it's better because you're free in here, like, you know, you haven't got teachers like proper down your ear, like and obviously, like, you're going to be acting out when it is like that, and then the teachers are gonna, like, hate you so they're going to try and make you work harder, and then you're just gonna like, you know, build up a bad relationship which obviously led to me getting kicked out ... but in here they make you feel good, like obviously teachers in school, you know, they don't care really, like they just want you to do work so they get paid … so everyone, like, you know, gets good on the exams so they get a pay rise obviously. But it is different in here. They realise different kids need different approaches. (Peter, aged 14 years, alternative education group)

This excerpt tells a somewhat different tale – one that receives further attention in the following chapter, which analyses the responses to youth services. Peter, unlike Carl, is still in education. Although he has not experienced the level of hardship that Carl has endured, he similarly experiences difficulties in conforming to the rules of mainstream education. Peter comments that teachers are always 'down your ear' and alleges that in truth, they care not about students but rather about earning pay raises by churning out good grades. Echoing a familiar pattern, Peter's comments indicate a mismatch between the expression of an element of his masculinity and his slowly developed cultural capital, which disregards the rigid structure of education. However, Peter comments that the teachers at the alternative education provider, unlike those in mainstream educational settings, make him feel valued and respected as they appreciate that different young people require different methods of education.

From a broader perspective, Peter's comments suggest that different fields of existence – the community and education settings for example – can either perpetuate a significant mismatch with boy's habitus or generate value that recognises and, to an extent, aligns with it. This, in turn, insinuates that subtle yet wide-ranging changes in practice can alter the effectiveness of engagement. Peter's quotation also demonstrates how local adjustments of practice that result in nonpunitive measures are more effective in engaging otherwise disenfranchised boys – a claim supported by existing literature (Case, 2015; Haines and Case, 2018). For example, it is evident that both Peter and Carl struggle to conform to the normal standards of the traditional education structure, as demonstrated by their exclusion from school, highlighting that both boys constructed masculinities that were not aligned with mainstream education. However, Peter's response to professionals in the alternative education setting suggests that it is possible to bridge the mismatch by taking different approaches to different students.

This section has focused on the boy's experiences of education, highlighting a common theme of disengagement which, being built on experiences in the family home, is pertinent to the men's constructing and making sense of masculinity. The first two sections have thus provided some context for how the boy's early experiences with injurious family relations have had significant impacts on their perceptions of education, leading to the development of a mismatch between their thoughts and practices as men and their ability to conform to the traditional opportunity structure.

4.3 Subordination through adversity

The interviewee comments reported in this section serve to explain why men might resort to offending, join gangs or behave violently. As explained in the literature review, men are traditionally encouraged to be successful breadwinners, as evidenced by the number of men occupying high-earning jobs (Connell, 2000). For the sample of boys in this study, however, who are out of work and have no educational credentials, there is limited opportunity to fulfil expectations of such a legitimate and valued masculinity. To counter these limitations, the men adopt aggression and violence, resonating with ideas of protest masculinity (Connell, 1987), whereby men try and recoup self-esteem and worth despite being subordinated by both class and adversity.

The below excerpts explore the influences that govern how boys internalise their experiences of adversity to make sense of their masculinity. The term 'adverse childhood experience' is used to describe often-traumatic experiences that have lasting and profound impacts on a person's physical, mental and emotional health and well-being (Bellis et al., 2016). Such experiences were common for the boys interviewed, and their impacts include attachment and trust issues, feelings of low self-worth and hopelessness, and destructive perceptions of society. Poverty and deprivation were common features in the data, and many boys were exposed to crime at an early age, a fact that they internalised in the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1953) – the perception, in Dean's words, of being a 'product of my own environment':

> I was brought up on a council estate and that and it weren't a very good place to live, just like people selling drugs, robbing houses. It's rough, but that is all we know, in that area, selling drugs and then people shooting each other over

> it, stuff like that, but like when I was 14, I was a fit kid. I used to play footie, I was going to boxing and that, and then, once I was getting into like my final years at school, I got involved with the wrong crowd and started smoking weed, drinking, taking drugs and that and that is it, basically. I feel like I am just a product of my own environment. (Darren, aged 22 years Mentoring group)

Darren discusses the impacts of living in a deprived area where crime, drug use and illegal drug dealing were commonplace. He reports that despite his early interest and involvement in sport, he succumbed to the atmosphere of the community and became involved in drugs. The significance of the areas where the boys live and their dispositions towards crime is evident, and it affects how the men make sense of their subordinate masculinities. Area of residence, like injurious family relations, is an aspect of these boy's lives over which they have no control, but which exerts significant control over the predispositions that shape their habitus. The boy's comments indicated a view that social inequality is reproduced in certain communities as distinct fields, despite efforts to conform to mainstream society, some men inevitably become engaged in crime. What this hints at is a wider territorial stigma, which Slater (2018) argues helps to perpetuate the view that these men are products of their environments. This stigma, alongside media representation of such areas and underinvestment in services by local governments, compound existing disadvantages (Scraton, 2007). However, despite the adverse impact of coming from a crime-ridden area, many participants, such as
Ray, displayed a level of pride when discussing where they lived:

> Well, like, I am from one of the rougher parts so it's like full of drugs when you getting brought up round there and, you know, then you start going OT doing the swag [out of town to sell drugs] and that but, like, I would rather be brought up on a rough estate than a posh estate because they're all just stuck-up twats, aren't they? At least on a rough estate everyone just sticks together, everyone knows each other. (Ray, aged 15 years YOT group)

Ray readily admits that he comes from a deprived area, and he suggests that exposure to criminality during his upbringing led to his own involvement in drug dealing. However, rather than seeing this as a type of subordination, Ray firmly professes that he is proud of his local area, suggesting that there is more community cohesion in a ‘rough estate’ than in more affluent areas, which he perceives to be ‘stuck up’. This unorthodox assignment of value can be understood as an attempt to recoup a measure of pride and self-esteem in Ray’s subordinated position. These insights highlight that crime, rather than being a product of individual action, is a localised attribute that inevitably affects the people of the area, who come into increased contact with authorities and are repeatedly exposed to crime. Ray’s story exemplifies that men from this background do not necessarily view themselves as marginalised by structural disadvantages; they may instead take ownership of their situation, even as doing so reinforces their marginalisation.

Deprivation, therefore, is one factor that contributes to boy’s engagement in crime. Another significant factor in the marginalisation of these boys is close proximity exposure: having close friends or family affected by serious violent crime, being a victim oneself or even having once perpetrated such an act. Some of the boys interviewed experienced traumatic events that played a major role in shaping their habitus and related performances of masculinity:

> I have had two of my good mates killed in the past year. [Anonymised], he was on his bike and got ran over and my other mate got shot in the head and fell off the back of a motorbike. (Craig, aged 14 years, alternative education setting)

Fatalities, serious injuries and the use of weapons were also common topics in discussions with the boys. Above, Craig shares the grief he was forced to suffer at an early age when two of his close friends were murdered. Experiencing the deaths at just 14 was undoubtedly a traumatic experience, and Craig reported later being diagnosed with mental health issues. This question of trauma feeds into a different aspect of masculinity: the display of sensitivity or emotional awareness, which is seldom discussed in connection with offending behaviour. Despite its rarity as a topic, however, emotional awareness is connected to the costs and injuries – quite literally – of boys who are subordinated by adversity.

Throughout the data, the cost and injuries were a common thread when discussing participants' involvement in gangs, which played a significant role in the adversity they faced by further compounding their subordination. During the interviews, the boys discussed incidents of victimisation and 'beef' (gang rivalry) that led to further damages, both physical and psychological. Matthew describes his lived reality of being involved in a gang:

> I got caught slipping once, just walking down the street. The next thing, a car has mounted the pavement and crushed me against the wall and another time a motorbike has come around the corner and shot at us with a shot gun, five of us got sprayed from head to toe. One lost his eye and in the other eye he can't really see, bad scars, one of them has got a shitbag [colostomy bag] sitting in a wheelchair now and still got pellets in his legs and that … They are all shook [scared] now and have all moved on after that happened. The ones that have been lucky to get away, they don't want to be in that situation. (Matthew, aged 22, offender-mentoring group)

In the above narrative excerpt, Matthew discusses the inevitability of victimisation for boys involved with gangs. To boys who have experienced subordination through adversity, joining a gang may seem like a means of recouping self-esteem and

making sense of their masculinity, as the following section discusses in greater detail. However, physical and mental costs of involvement are a stark consequence for boys in Merseyside, as Matthew's description of victimhood – both of a shooting and a deliberate vehicle collision – illustrates. In terms of making sense of one's masculinity, any status that may have initially been won from gang involvement is somewhat diminished in the face of serious life-changing incidents such as becoming disabled. In Matthew's experience, victims who were able to move away from the area did so, becoming 'shook' – undergoing a change in mentality wherein fear comes to characterise one's view of gang involvement. Deciding to leave and becoming 'shook' illustrate an ambivalence of masculinity and that habitus is not always the sole determinant of a person's actions. In some cases, the dictates of habitus are disregarded, and men make more logical decisions with their safety in mind. In this case, moving away from one's area in an attempt to avoid further injury contradicts the habitus of a gang-affiliated man, as the act abandons the tough persona that typically characterises the masculinity of such men. Since habitus adjusts slowly over time, this rapid change in behaviour is not an example of habitus governed behaviour and therefore qualifies as a contradiction of habitus

However, not all boys who are subjected to extreme violence choose to (or indeed can) remove themselves from the situation entirely. Others elect to retaliate, which could equate to deployment, and therefore the possession, of greater cultural capital within the criminal field, influencing their decision-making. In fact, retaliation may also earn boys' additional symbolic capital within their field by provoking fear in other boys. Sean reveals his lived experience of violent adversity:

> Well, when we were having loads of trouble with other people like my house got shot up …with three different guns and my ma [mother] got shot in the head … I was angry and I went out and got more guns but I got nicked with them [arrested by police] … a micro Uzi [semi-automatic machine gun] with a silencer and hollow tips [bullets] that are designed to go in someone and blow up on impact and I got nicked with a 4.5 as well, a revolver, one of the most powerful handguns … Yeah, none of these little shitty, rusty shottys [shotguns] what kids are flying round with, mate. Ha-ha, these days that you would have to hit them with it or shoot someone point-blank in the head so they just about felt it, ha ha. (Sean, aged 24, offender-mentoring group)

Unlike Matthew's friends, who relocated after serious adverse incidents, Sean's response was to retaliate, feeling angered after his house was targeted and his mother injured. Sean's narrative implies that his decision-making in the aftermath of the initial violent incident was guided by retribution, demonstrating his social capital in that he had knowledge of – and could acquire – specialised firearms and firearm accessories (Wacquant, 2002). The perceived weight of Sean's cultural and social capital is further enhanced by the humour he finds in other boy's limited capacity to source weaponry. In examining how boys make sense of their masculinity, it is evident that in response to (often multiple) adverse circumstances, the interviewees were guided by a variety of priorities. These priorities were sometimes mutually exclusive, as in the contrast between one's own safety and the need to regain one's status through retaliation.

The disparity between those two options, as respectively carried out by Matthew's friends and Sean, illustrates that while some men's involvement with peers or gangs can be explained as habitual and dispositional, helping them navigate through the criminal field, other men seem to engage in more rational, conscious decision making that contradicts their habitus. This observation implies that although a man's habitus may influence his decision-making when he responds to adversity, this is not

always the case, and the process by which men make sense of their masculinity is more complex.

This section has focused on the subordination of boys who offend through adverse circumstances, making illustrative arguments that deprivation, involvement in gangs and traumatic events all perpetuate the marginalisation of young people who offend. The proceeding section explores these complexities in greater detail by revealing how masculinity is regulated and policed by peers. The data demonstrate the usefulness of applying the concepts of habitus, capital and fields in understanding how men make sense of their masculinity and how doing so is guided by the norms, beliefs and expectations relevant to the street field.

4.4 Managing and policing performances of masculinity

The third sub-theme of ‘a product of our environment’ sheds light on the nuances of how masculinity is policed through norms, beliefs and expectations. This section focuses on the boy’s perceptions of their appearance, involvement in criminality, violence and codes of the street for boys on Merseyside.

The data revealed that attire, behaviour, expectations and other aspects of masculinity are all policed by one’s peers. As the prior sections have shown, participants’ accounts made frequent mention of originating from rough areas plagued by gangs, gun crime, drug use and dealing. In the words of Alex, age 24, ‘Crime is just normal in the area.’ Further discussion made clear that these areas are also governed by detailed ‘rules’ that inform how boys should dress, act and perceive authorities. Connor, aged 16 years, agreed: ‘You just do what everyone else is

doing.' Below, the boy's comments demonstrate that their early experiences at home translated into the street field (Bourdieu, 2005), where they developed a distinct set of perceptions, values and behaviours that form their habitus.

Interviewees repeatedly expressed that their peers policed masculinity from an aesthetic standpoint: in the clothing the boys wore. Clothing was seen to be a form of symbolic street capital within the street field. Sean discusses the necessity of having 'the best' clothes, emphasising the importance of boy's attire:

> You have got to always have the best clothes on and that and get them through whatever means … some go out robbing, some shoot people for money, some sell drugs, depends what you're into but the whole top and bottom of it is, everyone wants money don't they. (Sean, aged 24 years, offender-mentoring group)

Here, Sean describes clothing as a symbolic representation of street capital and a staple identifier of street masculinity. Indeed, considering his age, Sean's account of the importance of image – which he describes as a stand-in for money – is better understood as a by-product of criminal success. In contrast, Callum, ten years er, considers fashion more as a means of identifying with a group and impacting how one is perceived by others:

> So you go out, you have to dress, like, there's a dress code, you couldn't go out in like jeans and things because then they will be thinking, ay, what are you doing here, you're not meant to be here. But if you go in trakkies [tracksuits] then you look a part of their, what they look like (Callum, aged 15 years, alternative education programme)

In Callum's experience, fashion was policed through a dress-code – e.g. tracksuits and outdoor or hiking clothing – to which it was important to adhere if one sought to avoid unwanted attention. Dressing in such clothing was consistently mentioned

throughout the interviews, but it also became apparent that the dress code differentiated along the lines of a two-tier system. Callum describes the lower tier, whose members were usually er and involved in petty crime. Those in the upper tier would be older, dress more smartly and were more likely to be involved in serious crime. Below, John sums up this hierarchy, or status divide. For John, clothes are a clearly identifiable aspect of one's social position, representing the tier in which a man falls as well as the level of criminality engaged in:

> Everyone's got North Face on and all that, and then they've got their hoodies on, and even ballys [balaclavas] on … and stuff like that, that's when you know … they're one of the boys. But when you think about proper gangsters above them, but who still go around with them, they don't act like them, they just sell big drugs [wholesale weight] low key, always wear designer jeans and the proper expensive stuff. (John, aged 16 years, alternative education programme)

Peer influence has a significant impact on how boys construct their masculinity. For example, when asked about socialising with peers, the boys revealed that certain 'rules of the game' structured possibilities of thought and action in a particular field (Bourdieu, 2005), governing the types of behaviours and activities (often criminal) that the boys had to engage in. It seems apparent that boys collectively engage in surveillance of local masculinity, regulating its accepted portrayals within their field. In summary, the interplay of social, environmental and structural factors limits the boy's ability to progress in society through conventional means, such as education or employment, the result being that they demonstrate their masculinity in often self-destructive ways that lead to physical harm or custodial sentences.

Examples of such self-destructive situations were voiced by every interviewee, all of whom had all been either the perpetrators or the victims (and in some cases both) of

serious violent crime, including knife and firearm incidents. The boys discussed their understandings of these experiences with a level of normality that points to violence as an embodied form of masculinity in their field (Barry, 2017; Johnston, 2016). Interviewees like Daniel, age 13, provide narratives about such behaviour as an example of displaying masculinity in school settings, youth justice settings and even just walking down the street:

> Like if … like, for instance, it'd happen to be, like, if you're walking and then someone who you don't know, like, looks at you and you keep on looking at them and if you take your eyes off them you're classed as, like, a shithouse, you know what I mean? You, obviously, you keep on looking at them. And if it comes to, like, them saying something, obviously, you go over and do something about it. (Daniel, aged 16, alternative education group)

Daniel describes how his credentials as a () man are policed and can be tested. In this instance, an exchange of looks could lead to a potential physical confrontation, but to look away could represent a form of subordination and a 'discredited' or stigmatised display of masculinity (Goffman, 2002). This example indicates the fear and fragility integral to this type of masculinity: provocation can stem from the slightest of incidents, and many of the boys have experienced adversity but hide it behind a tough, fearless persona. Adopting such a front becomes habitual to the boys concerned, as expressed by their attempts to resist subordination and adversity. 'Hanging-round' with 'elders' (older men) in the community was another prominent feature in the regulation of participants' behaviour and outcomes. For example, Matthew reflects on the routine nature of the desire to be part of a gang, following through on that desire and leading to the cycle's repetition:

> It's like a routine in the gang, when you're a kid, you see all the elders and they have all got this and that, you know, cars and money and you come out every day just to be there with them … just to feel like you are one of them but

> when you grow up and then you start becoming one of them, or, you think you are and then you are showing the kids and it is just that routine, kids growing up into the gang and then the same for them … all the kids who are around see the gang and they are attracted to it. (Matthew, aged 22 years, mentoring group)

Matthew's reflective account describes having looked up to the older men as localised ideals of masculinity, seeing them as role models. This admiration demonstrates the role that peers play in boy's becoming offenders and encountering youth justice services. Again, this suggests how their locales act as fields whose norms help predispose them towards offending. The excerpt develops the nature of the mismatch discussed throughout the chapter: that between the boy's identities and the conventional structures of education and opportunity.

From Matthew's perspective, there is great value in learning to become 'one of them' – the gang members. This becoming aggravates the mismatch already present in education by further alienating men from mainstream society. The alternative habitus, developed in the street field of such locales [deprived communities], crystallises certain expectations of boy's conformity. Those who accumulate greater shares of street capital become perched at the top of the local male hierarchy and are looked up to, as Darren confirms when describing his perceptions of his positioning in the street field:

> ...people would start to look up to you when you're doing things and that like a role model or something… people would take notice; you know what I mean? Like he is going round doing his thing, he's making money, he has shot people, things like that, they were weary of me, because of the way I was and that, I was doing things that I shouldn't be doing and they wouldn't want to like fuck about with me, and that, because they knew what I was about, stab people, shoot people, rob people, everything really (Darren, 24, mentoring group)

Having a fearsome reputation and a willingness to perpetrate extreme violence are important aspects of street habitus. Both serve essential functions in a community where police protection is not accessed: being able to protect oneself and being able to make money. Darren understands that despite the deviancy of his behaviour, he was viewed as a kind of role model in his area, calling to mind Matthew's above description of what we understood as a form of street habitus. However, hindrances are associated with this kind of habitus, including alienation from mainstream society and a sense of entrapment. While the boys do point to stereotypical aspects of male behaviour – displays of physical strength and aggression – they also reveal the hidden insecurities at play, which suggest that not all men subscribe to the above ideals. For example:

> Like you're expected to behave like you're hard ... I don't really hang around anymore. I used to hang around in a gang like just chill out, smoke weed and that, but obviously if you come across like a few people who they've got problems with, you don't even know them yourself, but obviously, then you've got a problem and you've got to join in, otherwise, they'll turn on you. I used to get bullied a little bit … but my dad put me in boxing, and I was dead angry. So, like, to calm me down … and, like, to take me out and get, like, out of my environment, because I've got a bad temper and that, and I obviously went in there, like, you know, it takes my mind off everything. And then I got in, settled in, like, you know, learned to fight and defend myself. (Daniel, aged 16 years, alternative education programme)

The influence of peers on how the boys make sense of their masculinities seems to have fluctuated across different stages of their lives, albeit always helping to reproduce and police masculinity. Above, in describing the reality of constructing his masculinity, Daniel reveals the types of pressures that arise when present in groups of men, such as being forced to inherit gang rivalries and disputes lest his group turn against him. Such pressures highlight the street field's capacity to trap boys, all whilst ensuring the reproduction of male behaviour, norms and outcomes, as

observed by Skeggs (1992) and Willis (1977). Thus, we see discursive pressures to conform to the dominant masculinity (Connell, 2005) and the ambivalences at play beyond the essentialist traits of aggression and violence. The boy's own analyses of their first-hand reflections help to delve deeper into the stereotypical traits of masculinity and reveal the extent to which one must struggle to escape this lifestyle and habitus. Here, Daniel shares his internalisation of how masculinity was constructed within his group:

> Like ... for example, as a kid, you see like, obviously an older lad, you know, with a little bounce on [a style of walking] and designer clothes, smoking the best weed and that, obviously, you're going to think that's good and that's the right thing to do ... so you start doing it so it can make you look good. I used to, like, … I'd start obviously acting how all kids behave ... But when you grow up, like, you grow out of it because you realise what's the point. (Daniel, aged 16 years, alternative education programme)

Daniel describes his past desire to conform to local male norms and emulate his peers' practices. To an extent, he viewed these men as role models, admiring their mannerisms and luxury clothing. Daniel recognises that he was 'acting how all kids behave' by seeking to emulate them. The alternative habitus shaped by Daniel's peers had specific aesthetic and cultural tastes, illustrating how some subordinated men develop their own counter-value systems through masculinity (Skeggs, 2012).

The interviewees also demonstrate how performances of masculinity are rooted in offending behaviour, with age playing a key role in Sam's discussion of adapting his behaviour to fit in with older peers:

> You can't be perfect [well-behaved], obviously, but you don't act stupid. Yeah, you've got to act older, say, like, I'm 14, you've got to act older, like 16, 17 and stuff … because I've been doing it for so long, it's normal. (Owen, aged 14, alternative education programme)

Sam describes intentionally maintaining some distance from good behaviour within his group, which makes him appear respectable and allows him to be perceived as older. He also, however, acknowledges limits to this intentional misbehaviour, advising that 'you don't act stupid', which refers to avoiding police involvement. Later in the narrative, Sam speaks very respectfully of his mother and of trying his best to avoid trouble. Sam thus demonstrates ambivalences in his masculinity, typifying the dual nature of the masculinities of the participating boys. Most cite a desire to 'fit in', while others described emulating their peers as a way to enhance their own status and reputation. Chris best illustrates the impact of age on one's thoughts and practices:

> Well, at a young age like 16, 17 or 18 you're going through a mental stage where you want to be the boy and, obviously, as you get older like 19, 20, 21 and 22, you don't want to do stuff like that. However, when you're at that age, you want to engage in physical activity like shooting guns and being the 'big I am' do you know what I mean? … Wanting to have fights with people, things like that … but it's bad, most of them end up 'lifed-off' [receiving a life sentence] in prison, some end up having kids at a age and end up not being able to see them because of it all, an' losing family members for a bit, houses get shot up left, right an' centre. Just no good, really, is it, any of it? (Chris, aged 22 years, mentoring group)

In this narrative, Chris directly reflects on his evolving male identity. At a age, Chris's need for symbolic capital – in his words, to 'be the boy' – led him to offend as a way to adhere to local norms (Bourdieu 1979). Wanting to 'be the boy' in Chris's early teens was also a quest for real value, as symbolic capital translates to currency in his local environment, where fighting and the use of firearms are normalised. Chris proceeds to note that age plays a major role in how he demonstrates his masculinity and the level of risk he is willing to take. With greater age and experience, Chris acknowledges the repercussions of offending, including lengthy custodial sentences, loss of contact with family and fear of reprisals, showing how social and

environmental influences are internalised by boys as lasting dispositions and learnt ways of thinking and behaving (Wacquant, 2005; France and Haddon, 2014). Chris's perspective as an older man is more rational and shows how his habitus changed through maturation in comparison to Matthew's earlier comments about friends leaving their home town as a result of gang violence, which was posed as a kind of contradiction of male habitus. These excerpts demonstrate that the link between masculinity and offending behaviour is far more complex than simply acting out local gender roles. Rather than being a static, one-to-one relationship in which gender roles are endlessly reproduced, the link changes with both time and circumstances. The narratives also feature a recurring ambivalence: on the one hand, interviewees discuss they're offending in detail, but on the other, they understand the limitations associated with offending behaviour and exhibit a desire to change.

Masculinity, therefore, exists on a spectrum where ambivalences are evident. A more reflective self is often present in the accounts of the older men, who have become wiser with time and experience. The er men, in comparison, tend to feel the need to prove themselves 'hard', i.e. physically tough and mental toughness, which increases the likelihood of violence. Several boys reported resorting to serious violence when they felt their masculinity being called into question. Patrick, for example, offers a vivid account of a situation in which he felt compelled to prove himself:

> He has come walking over to us and we have all be bladdered [intoxicated from alcohol] and he was a bit of a 'smackhead' [heroin addict] this man himself, and he comes walking over to us, and he has been saying something, thinking we're not going to do nothing, because we're kids, you know what I mean? ... So, I just said to him, 'What, lad, you think your sick, yeah? I will show you who is sick,' so I just ran over and bounced a brick off his face and he was just knocked out on the floor. (Patrick, aged 15 years, YOT)

Patrick felt that this reaction was justified by the man's display of condescension to him and his group. This violent and destructive habitus was evident across the sample, with the boys reporting easily being provoked to violence by the slightest of incidents. This readiness to resort to violence can be understood as a code of the street and one of the many facets that regulate male behaviour in the street field by accumulating capital through violence. Some boys, in contrast, used violence not to assert status but rather as a means of survival when under threat. Below, comments made by Chris, 22, epitomise the kind of risks associated with the criminal lifestyle:

> Once, when some girl asked me for a bag of weed on strap [drugs on credit] and I told her 'no' but then her and her fella came round to my mum's house saying, 'I'll smash your head in and your Ma's head in' and I ran out with a big knife to the lad and he weren't scared at all, he laughed at me. I was a bit feared by him and he was phoning me later on in the night saying 'Kids are coming to shoot your house up if you don't pay me £500' and that, so I got a gun off my mate and I said to him, 'Yeah, I have got your money here' so I went an' met him and I just shot him two times in the back, innit. He weren't in a bad way or nothing, the bullets were homemade, so they weren't very good but I never heard from him again. (Chris, aged 22, offender-mentoring group).

In the excerpt above, Chris highlights the type of danger he had to face whilst dealing drugs. On the one hand, this example affirms the stereotypical notion that men are violent. On the other, though, it evidences a certain vulnerability at play – to which Chris readily admits – when a dominant male opponent instilled fear in Chris in an attempt to extort money from him. In contrast to Patrick's example, which saw him provoked by the slightest incident of disrespect, Chris's use of violence was more akin to a last resort. In terms of making sense of one's masculinity, these two examples represent the dispositional street capital that manifests the regularity of extreme violence for the crime-affiliated boys of the study. Violence is indeed a repeated topic of discussion throughout the narratives, but once again, ambivalences also appear in connection to the topic, offering a more nuanced understanding of

why these men are violent. The reasons thus illuminated range from dealing with perceived disrespect, the direct joy of behaving violently and the simple necessity of encountering violence as an occupational hazard. The following section continues the exploration of undertones of extreme violence and concludes the discussion of the 'product of our environment' theme with an analysis of how boys make sense of their masculinity by obtaining economic capital.

4.5 Alternative economic capital

Despite the disadvantages the studied boys have experienced, they continue to subscribe to male aspirations of economic security (Connell, 2005). Indeed, economic capital was a key component of the boy's statuses within the street field and a significant feature of how they made sense of their masculinities. As noted earlier, none of the boys enjoyed access to conventional means – such as educational qualifications – of social mobility, and thus, they faced structural and economic pressure that kept them largely fixed within their original communities. In response, the interviewees resorted to a variety of crimes for economic gain, including county line drug dealing (in which dealers migrate from large cities to small towns), armed robbery, burglary, robbing other drug dealers and shoplifting. Some methods were more sophisticated than others; the type of crime committed was a signifier of both the cultural and social capital that the boys possessed.

Dealing drugs was the predominant occupation in the sample, particularly dealing crack and heroin in coastal areas. This activity, which the boys referred to as 'going OT', or out of town, is also known as 'county line drug dealing': , inner-city dealers travelling to more rural areas to deal drugs in less saturated markets (Robinson,

2019). This approach is one of the more sophisticated methods by which the boys obtain economic capital, and it can be lucrative in terms of symbolic capital as well as economic. Below, Ethan, 15, explains the process of ‘going OT’:

> The way we used to do it, you have a graft innit [a supply and demand for drugs] so I mean they [older men] would of gone there [small town] and linked up the punnies [customers] already and advertised the product, you know what I mean? And then they like ‘phone one of the punnies up and say, “Yo, I am sending someone up to stay in yours”’ ... You know what I mean? ... So, then you go up there and you get given a pack, like a G pack [a set of drugs worth £1000] or something, it adds up to a grand in pebbles [crack cocaine] and you just stay in that house, and you get a call and get told where to go and drop off, like it might be four white and three B [small recreational quantities of drugs], to clarify for this, I am talking about four crack and three heroin. Usually weigh like 0.1 [a tenth of a gram] and obviously that sort of stuff involves banking innit ... Banking is where you wrap the things, the pack, in cling film and stick it up your bum innit, ha, ha, ha, yeah, man! Banking and that bruv … ‘Man’s done’ had to bank you know ... from eleven and twelve man was learning to bank ... but you’re taking out that pack and then rebanking it, you get me? But obviously it’s in your bowels innit and then you’re sticking it back up so obviously there is shit everywhere (Ethan, aged 15, offender-mentoring group)

Ethan describes this type of drug-dealing as relying on the appropriation of drug users’ houses as bases for drug distribution. Takeovers of this sort are known as ‘cuckooing’, as the exploitation of vulnerable people for economic gain resembles the cuckoo’s capturing of other birds’ nests to raise its young (Robinson, 2019). Ethan’s detailed description of the logistics of such dealing reveals that the drugs must be ‘banked’ – internally stored in one’s rectum. This practice has received some media attention but remains a relatively recent aspect of criminality of focus in academia (McLean Robinison and Densely, 2020; Robinson, Mclean and Densely, 2019; Robinson, 2019). What is most striking about this narrative, however, is Ethan’s casual comment that he learned to ‘bank’ drugs at 11 or 12 years old. Clearly, teaching a child of this age to insert and transport drugs in his rectum is a form of both criminal and sexual exploitation, and it demonstrates that in this alternative

economy, the most vulnerable are cruelly exploited (Robinson, 2019). In terms of making sense of his masculinity, Ethan discusses his line of work as relatively normal. Such a perspective was common among the boys of the study, for whom dealing drugs was a viable way of earning money and social capital. Drug dealing, not restricted to county line sales, was also prominent at local levels. In fact, the boy's practices with respect to drug sales varied widely. For example, Chris expressed his perception of a certain moral high ground when it came to his drug dealing:

> I've sold guns from machine guns to handguns, even had them stashed in my own house, and drugs, but just cocaine and cannabis, never really dealt with smack [heroin] to be honest, it's dirty, not really a fan of it, but cannabis and cocaine all day long. (Chris, aged 22 years, offender-mentoring group)

The story told is significant because although Chris describes engaging in a rather severe level of criminality – trafficking firearms and drugs – he distances himself from dealing heroin in the very same sentence. This sheds some light on the kinds of moral justifications that some men rely on to make sense of their masculinity in relation to illegal economic activity. Others, in contrast, engaged in an arguably more extreme and reckless activity, which also served as a means of accruing multiple forms of capital, beyond simple economic gain:

> … drug dealers' houses getting ran through [broken into] with guns and everything and knives. There is loads of kids doing drug dealers' houses but it is the most risky thing you can do round ours because they are all linked to someone … I know someone who robbed some people and he has just had his legs shot with a high-calibre weapon and he is in hospital now and they said he might not walk again but, this shit happens … and that was in the middle of a main road broad daylight out of a car. (Gary, aged 16 years,YOT)

This passage illustrates the normalised status of extreme violence carried out between males in Gary's community and serves as an example of the literal injuries

that this sort of masculinity can inflict. ‘Taxing’ other dealers, which was mentioned by other boys from the sample, shows both the chaotic reality of the boy’s lives and the versatility of their criminal craft. The struggle for value, through the accrual and display of symbolic, economic and cultural capital, is evidenced here by Gary’s confirmation of the extreme lengths to which men go in bids to acquire economic capital and the corresponding symbolic capital (Allen, 2017).

The consequences of this type of masculinity are equally extreme, often leading to injury and sometimes to permanent disability. Later in the interview, Gary describes what he has done within his group for money:

> We would just rob stuff and, if we didn’t get caught, we would [sell stolen goods] go and get twisted [take stimulant drugs] or we would get stoned [smoke cannabis] and find somebody we could rob or a house that no-one was in and just get in there and do what we want and then set fire to it when we have finished and when there is nothing left in there … We have done some bad stuff, you know, stabbings, waving guns in people’s faces, we have tipped mobile police stations over outside our shop, and we would all stand outside the shop and just run in and take whatever the fuck we wanted, clean sweeps … we used to do that all the time. (Gary, aged 16 years, YOT)

The wanton crime that Gary here describes emphasises the chaotic nature of his environment and the normalisation of offending behaviour within his group: Gary and his cohort engaged in a combination of petty crime, anti-social behaviour serious criminality, seemingly to fuel their drug habits. Robbery and the use of weapons were a striking part of Gary’s narrative but ultimately, as others alluded to similar activities, an unsurprising one. The truly significant takeaway from Gary’s tale is an overlap between the need for economic capital and the quest for symbolic capital, both of which are satisfied through the most extreme and aggressive behaviour. As earlier established, masculinity is policed and managed by peers who operate within the

alternative economic structure. Through the same mechanism, the desire for material gain was both observed and enabled as a part of the boy's social capital. Peers who possessed higher levels of economic capital were seen as signifiers of desirable masculinity, as Ray and Luke describe:

> When you're young, you see other lads walking around and they have got loads of money and loads of nice things, you know what I mean? And like you want them yourself, so how are you going to get them? So, I decided yeah, I am going to do the same, so I started doing the burgs [burglaries] and anything else I could make money on. (Ray, aged 15 years, YOT)

> On the estate where I live, lad, I am around bad people and I just end up doing what they're doing, innit … and like, I seen the money they was getting and I wanted it. I was a lad, stupid, and I didn't know where I could be in my future, I ended up doing all fucking madness, selling bits, you know, weed, flake [high-strength cocaine] everything and then started doing burgs lad… and fucking people would be like, argh there is a safe in this house, there's meant to be this much in it, so then we would be, like, come head let's go and do it, innit ... so I have ended up doing that a few times. (James, aged 18 years, offender-mentoring group)

Both men discuss being driven, by a lack of material wealth, to offend for economic gain, demonstrating that in terms of masculinity the desire to be high-earner is a classical male trait (Connel, 2005) These passages confirm that this trait continues to be present in the street field as one aspect of being a 'man' in this particular field of the street (or local estate) is having economic security. Observations that peers enjoyed material goods and disposable income as the proceeds of crime laid down social and cultural distinctions in the field and provoked an increase in crime. It is evident that boys have the desire, entrepreneurial will and commitment to acquire money in many ways, all the while retaining the self-awareness to recognise that they have become products of their environment.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted boy's ambivalences when it comes to making sense of their masculinity. The stereotypical masculine attributions of violence and aggression, which have long been associated with masculinity and offending, were indeed present in the boy's narratives. However, these first-hand accounts also revealed the nuances at play, highlighting the insecurities, sensitivities and vulnerabilities of marginalised men.

The chapter set out to understand how these boys make sense of their masculinity and found that this sense-making centred around three interlinked elements: family, environment and peers. Disrupted family relations, living in care, and being exposed to drugs and crime all shaped the development of the men's habitus. The data demonstrate that this habitus, which embodied the interviewee's deep-rooted histories, influenced in turn their thoughts and practices, as exemplified by participants' discussions of the local hegemonic masculinity and the quest to earn street capital by being 'the big I am'. Assuming that esteemed character involved toughness, being respected and feared, never backing down and the willingness to engage in violence.

The findings outlined in this chapter further illuminate how social class, disadvantage and access to different forms of capital naturally limit the kinds of masculinity displayed, with aggression and violence being adopted as means of both coping and guaranteeing status in response to aggressive environments and socialisation with violent peers. Dispositional circumstances of poverty, unemployment and resentment of authority continue to play important roles in the boy's perceptions and the kinds of

behaviours they display. This emphasises the cultural capital available to them in what Bourdieu (2001, p. 64) describes as ‘schemes of perception’, which are projected through physical practices and compound issues of social class.

Throughout the interviews, the boys discussed the social acceptance of criminal behaviour and its recognition as a part of everyday life. To most, it represented an alternative structure of opportunities and values – one they were obliged to create in response to the inequalities and marginalisation they faced in conventional society. For boys faced with social exclusion from education and legitimate employment, crime became a way of securing economic independence. It is clear from the data presented in this chapter that the kind of masculinity these boys adopted is rooted in a combination of structural disadvantages, family backgrounds and the local environments in which they live. These environments are policed by peers, as noted in the excerpts around clothing, and governed by the men’s ages and the degrees to which they lack material possessions. Ultimately, these conditions led the boys to offend and subsequently to enter the youth justice system.

The core theme examined throughout the chapter was how the combination of family, environment and peers shape the habitus and cultural expectations of boys in a given area. A significant aspect of these boy’s habitual and dispositional nature is their anti-authoritarian perspective, which is explored throughout the chapter as a mismatch between the men’s habitus and the system.

This mismatch presents a timely challenge to the way services are designed to meet the needs of boys who offend, implicitly supporting approaches that better align with the men’s needs and attitudes. Approaches that continue to ignore this mismatch run

the risk of reinforcing it, leading to an exacerbation of the cycle that caused the men to become service users in the first place.

Having established how the studied boys make sense of their masculinity, we move now to another chapter and a second theme: ambivalent masculinity. This theme, which concerns the potential and limitations of youth justice, characterises the boy's responses to justice services, particularly how masculinity may affect their perceptions of and engagement with youth justice services. In the next chapter, we will see how the habitus acquired during the boy's upbringings and activities in the street field affects their responses to youth justice, which is seen as oppositional in its approach: justice services attempt to reduce offending behaviour, but this behaviour is itself a significant aspect of the boy's constructions of masculinity.

Chapter Five: Ambivalent masculinity – the limitations and possibilities of youth justice

5.0 Introduction

Within this chapter, the second research question – *What impact does masculinity have on engagement in youth justice practice settings?* – is addressed. In identifying the chapter's primary theme of ambivalent masculinity, four sub-themes emerged: mismatched services, forming relationships, engagement and understanding, and changing performances of masculinity. Each subtheme informs an analysis of how the boys perceive their own behaviour, the professionals working with them, their experience of youth justice services and what they believe to be effective to engage with. The boys also discuss what does not work, and their negative views on approaches they perceive as unhelpful could guide practitioners towards better, user-centred policies and practices.

Trusting relationships proved to be a key factor in engaging with the boys, forming the basis of meaningful interactions in which there is scope for change. The boys reported valuing respect, trust, consistency, shared experiences and practical assistance most highly in their relationships with the service providers.

Expanding on the previous chapter, the participants' narratives below reveal further ambivalences with respect to how they think and their habitual practices, which they describe as a kind of 'performance' when reflecting on their past experiences (Goffman, 2002). The boys discuss distancing themselves from criminally active peers, seeking job opportunities and how life-changing events such as becoming a father helped them to reconstruct their ideas of what it means to be a man. The focus of the theme is how the boys have responded to three different youth justice services (one in each sector, public, private and voluntary), highlighting how professionals can most productively engage with them. One of the chapter's key findings is by working with the youth in a non-authoritative and non-judgemental manner, service providers can, to varying degrees, break down the barriers [mistrust, dislike for authority figures] that typically give rise to a mismatch between men's needs and the services in question.

The interviewees cite professionals' 'keeping their word' and 'not forgetting what we said' (Neil, 15) as particularly important to them, even as they admit holding disparaging views of professionals, reporting having been 'let down' in the past. Many of the boys interviewed for the study have been involved with a variety of services and programmes, including social, mental health, youth offending, probation

and custodial services. The boys describe their relationships with professionals as difficult and disjointed – or, less politely, as ‘a load of shit’ (Neil, 15).

It is readily apparent that trust has not been typical of the men’s relationships with professionals, some of whom Sean (24) describes as ‘fucking wankers’. The interviewees reported believing that professionals ‘work against them’ (Ashley, 15) and are ‘stuck-up’ (Alex, 24). Some even reported holding professionals, who they accused of ‘twisting what [the boys] said’ and turning their ‘own words against [them]’ (Adrian, 16), responsible for their induction into care and their separation from siblings and parents. These unfriendly perceptions stem from experiences with professionals whose behaviour directly opposed what the boys valued most – building a trusting relationship.

5.1 Mismatched services

The first common thread that appeared in the boy’s responses to youth justice services was the negative experiences the men have had. Accounts of disjointed relationships with professionals and difficult experiences with services outnumbered those of the development of trusting relationships. Many of the boys interviewed had been taken into care, and it was evident that their experiences with service provision had been adverse. Ashley, 15 exemplifies this point:

> I don’t like them [social services], lad. I don’t like them, they just fucking… when they ask you loads of questions lad, they just want to fucking grass [inform] on you and use it against you… Like, one social worker asked me some questions once and I answered them and then, like, I never used to go

> to the meetings but my mam did and they brought it all up in the meetings so then I was just like, ‘Fuck you’, and this is what brought me into care. (Ashley, aged 15 years, YOT)

Ashley makes clear that he perceives professionals to be working against him and is emotionally challenged by the impact this work has had on his family. The excerpt further indicates the existence of opposed dynamics between the interlinked fields of street and system, evidencing a distinct mismatch between the service user and service provider. While social services may be intended to serve the user’s best interests, people like Ashley may find it difficult to reconcile that proposition with the reality of separating a child from their mother and sharing information that was imagined to be confidential. Demonstrating both agency and an active critique of youth justice services, Ashley reverses the usual discourse, asserting that he does not come from a ‘broken home’ but rather that it was ‘the system’ (social and youth offending services) that ‘broke’ his home. An adversarial view of the youth justice system and associated professionals was commonly expressed by participants who had been taken into care, and for some boys, the problem with the system did not end there. Ashley, for example, associated justice services with unrealistic expectations and a failure to understand his context, particularly about his family background:

> I think they should make it more realistic you know what I mean? Social services like put things… I mean, on my care plan, the things they put on paper that I had to do and what my mam had to do… It was not realistic, lad, it was not happening. You know what I mean? They wanted me to go to school full time, not go out. They wanted my mum to be at my side 24/7 and if I do something wrong, they blamed my mum. They just need to think because half of them haven’t even got kids themselves, lad, you know what I mean? All

> they are doing is looking at the kids off a piece of paper and off what they have learned in the fucking wherever they have learned it. You raise a kid as you go along, innit? You can't write down on a piece of paper how you raise a kid. (Ashley, aged 15 years, YOT)

Ashley describes his subordinate position in social services, as he perceives them, with notes of hopelessness and despair. Most simply, the passage highlights the vulnerabilities and disadvantages that Ashley has experienced and which he attributes to contact with social services. However, a deeper critique is also at play: Ashley questions professionals' qualifications to decide how he should be raised. This suggests an ambivalence of feelings towards the care system, which on the one hand has been hostile to his habitus, shaping his negative perceptions of the system, but on the other serves to vindicate Ashley's feelings that he is not respected or understood. Having been known to social services since the age of four, owing to domestic violence between his parents, Ashley's family life was predisposed to disruption from the start, which could have contributed to his prolific offending. Ultimately, Ashely is here pleading that services offer genuine help, rather than continuing to reinforce the stigmatisation he feels. More broadly, the interplay of conflict between the street and the system perpetuates a type of protest masculinity (Connell, 2005) expressed through resistance and resentment, but in doing so, it works to solidify his subordinate position.

Other boys similarly discuss their perceptions of the system and go further by making explicit recommendations as to how youth justice services could better engage with boys. These recommendations include involving age-appropriate workers and

practising a less superficial, more direct approach to discussing offending behaviour. Ethan, 15, was one of the boys who endorsed the latter recommendation:

> Like, me, personally, I don't know I am just going to sound like any other adolescent, bruv. Like, for me YOT is fucking shit and anybody else is going to tell you YOT is shit, fam, but why I really think the YOT is shit is because they come in with whatever training they have done or degree you know whatever research they have done about how kids behave offending-wise, especially… But, like, they don't really have genuine first-hand experiences of why and how, you know, we do it, you know what I mean?.. And they want to come in and talk to me all da da da, 'You should not be doing this…' I just think it's, well for most kids. I just think it is patronising, well I do… If you just come in thinking you know everything… But, at the end of the day, if your just down with me [honest] and talk to me, you know, keep it real with me and say if you carry on like this you are going… instead of just saying, 'You shouldn't do this, it is bad to do this da da da...' like fucking nursery shit, you know what I mean? (Ethan, aged 15 years, offender-mentoring group)

Ethan's comments are significant for several reasons. First, he articulates a problem with the approaches taken by YOTs: Ethan describes the mode of professionals' interactions with youth as patronising and ineffective. Second, he perceives professionals from academic backgrounds as ill-equipped to engage with him. This again exemplifies Ethan's subordinate positioning and how his habitus guides his resistance in the penal field through a form of protest masculinity (Connell, 2005). As a result, he believes that current approaches to addressing offending are patronising, abstract and irrelevant to his needs. Ethan proposes that professionals should, in contrast to their current approach, work to personalise discussions with young offenders, explaining that he would be more engaged with a professional who discussed Ethan's specific circumstances with him.

Ethan's suggestions and criticisms suggest that engagement can be superficial, making it difficult for boys to meaningfully invest in the service. Given that the boy's habitus is naturally resistant to authority, this data provides further evidence of a mismatch between the service user and the service provider. Ethan suggests that to mitigate this mismatch, professionals must engage in some degree of compromise to better align themselves with the boys. The sentiment of a mismatch was echoed throughout the interviews, and many boys, such as
Gary, voiced recommendations of what they felt would work for them:

> To be honest, yeah, a few YOT workers do know what they're actually talking about but to really get through to kids my age who might not be as mature as me as far as like sitting down and talking… I mean, somebody a bit er in the head they won't understand what you mean and just see it as, 'Ah, you're telling me not to do this' so I think for anyone to really take something from it you need somebody to show you like, 'Look, I've been through this myself'. (Gary, aged 16 years, YOT)

The ability of the service user to relate to the provider is key in Gary's assessment of how services can work for boys, mirroring the idea expressed in previous accounts that a mismatch in services results in disengagement. Approaching boys on mutual terms – even footing that recognises their habitual and dispositional nature –could be most effective, as Gary indicates. From the standpoint of service provision, it is clear that shared male capital can be an effective means of engaging boys beyond surface-level forms of interaction such as compulsory meetings and mandatory tasks. Similarly, Sean highlights that he believes boys would derive greater benefit from services if they were run by people who had themselves been involved in crime:

> I reckon all these services shouldn't have normal people working on it because they don't understand it. They should just have people who have had a past and want to help others run it and that because it would get run better, its people who know what they're talking about and they're going to be running it better than some 'divvy' [idoit] in a tie who fucking hasn't got clue… because I've been round the block more than once me, you know what I mean? Like, just because you're a criminal doesn't mean you are a bad person. Most criminals have got more of a heart then these snotty little stuck-up ones haven't they? (Sean, aged 24 years, offender-mentoring group)

Throughout Sean's narrative, there is evidence of a protest form of masculinity: Sean justifies his offending, seeking to re-establish some pride in his subordinated position and suggesting that he is more empathetic than 'stuck-up' professionals. Sean advocates firmly for involving people with criminal pasts in work with boys, something that other participants also highlighted as useful for forming relationships. As participants' perceptions of professionals are indeed largely disparaging, this would help to restructure the mismatch between service users and service providers. When discussing professionals' ability to understand the participants as boys, the latter tended to refer to professionals as simply 'not getting it'. While it is easy to fault professionals' lack of exposure to the criminal world of the men with whom they work, it is also important to remember that the boy's perceptions of the offender–professional mismatch are also driven by their own limited capacities to engage with the system. In practice, these boys are clearly calling for empathetic support from professionals who understand their individual needs.

This section focused on how youth justice is perceived by boys who access the services of the youth justice nature. Undertones of conflict are evident in the men's perceptions of professionals, who they consider either direct adversaries who interfere

in family matters or questionably credentialed to engage with the boys in a meaningful way.

5.2 Forming trusting relationships

Despite the boy's common characterisation of professionals as adversaries, the boys did find value in some of the services with which they were engaged. The value of forming relationships with professionals was a recurring theme as boys described their responses to youth justice services. These relationships laid the groundwork that helped the boys discuss how they felt and how they understand themselves within their social, cultural, and environmental fields. This suggests a notable shift in habitual thought: the process of engaging with professionals began to reveal ambivalences in the boy's masculinities. These ambivalences became evident in the men's sharing of their feelings and emotions and their reflections on their previous behaviours. Study participants also discussed the impacts that offending has had on them, their families and the wider community.

Most of the boys interviewed expressed that trust was a point of concern, particularly with social service and youth justice professionals. Specific elements of this concern included poor communication, feelings of being let down, and a sense that services worked against the boys rather than for them, as illustrated in the prior section. In contrast, some participants successfully formed working relationships with professionals, particularly in the mentoring groups. Several boys expressed what

factors led to this success. Matthew, for example, shared his experiences of working with a volunteer mentor:

> We go out to places, he takes me to courses and he tells me about jobs, we go for walks on the beach, it is good, it refreshes my mind and being with Ryan is good. It is good, nice fresh air, to just get everything off your chest and you just feel better because you know he is there. He doesn't judge me, like, my past is my past. Like I said I wouldn't tell no-one about the things I am going through and for me to say something to him about what I am going through with my mental health. Well, that is a big step for me and he is lucky because you get other people who I wouldn't speak to but he understands. (Matthew, 22, offender-mentoring group)

Matthew seems to appreciate the effort made by his mentor, who checks on Matthew's welfare, listens to him and engages him in discussions about his experiences. More importantly, Matthew reports feeling comfortable and at ease within their relationship. The activities that the two engage in together are also important, as reflected in Matthew's appreciation for the walks on the beach, where he can 'get everything off [his] chest'. Matthew's comments highlight the importance of professionals demonstrating discretion by engaging boys in a non-judgemental manner. This engagement takes place on terms acceptable to the boys and centres around their needs, rather than taking the form of the authoritarian regime typical of 'top-down' approaches. Such approaches follow a pre-prescribed method of 'treatment' and do not work with men as individuals with unique needs (Case and Haines, 2015). In relationships such as that between Matthew and his mentor, however, symbolic capital that may be valued in 'the street' loses its currency, and boys do not feel compelled to protect it, becoming increasingly free to comfortably

discuss their true feelings (Costa and Murphy, 2015; Miller, 2016). This increased comfort is suggestive of adjustments in habitus when entering new fields (Costa and Murphy, 2015) and highlight the multifariousness of gender ideology: that Matthew can articulate his vulnerabilities within the right setting indicates that masculinity is complex and not reducible to the stereotypical male attributes observed by Dominelli (2002).

David, too, shared a comfortable and trusting relationship with his mentor. Whereas Matthew spoke of the relationship straightforwardly, David drew on comparisons to his probation officer to highlight the discrepancy in practices between public- and third-sector organisations that work with boys:

> I think my probation officer is just a tit! He like doesn't want to see me back in my own area, but the mentor people have, like been there to help me obviously they go out of their way to like to ring you asking 'are you okay, do you want referring to anywhere', go for a little walk and talk about how I am feeling and stuff like that, which the probation officer wouldn't go out of their way to do anything like that for you. My probation officer doesn't really give a fuck and I don't like him. (Darren, aged 24 years, offender-mentoring group)

Darren voices both resentment of and respect for the professionals he works with – depending on whether he perceives the professional as wanting to engage with him. Darren distinguishes between these professionals, who understand his position, are willing to converse as equals and do not pass judgement, and those who seem unwilling to exert the effort to reach the required level of engagement. This is another example of the conflicting interplay between the street field and penal field, the latter of which can be incompatible and hostile to the identities and habitus of boys who

offend. Yet boy's offending does bring them into these conflicting fields, which can either reinforce or challenge their thoughts and practices. For example, Darren described how his mentors 'go out of their way' to help him and reports valuing their efforts and the opportunity to discuss how he is feeling. This further demonstrates that when the boys are present in the penal field, their perceptions of professionals' ability to relate and withhold that can help provoke fruitful discussions of emotional matters that would, in the street field, be suppressed or perceived as weak (Blagden and Perrin, 2018). Professional discretion can be paramount in engaging young people, as evidenced by the research finding that mentoring practices rooted in rehabilitation and change are more effective than those that mirror the youth justice system's emphasis on punishment.

To expand on Matthew's and Darren's accounts of their experiences with the offender-mentoring group, it is useful to consider Ethan's description of how his mentor, who has a criminal past, turned his life around and become a positive role model for Ethan:

> The mentor I'm seeing, he's got a past and that, and he has switched it around, that's kudos to him. I'm not going lie, it's rubbed off on me a little, but it just depends on the kid. Obviously, like I said before, the guy has showed me, that it is not impossible to switch it up, but for me, it's more like I've got like two sides to me. Like, there is almost this battle going on inside myself, how I was before, doing the road thing [selling drugs out of town] and then like, how I grew up, the sort of music ['80s rock music] I was into. You know, like, man [I] plays guitar and that, you know what I mean? Then there is this other side that is just 'roadman scally shit' [drug dealer], rapping, and all

> gangs and shit you know what I mean? You know like, it's conflicting. (Ethan, aged 15 years, offender-mentoring group)

In these comments, Ethan describes an internal conflict ongoing in his performances of masculinity, epitomising the ambivalences present throughout the men's sensemaking of masculinity. On the one hand, Ethan still desires to adhere to the local norms that breed a criminal culture of masculinity, whilst on the other, he mentions a different side of himself – a side that points to his agency and draws him away from the typical gang culture and street persona to which he has grown accustomed.

The passage illustrates the recurring ambivalence that characterises, in Ethan's case, the appearance of continued interest in toughness alongside more nuanced aspects of Ethan's identity elicited by his work with his mentor. Above, for example, Ethan proudly proclaims his ability to play the guitar and his interest in '80s music. Both demonstrate that Ethan possesses wider forms of cultural capital quite outside of street capital and the street field. The excerpt brings to light the internal debate between fields: Ethan describes his desire to retain elements of his habitus within the street field but is willing to engage with professionals in the penal field who would if Ethan were ruled by street habitus alone, be viewed as his adversaries. In terms of youth justice practice, the capacity for boys and professionals to relate can, to some extent, bridge the perceived gap, or mismatch, identified throughout this study.

Ethan's account resonates with an earlier excerpt in which he recommends deploying professionals who have similar backgrounds to the boys with whom they

mean to engage. Although masculinity is not explicitly a focus of the work that Ethan describes undertaking with his mentor, simply being presented with an alternative version of masculinity provoked in Ethan an internal debate over what it is to be a man. Thinking thus about engagement and the potential for change, it could be argued that sparking such a debate is integral for boy's change. When boys begin to scrutinise the ideology of masculinity, so too do they scrutinise the purposes of their offending.

An account offered by Sean reiterates the other men's points about relatability and mutual understanding, and Sean's comments also offer deeper insight into his perceptions of authority figures and other people in powerful positions within the penal field:

> Dave, he is alright, he has been nicked a few times himself. You can talk to him and because he's been through it himself, he kind of knows what you need, and he has helped me to find a job. Whereas when I usually deal with a 'straight-up' person they usually don't have a clue. They haven't got a clue what's going on in their own houses never mind someone else's. Their crime is parking on a fucking double yellow, mate. (Sean, aged 24 years, offender mentoring group)

Sean implies the shared ground on which he identifies with his mentor Dave, whom he considers better able to assess his needs and easier to communicate with than professionals without a comparable background. His perception of 'straight-up' people (those without a criminal past) is that they are naïve and have little understanding of the realities boys live, effectively precluding them from offering useful advice on a field of which they are not a part of. Sean's complaints about such individuals – that they are questionably competent and lack street knowledge –

represent a potential hindrance for many boy's engagements with youth justice practice. Simultaneously, Sean's response is a form of protest masculinity, which tries to recoup value, on his terms, from his subordinated position (Skeggs, 2012). It could be argued that Sean's disregard for workers who lack adequate 'credentials' is a result of his habitus shaping his beliefs about certain professionals. It also demonstrates that the normative structures of fields are malleable: they too can be shaped, coming to allow for the understanding and reflection that are necessary to bring about positive transformation

Mutual respect and understanding appeared again and again as important themes throughout the boy's narratives and the research at large. Because of these qualities' effectiveness in prompting engagement, it is crucial to note that they were not reserved strictly to relationships between males with shared backgrounds. Women demonstrated equal effectiveness in engaging and empathising with the boys, and the boys attributed the women's successes in this regard to their provision of practical assistance and their positive treatment of the men.

> I treat her with respect because of what she does for me. She helps me out but either way, if it was a man and he done the same then I would respect him as well the same way (Adrian, aged 17, YOT).

Adrian's remark stands in contrast to the qualities highlighted as important by some other boys, such as the mannerisms of the male workers and the value of their lived experiences. Rather, the help provided to Adrian was related to elements of normative femininity, which are more empathetic and nurturing, and this earned Adrian's respect although in the same passage he states he would show a man this

same respect. Prioritising respect, it seems, can help dissolve the otherwise oppositional relationships that exist between the criminal and penal fields. Below, Adrian provides further detail about the traditionally antipathetic interplay between the two fields:

> Yeah, lad, been on it [a mentoring programme], since before I went to jail, but I didn't really see what they was doing for me. Now I am out, I can see what she is doing for me. I have *deffo* benefitted from it lad, the things she has done for me. Do you get me? Like, I've had two jobs off the back of this already but one of them was night shifts and the other was pulling tops of bottles all day lad. That is not me, I would rather be doing something where I am lifting and moving about and that, doing physical things rather than just doing that shit. She makes sure that everything I am doing is right, like help me apply for jobs. It has been good in many ways rather than just me being left out in the open to do whatever. I have had a mentor there guiding me through things, like, when I have been stuck, she has been there for me to text or phone. Like, if I need to know anything she is there and will let me know, like. I have bad eyes, lad, and she booked me an appointment and took me to get my contact lenses, so I can see proper now. (Adrian, aged 17, YOT)

It seems that Adrian's bond with his mentor developed out of the non-judgemental approach she took, guiding him towards action without compelling him to act. Adrian appreciated her reassurances and practical help, including her assistance in securing employment. Adrian's willingness to work and his pride in undertaking a physically engaging job recall prior literature around working-class men taking up working-class jobs (Willis, 1977), but the important distinction to note here is that obtaining a legitimate job constitutes a significant shift away from crime as an occupation. This shift was brought about, at least in part, by the tenacity and persistence of Adrian's mentor. These findings highlight that despite the perception

that male workers are key, it is help and respect that is at the core of Adrian's engagement with services. Women's capacity to engage with the boys was echoed in other men's narratives as well, and the perceived value of a professional's discretion transcended gender lines, as Ashley (age 15) describes below:

> My YOT worker I've got now is quite a good YOT worker and she is a girl. I have had her now for about a year she knows me and, like, if I'm late she's not arsed, but, other ones, if you're late, they will breach you [record your violation] straight away. Whereas, Penny knows that's not the way with me. If you breach me, I won't come back if they're just taking the piss out of me, but she will let you have chance after chance and it is a good thing because obviously nobody is perfect: you're not going to come every single day on time. (Ashley, aged 15, YOT)

Ashley discusses the value of a non-authoritarian approach and how it encourages his engagement. Because Ashley is afforded leniency, he is more inclined to engage with the service and values his mentor more than he otherwise would. Ashley elaborates:

> She is sound as fuck! Best one out of them all. Some of them, lad, yeah, they will sit there talking with you but you can tell that they don't give a fuck. But, then some others, like [mentor], she cares, she will do things for you. She's been getting my, like, me bank, all my shit sorted, trying to get me my GCSEs, but all the others, lad, they just don't give a fuck. (Ashley, aged 15, YOT)

Ashley praises his mentor's discretionary approach and its accommodation of his needs. Ashley perceives his mentor's maintaining leniency by not 'breaching' him if he is late, for example, as a kind of compassionate understanding of his situation. In this way, Ashley's mentor demonstrates her understanding of his habitus and culture, and she is able to tap into his field

through compromise and respect (Bourdieu, 1986). This is an example of innovatively adapting work practices to help meet the needs of a man who is, outside of the YOT programme, living a chaotic lifestyle. The heart of this innovation, which breaks down the traditional oppositional relationship between offender and offending services, is that it is the mentor, not the mentee, who crosses fields, as when Ashley's mentor sets aside the strict requirements of timeliness that typify authority structures and the penal field.

The effectiveness of this style is clearly illustrated by Ashley's relationship with his female mentor, whom he enthusiastically describes as 'sound as fuck' in comparison with others, who Ashley believes 'don't give a fuck' about him. Ashley's later interview comments indicate that he continues to construct a masculinity represented by 'tough guys' capable of extreme violence. However, he mentions on several occasions that his mentor is helping him to study for his GCSEs and assisted him with making investments outside of the criminal field, which have served to create opportunities for Ashley to reflect on his behaviour and future.

The interviewees shared negative views of services with which they had been involved. Disregarding authority, a commonality amongst constructions of masculinity of men who offend (Holligan and Deucher, 2014; Heath and Priest,2015), appeared in the boy's accounts as perceptions that professionals were not relatable and could not understand the boy's circumstances. However, the interviewees also reported that certain practitioners challenged their ways of thinking and behaving, which they were able to do because of mutual respect and understanding. Having a shared background – specifically, residing in the same area or sharing similar interests – was also a powerful driver of engagement. Furthermore, previous involvement in

crime helped establish a good rapport and positive relationships with the boys. On the other hand, practitioners with little in common with the boys could also be effective: what the boys appreciated most was practical help, respect, trustworthiness and the absence of false attempts to understand their situation. Forming relationships has been observed as critically valuable in the engagement of marginalised groups (Coalter, 2010), but in youth justice practice, it can often be difficult to facilitate. However, understanding offending behaviour as a manifestation of habitus, and that the habitus of boys who offend is naturally resistant to those in authority, the usefulness of alternative methods becomes clear. Key in bridging otherwise opposing fields is the discretion practised by professionals willing to compromise in their approaches to their work with the boys. Indeed, discretion can go a long way in facilitating the boy's engagement and understanding, which in turn can prompt them to question their ideas of what it is to be a man and of the possibilities and limitations of youth justice.

5.3 Engagement and understanding

To expand on the importance of building trusting relationships, it is helpful to consider the engagement and understanding that such relationships can facilitate. Some professionals were viewed as role models who offered positive, alternative constructions of masculinity which helped promote intrinsic debates about what being a man means. In helping the boys, these support workers deployed a variety of methods to meet the boy's needs. Barry (aged 14), for example, who was expelled

from several schools and now attends an alternative education programme, highlighted what has worked for him:

> They're good, you know, like, they help you and, like, if you come in and they see, like, you've got shit going on. You don't act your normal self, they'll say, 'Do you want to do your work and that, or do you want to sit out for a bit.' You know, they will do that and that means a lot. (Craig, aged 14 years, alternative education programme)

Sharing a mutual understanding with professionals was a key factor in Craig's engagement, highlighting the professionals' emotional intelligence and nonjudgemental support in recognising his mood and allowing him to 'sit out for a bit'. Craig also suggested that he valued their professional discretion highly and supported the idea of varied education practices. John, 16, likewise described how the professional with whom he worked (in the alternative education setting) exceeded his expectations during the pair's work together. Although John's comments below do not explicitly discuss constructions of masculinity, the approaches described are capable of promoting change by posing challenges, perhaps inadvertently, to male norms:

> They lead you on to the right path. It's your choice what you want to choose. If you want to go down a wrong path or do you want to have them people like [organisation anonymised] behind you, and, like, help you go down the right path? Like, I've got xxx. Like, I wasn't in school. Jack's taken his time out three hours a day to give me the GCSEs to fall back on if I don't become a boxer or a football player. So, he's helping me like go down the right path instead of oh, just do what you want, you know, have no GCSEs, go down the wrong path. So I believe that they do take you down the right path and you know I respect him for giving me a chance and an opportunity. (John, aged 16 years, alternative education programme)

John demonstrates an acute awareness of the course of his own life and, as a result, his own potential to go down the ‘wrong path’ within his field. He discusses the respect he has for the professional with whom he works, particularly appreciating steps taken to help salvage his education. The excerpt exemplifies how alternative methods that follow a more child-friendly approach (Haines and Case, 2018) are better suited to the boy’s habitus. John, as a man who has been living in care, whose father is incarcerated and whose mother is detained in a mental health ward, is undeniably vulnerable. However, he demonstrates maturity when discussing his relationship with the education programme professionals, suggesting that their efforts are paying dividends by motivating him to strive for a better outcome – one removed from crime. The evidence presented here challenges the effectiveness of punitive methods traditionally opted for in criminal justice. As John's comments attest, egalitarian approaches rooted in equality, change and respect are more effective in promoting non-criminal ambitions amongst young people. The data indicate the feasibility of engaging with hard-to-reach young people but highlight that to do so, discretion and diversity of practice are key. Engaging boys with a ‘like mind’ can be facilitated by work on masculinity issues, as such approaches avoid focusing narrowly on boy’s crime and instead seek to understand in greater depth the origins of their offending. As the above quotations illustrate, if one seeks to facilitate engagement and understanding, it is better to work with boy’s specific needs than to focus on reparation for their specific crimes.

This thesis has consistently identified the incompatibility of the boy’s habitus with the dominant paradigms of youth justice, questioning the efficacy of authoritarian practices in promoting engagement. Supporting this argument, interviewees indicated that

traditional methods help to reproduce the conflict-ridden status quo between the street and penal fields. The data gathered in this study further evidenced that in contrast, diversity of practice can be effective in changing thoughts. This sentiment was echoed by Lee, whose comments described a self-fulfilling prophecy (Matire, 2017; Merton, 1963) in which being 'bad' shaped habitus, resulting in his struggle to process positive regard. Lee discusses feeling unused to the approaches that professionals took with him, being more accustomed to thinking little of himself and being reprimanded or punished:

> I am not used to where, like, people praise me. I am used to normally people saying, 'He's a little shit, him. He's going nowhere', but, like, when I have been behaving, I've had people say, like, 'Well done'. I start sometimes thinking that I can change into something more positive. But then I end up being naughty because I am not used to it. I don't like it because I am not used to it. (Craig, aged 14 years, alternative education programme)

In this narrative excerpt, Craig manifests his subordinate masculinity in his struggle to internalise a perception of himself as valued or well regarded (Skeggs, 2012; Wacquant, 2016). For example, his words are suggestive of the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1963), which sees people live out the ways they are described by others. In Craig's case, constant reinforcement of lack of worth has shaped his habitual thought and practice, causing him to self-identify as the 'little shit' that others have described him as. Only after having entered the penal field could aspects of his habitus be brought to the forefront of his consciousness, causing him to feel out of place but, more importantly, prompting him to question his perception of self. This point indicates the importance of integrating positive constructs of masculinity into youth justice practice, both to spark an internal debate about one's

self and to avoid reinforcing the negative stereotypes of being an offender. Following up on his difficulties processing praise, Lee discusses dynamics at the alternative education programme that are better aligned with his habitus than those in traditional education:

> They're sound, they can take beef [banter], like, where we start messing about with them because they mess about with us as well. If we are having banter, they can take it and start giving it back. That is why I reckon the teachers are sound and that. But like in my old school they weren't like that."
> (Craig, aged 14 years, alternative education programme)

Craig reproduces a familiar narrative of professionals who demonstrate leniency and compromise in adjusting their approaches to meet and appeal to the specific needs of the boys they work with. Different boys enter the youth justice system with varying levels, and indeed types, of cultural and social capital, justifying practitioners in adapting different approaches to reach and engage with them. Such adjustments implicitly acknowledge that insofar as boys accrue cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 2005; 2017) through performances of masculinity, they also continue to adhere to local norms upon their contact with the system. When operating in the field of education, the pursuit and deployment of capital of this sort are traditionally characterised as misbehaviour. In the alternative education programme, however, participants felt that they were not always treated as miscreants, and this less authoritarian approach better suits alternative education settings to their habitus. Mainstream school settings, in comparison, are typically understood as more welcoming to middle-class groups (Reay, 2001; 2004). The alternative education provider offered the boys of the study an environment that

better accommodates their needs, demonstrating that despite the frequency with which these boys failed to earn educational qualifications – as do many other boys who offend – it is possible to reintegrate them by different means. The findings demonstrate that opting to break away from the conventional education structure and instead using sport as a tool can offer boys the chance to gain an education, which may contribute to their desisting from offending.

To date, the link between masculinity and offending has been understood through stereotypical commonalties linked to toughness and violence (Dominelli, 2002). The concept of agency is notably absent in this understanding, reflecting a knowledge gap when it comes to the hidden nuances of constructing masculinity. A key theme from the data both foregrounds the men's agency through their lived experiences and, from a practice perspective, indicates what works in encouraging them to reflect on their perceptions of being a man. In a number of excerpts below, the boys clarify how their experiences with the penal field prompted steps towards internal change, representing a reshaping of their habitus. For some boys, the symbolic capital associated with taking risks and committing crime became less important. This reduction was brought about at least in part by the direct work of professionals who challenged the men's perceptions of masculinity. The data widen the literature's essentialist understandings of men who offend (Messerschmidt, 1993; Collier, 1998; Dominelli, 2005b; Baumgartner; 2014) and demonstrate the men's capacity, as agents, to be reflexive.

Reflexivity is demonstrated in the practices of several boys. For instance, Jordan discusses how working with his mentor led him to reflect on his own behaviour.

Jordan appears to have been far more responsive to mentorship than he might have been to traditional punitive measures, as he illustrates:

> You don't tend to look at the bigger picture lad, you just think 'oo yeah I am doing a burg [burglary]'. But they show you how scummy it is lad and bring it out of you (James, aged 18 years, offender-mentoring group).

James, beginning to reflect on his previous practices as a man, recognised that at the time, he would not consciously think about the crimes he was committing. This prior absence of direct reflection can be connected to James's habitus, which is shaped by his peer group, and the lasting dispositions that normalise this sort of offending. Working with his mentor, however, has prompted Jordan's reflective agency by invoking a level of shame – in his words, showing him 'how scummy' his conduct was. The recognition of this shame, and indeed of the nature of his own prior thought patterns, demonstrates James's status as an agent, his capacity to think independently and become reflexive with respect to his own behaviours, and, most critically, his potential to radically alter basic constructions of his masculinity. In Jordan's own plain language:

> 'I don't want to be that type of man.' (James, aged 18 years, offender-mentoring group)

Complementing James's accounts of reflexivity are comments made by Ethan, which raise several key points in a reflective account of his behaviour and change. Ethan plays the guitar and has accrued some cultural capital that would not be typically

associated with men who offend, demonstrating that though habitus and dispositions guide, they do not dictate subjective choices:

> …Like you see this generation, you get ‘terrored’ [terrorised] if you’re different but like it has got to the point now where I just don’t give a fuck what you think about me, like I don’t care. Like you want to try and ostracise me because I am different from you, because I don’t like to wear the same clothes as you or listen to the same music as you, then that’s your problem ‘init’. (Ethan, aged 15 years, YOT)

Ethan reflects on his upbringing and how his environment shaped expectations of being a man. In doing so, he cites conflict in the domain of his cultural capital, particularly with regard to his tastes in music. Ethan offers a reflective account of no longer being concerned with accruing symbolic or social capital. He is even less concerned with ‘being different’, suggesting that his habitus has evolved, and suggesting that his habitus has evolved and that he can envision a future self beyond crime. This highlights the benefits of engaging with volunteer-sector services, especially those designed to evoke self-reflection. In this study, such reflection also extended to the examples that the boys wished to show and be to others, including their er siblings. Below, Malcolm stresses the value that he places on being a role model to his er brother and setting an example of appropriate male behaviour:

> I want a be a decent role model and that and a decent man, you know, like show my little brother how to behave and that. (John, aged 16 years, alternative education programme)

In his reflection, John conveys an understanding that he must progress beyond offending behaviour if he wishes to guide his er brother and be a ‘man’ worthy of his

brother's emulation. This reflective thought not only demonstrates agency in practice, as there is an implied acknowledgement of criminal male norms from which John wishes to distance himself, but also exposes the contradiction of this type of masculinity epitomised in the street field and recognises the multiple masculinities pointed to by the many ambivalences identified throughout the study.

In their interviews, the boys exhibited various aspects of reflective thinking on their past perceptions of behaviour. Their further reflection on adhering to contextual male norms provides a platform on which work about offending behaviour and masculinity issues can begin, as changes in self are often signalled by changes in behaviour. Below, Ashley discusses this relationship and certain changes made in his behaviour:

> Nah, everyone says like YOT workers 'work', but actually it is in your head if you want to change. Like now, I've just recently changed. I used to be a little fucker, me. You know, I would go out and do three burgs [burglaries] in one day. But now, I just thought it's not the right thing. Like, I don't mind selling drugs, I don't give a fuck about that. But doing burgs, when you think into it more, like you're going through somebody else's stuff, you know what a mean? You're in some else's house and you wouldn't like it if somebody was in your house. But drugs, it's a different story because they are going to either buy from you or somebody else, so I may as well make that money. (Ashley, aged 15 years, YOT)

Ashley reflects on his past behaviour and a recent shift in his moral compass. The quotation reveals his deeply ingrained habitus – which points to elements of change, contradiction and continuity in his conceptions of street capital and crime – and makes explicit how Ashley's thoughts have changed in response to a self-realisation

(Wacquant, 2002). The self-realisation demonstrates on the one hand that the boy is reflecting on his past criminality, but on the other reveals the durability of habitus and the subordination and structural disadvantages Ashley has faced. With opportunities for legitimate work limited, the boy justifies the sale of drugs as a viable alternative – a manifestation of the cultural reproduction of the criminal field. Yet Ashley reflects (and seems to subscribe to) neoliberal notions in claiming fault and responsibility for his behaviours and the potential for change. This acceptance of subordination is an example of symbolic violence in which emphasis is placed on one's unconscious complicity in intrinsic deficiencies – simply put, the presence of an inherent and perhaps inborn flaw – rather than on the results of structural disadvantages (Bourdieu, 1979). In approaching change from this perspective, Ashley questions whether professionals can indeed be effective in promoting it: for him, change is an internal debate. Thinking in this way supports the necessity that services discuss issues of masculinity in their work with men to explore the pressures men face to emulate stereotypes and norms. Asking questions about masculinity and male identity, as this study shows, can be effective in promoting self-reflection, which is, according to interviewees, the key to potential changes in behaviour.

The notion of self-reflection is further exemplified by Adrian, who, unlike Ashley, appreciates the value that integrated services have had on his thoughts and practices and his ability to envision a life without crime:

> Well, I've been involved with social services since I was 11 but the youth offending team [YOT] they have done all like my drug and alcohol work and like victim awareness, all that stuff, like. Then [Mentor] has been there to help me sort my physical life out; you know what I mean? Like the YOT try and

> show you how to be respectful and then the mentor actually helps you to do it in real life. (Adrian, aged 17 years, YOT)

Adrian articulates the complexities at play regarding changes in thoughts and practice. Significant in his narrative is a multifaceted need, one both psychological and practical, highlighting limitations in what professional practice can accomplish. For Adrian, publicly run youth justice services were effective in terms of bringing him to think about his actions, but it was the voluntary organisation that helped him to realise those thoughts. Adrian acknowledges the remits of different forms of service provision, and his account offers important insights into the scope, strengths and limitations of youth justice. Where others dismiss public youth justice entirely, Adrian provides a more nuanced account of how such services synergise to produce a more holistic approach.

Previous knowledge in this area has perceived the masculinity of boys who offend as homogenous and focused on deficit aspects of aggression, violence and crime (Smith, 2009; Domnielli, 2016). In contrast, though the boys interviewed discussed why they might be violent and aggressive in certain circumstances, neither these reasons nor violence and aggression itself are understood as identity-defining in this study. Most of the boys interviewed had progressed away from offending behaviour and spoke of personal developments in their lives, which challenges essentialist understandings of homogeneous masculinity (Collier, 2005; Smith, 2009; Baumgartner, 2011). Despite facing multiple disadvantages that predisposed the boys to crime, they readily demonstrate that their engagement with services has helped them to think and behave differently.

5.4 Changing performances of masculinity: Contradiction, change and continuity

The final theme that appeared in the boy's accounts of their responses to youth justice is changing performances of masculinity. This theme highlights how the boy's perceptions and practices were impacted by service provision and their relationships with providers. One of the accounts that best illustrates this was given by Sean, who has served time in jail. Upon his release, Sean engaged with a mentoring project and gained employment. Despite his past, working with a mentor allowed Sean to secure a job working with people with severe autism, and as he says, he is flourishing in this new position:

> It's alright, you know. I am just helping other people out. Like, this kid I've been working with, before I come, he was just working with all… not dickheads, but just people who are not really arsed. He couldn't speak properly or nothing and, obviously, I've only been there a few months and he's speaking words, coming out of himself. But, like he doesn't. I mean, before I came there, he didn't want to come out of his room, didn't want to get washed. He didn't want to do nothing. But I've been spending time with him, you know, treating him like a human being. But them other people, them straight-headed people who are just going to work every day and that's their job, they can't be arsed. I think they can't wait to get home. But I am spending quality time with him you know and he's getting cleaner. He's getting out starting to talk so, I enjoy it. (Sean, aged 24, offender-mentoring group)

Sean describes performing a type of masculinity characterised by compelling emotional regard for someone less able than he is. His actions demonstrate his agency by adapting his social capital to better include and help meet the needs of a

vulnerable adult, and the excerpt shows that the different fields through which an agent passes influence habitus and can, in the right circumstances, provoke change. The penal field was ineffective for Sean, but the mentoring group who approached him on his terms has enabled him to acquire a job that he is passionate about, demonstrating Sean's agency and variation in his masculinity (Costa and Murphy, 2016). The implication of this data is the usefulness of egalitarian approaches that focus on offenders' needs rather than their offending behaviour. Such approaches allow the causes of offending, rather than the act itself, to be addressed. Some of Sean's further comments articulate not only maturity but a substantial level of transformation in Sean's attitudes: 'You wouldn't catch me running around playing with guns for no one... spread love, not war.' It could be that Sean came into contact with the mentoring service at a point in his life when he was ready to accept change (Morris, 2017), and while he still subscribes to the notions of masculine performance that he previously displayed, Sean's path has demonstrated his ability to adapt and conform to new and quite different contexts

The transition to changing one's performances of masculinity was invoked in them in different ways, but as a whole, the boys began to question their suppositions of what it means to be a man. Economic capital plays a key role in both emulating a type of respected masculinity and facilitating offending behaviour. As Adrian indicates below, the value of and quest for economic capital often comes at the expense of relationships with family members:

> Well, back then I used to just think about money, I mean I fell in love with money when I was er, so all my life I just wanted money but now I have

> realised growing up as a man you need to have morals and responsibilities, rather than just not giving a fuck about anything or anyone, you know what I mean? Because that was all I was like before, I didn't give a fuck about anyone, I treated my mum like shit, treated my girlfriend like shit, and my family lad. But now, I have realised they are the only people that stick by you. (Adrian, aged 17 years, offender-mentoring group)

Adrian reflects on his practices as a man and discusses initiating a process of change. The quote reminds us that boys do possess agency; they are not simply passive beings subordinated to their environments. Adrian demonstrates his agency by reflecting on his attitude towards criminality, which he had understood in the past through the societal pressures he faced to obtain economic capital in the street field, and on the desire to change his practices. Reflecting on the impact of being selfish and not thinking about the 'bigger picture', which would have captured the self-harm and family disruption his offending caused, further demonstrates the ambivalence of Adrian's masculinity. As Adrian re-evaluates what manhood means, family, morals and responsibilities are prioritised over living up to the local hegemonic ideal.

Such ambivalences of masculinities are evident throughout the study and indicate the need for youth justice to structure its services in a way that taps into these varied male practices. These findings highlight the value of incorporating gender-based approaches such as discussions of issues of masculinity, as the limited view of masculinity (as aggressive and violent) serves only to reproduce the negative association long theorised between masculinity and youth crime. A trade-off is evident between conforming to local male norms and the individualised versions of maleness with which the interviewees identify, as expressed by Luke:

> They [family] were disappointed and being in here has made me realise that life isn't about doing bad things and that I want to live clean and do the best I can in life even if that is not having a good job, just earning some money to look after yourself and, not cheat, that is being a man. Yet when you're with your mates you act like you don't give a shit and you're not bothered like you will do anything you can on the streets… but in here I want to get my head down and do my work and get the most out of life. (Patrick, aged 15 years, alternative education programme)

Patrick's above comments demonstrate his ability to think independently about how his thoughts and practices have been structured and are currently being restructured. He is aware of his own space within the street field and the need to conform, but he also displays a more nuanced perspective of what 'being a man' means. Most of all, the quote highlights that Patrick's habitus has changed as a result of his entering the penal field, pointing to a duality of how performances of masculinity are translated in the street and the alternative education centre. Like Adrian, Patrick refers to the influence of his family and cites their disappointment in him as a driver of the adjustment of his moral perspective, which now values work and looking after his family over the need to emulate local hegemonic masculinity.

5.5 Conclusion

First, the chapter highlighted how interviewees perceived services (social care, youth offending services) as being mismatched to their needs citing how services were unrealistic. There were clear narratives that professionals were viewed as adversaries who worked against rather than for them. Interestingly, however, interviewees gave accounts in this section of how services may be better designed to meet their needs. Approaching boys on terms more equal to them and making attempts to understand their situation were key factors identified.

Second, the chapter highlighted the importance of forming relationships. For example, it examined the boy's emphasis on the value of working with older males with whom they shared similar backgrounds. With equal appreciation, the men also discussed the value of female workers and how trust, respect and practical help were important drivers of their engagement. To explore the boy's complexities and capacities for change, this study set out to understand, by way of their perceptions, both the offending behaviour and the self-perceptions of the participants. The chapter gives several accounts of boys involved in varying levels of crime, from drug dealing with robbery to assault. However, the chapter also highlights that even as these men reflected on their behaviours, in many cases attributing them to social and structural disadvantages, they internalised those behaviours, sometimes describing them as 'all we know'. The findings affirm that crime can become a male occupation embedded within boy's lifestyles (Messerschmidt, 2012), but crucially, they also recognise the existence of opportunities and possibilities beyond the boy's seemingly limited circumstances. Finally, the chapter concludes with several boy's reflections on their changing performances of masculinity and their desires to desist from crime. Some men discussed working with others and helping the less fortunate, while others spoke of how making changes in their lives and distancing themselves from peers. The role of the family become more prominent in the men's discussions as they reflected on their life experiences and what people were of value to them. There were arguments put forward in this section of boys possessing agency and their ability to think independently and make changes in their lives. Masculinity was perceived as ambivalent as there was a conflicting interplay of needing to "tough" alongside more sensitive aspects relating to mental health issues, caring for others

and notes of regret of past behaviours. It was evident the professionals played a key role in helping to facilitate engagement and deconstructing social constructions of masculinity related to offending. The next section looks at accounts from practitioners regarding the boys they work with.

Chapter Six: Practitioners' accounts of the boys they work with: challenging identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses practitioners' understandings of the boys they work with to address the third and final research question: *How do professionals reinforce or challenge aspects of masculinity in their work with boys?* Findings from the focus-group interviews, see practitioners discuss the inequalities and adversity faced by their young charges, as well as how those challenges can be masked by the boy's aggression, violence and inability to cooperate with the professionals. The professionals' comments reveal the deep insecurities of the boy's street masculinity as it drives them to deny vulnerability and struggle to discuss feelings and emotions. Throughout the following sections, practitioners also describe how they attempt to help the boys and, with varying degrees of success, challenge their thoughts and practices by forming relationships which I argue is an example of cross over between the street and penal fields through professional discretion (Costa and Sandberg, 2015).

6.1 Forming relationships

This subtheme, forming relationships, provides insight into how professionals attempt to establish rapport and relationships with the boys with whom they work. The professionals elaborate on the significance of forming these relationships and the productive effects they can have, tending to reinforce the boy's own comments about the value of trusting relationships with professionals.

The findings highlight the culture of a specific, local form of hegemonic masculinity and the pressures that practitioners face in their work, including how they communicate and engage with the boys. Professionals discuss working in crisis with young people facing multiple disadvantages, confirming the boy's descriptions of the early socialisations that contributed to the development of their habitus. Helen, a YOT worker, illustrates this point below:

> A lot of them are very compliant when they come through, but some can be quite resistant and what we found within our YOT is build a relationship with them before we even get onto doing some of the statutory work because you're not going to be able to do that without being able to form that relationship. We've got a number of cases that come through that you can't even do some of the work because they won't talk and that's not because you're a YOT, it's because they have a general mistrust with professionals in general, sometimes you're managing crisis. There's also a mental health crisis, drugs, criminal exploitation, that's a massive impact as well, isn't it? And peer influence as well, across from who I've worked with, has a major impact. (Helen, YOT practitioner)

The mistrust of professionals can hinder engagement. Helen asserts that one must first establish a relationship with the boys before productive work can take place,

mirroring the boy's insistence on the value of a trust-based relationship before engagement. Helen concedes that it can be difficult to build such a relationship, owing to a general mistrust of professionals and the reality of working in crisis around mental health, drugs and criminal exploitation. Multiple factors beyond offending behaviour are evidently at play, and these factors seemingly transcend the purview of youth offending team workers, shedding light on the difficulties practitioners face in seeking to meet boy's needs.

Considering the multiple disadvantages the boys have experienced, their resistance can be explained by their habitus and the impact of lasting dispositions. As detailed in Chapters Four and Five, the boys have created alternative structures in response to their subordinated social positions and early socialisation within their family homes, and as observed within the literature (Skeggs, 2012), these structures continue to shape the men's practices. One factor relevant to the boy's practices is their self-portrayal as 'hard', which is connected with their evasion of the discussion of any vulnerabilities they may be harbouring. This tendency to conceal can be tied back to the alternative schemes that the men adapted to survive in their fields, and they are also commonly associated with stereotypical masculinity (Skeggs, 2012). Below, YOT practitioner Steve illustrates how constructing masculinity plays out in practice settings and professionals' attempts to break down the barriers put up by evading vulnerability:

> There can just be a window sometimes if the session has gone that way and their guard comes down a bit with you, and if you're saying it is ok to be scared about things its ok to come here and say that life isn't great and that you have got difficulty, because you know, you might give them difficulties that

> you went through when you were er and then sometimes they'll come in and speak to you about those areas a little bit and I guess seeing the softer side of them that other people might not be seeing. Then it's quite difficult because they then go back to the communities and their friends and that sort of culture. We can sort of see sometimes, the cogs turning with them thinking, 'Well, you know, I could get an apprenticeship, I could do this,' because it's not just ourselves trying to build them up, they might be in really good places with key workers who're seeing them much more than us and they're sort of slowly, in a nice way, trying to chip away at their ideas at what life can be (Steve, YOT practitioner).

Steve discusses the complexities of engaging with the boys who sometimes discuss insecurities or vulnerabilities. He describes using his own experiences to help break down these barriers and reveal a sensitive element of the boy's masculine selves, but he goes on to highlight how the boy's return to their communities and peers – the street field, this thesis would argue – is a significant barrier. The boy's reintroduction to their former environments reinforces their established cultures of masculinity and the need to acquire and defend street capital discussed in the literature in Chapter Two and the boy's accounts in Chapter Four (Fraser, 2013). Given the deeply ingrained and highly durable nature of habitus, this constitutes a difficult aspect of youth justice's attempts to engage with boys, and it emphasises the brevity of the time professionals have to work with men – and, therefore, the importance of seeing that this time is optimally made use of.

The data from this study suggest that engaging in conversations of masculinity and what it means to be a man could help maximise the value of professionals' short time with boys who offend by scrutinising the origins of their offending. This is particularly

feasible because when people enter new fields, their habitus becomes more obviously identifiable (Bourdieu, 2017), and individuals may feel uncomfortable as their dispositions do not fit the new field (Costa and Murphy, 2015; Miller, 2016; Bourdieu, 2017). Steve's above comments illustrate how boys entering the field of youth justice practice can promote reflection on habitual thought and practice. For example, when removed from the street field, the balance of boy's power shifts, and their symbolic capital becomes much less important in the youth justice context. Indeed, there is evidence within the dataset that some men do conform to the norms of the youth justice system. Without mentioning masculinity per se, Steve indirectly brings masculinity to the forefront of his work by challenging the men's ideas of what maleness means and what alternatives are available. This fact is significant as it reflects Steve's belief in the boys as agents. Granted that Steve is not unique in this approach, professionals do seem to demonstrate a recognition that men can (and must) think and change independently.

A key component of relationship-forming highlighted by the alternative education professionals is communicating consistently (in both style and frequency) with the boys, as Colin suggests:

> We always speak to them, like we never don't speak to any of them, do we? So, say someone has had problems at home and they are coming in dead angry, we challenge them and say 'you can't do this you can't do that'. But, the next the day we won't not speak to them, because I think constantly being the same with them breaks down the barrier that they have, like they forget that they don't want to speak to you, because you're a teacher and this happened yesterday. But, then if you come in the next day and talk to them about what they have been up to, that barrier goes down slowly and slowly

> and, they have full conversations with you don't they? (Colin, alternative education practitioner)

Colin's account offers insight into how he maintains relationships with his young charges: he is firm in his actions when required but consistent in terms of his communication with the boys. Colin gives the example of promoting consistency by challenging behaviour but not holding grudges. This demonstrates the peaceful resolution that characterises potential conflict in the field of education, whereas, in the street field, conflict can quickly escalate into violence (Fraser and Atkinson, 2014). By extension, Colin is showing the boys alternative ways of responding to conflict situations.

Another aspect of relationship-forming is the lack of male role models, which the professionals link to the men not knowing how to 'present as a male'. In addition, it is highlighted by practitioners that a lack of male presence in the youth justice service and social care further perpetuates this lack of male role modelling. However, as Helen discusses below, the boys who do work with male professionals often form bonds with them:

> They also don't get much of a role model in relation to how to present as a male, because the majority don't have those role models. Plus, there aren't that many blokes in our service, there aren't that many blokes within social care, however, people like [anonymised], and some of our other male social workers tend to build that relationship, and they tend to attach themselves to that, they're liking the relationship because they don't tend to get it from anywhere else. I suppose, the other thing is domestic violence, we've had some boys who have been victims and their perception is, 'No, I can't go to

> the police because I will just look weak.' So, it's about those perceptions about their masculinity, and how only women are involved in domestic abuse, no one else. (Helen, YOT practitioner)

Helen identifies the void that exists for boys without male role models and the effects of conforming to stereotypical male norms. The data reiterate that certain male behaviour is reinforced by social or environmental circumstances, which contribute to the development of everyday practice and add to the difficulty of working with boys who offend. The difficulties lay in attempts to challenge the deep-rooted dispositions that shape the identities, thoughts and practices developed over the course of the men's lives – dispositions exacerbated by the absence of positive male role models. However, as the data indicate, opportunities to work with male practitioners can initiate the process of change, as bonds formed with male professionals constitute the introduction of an element previously absent from the boy's lives. Steve extends Helen's position by adding the context of those men who do have males in their lives, discussing their relationships with their fathers and how he believes these relationships impact the boy's practices:

> It can be quite extreme, where they'll sort of put their fathers on pedestals despite the fathers being involved in lots of criminality. Then you get the other extent of 'my dad's nothing to me'. I guess the ones who're keeping their dads in that position are trying to maybe not see their faults and the reality of things are a bit harder to get on board with more pro-social role models because they're trying to almost live up to the reputation which their fathers have in the communities. (Steve, YOT practitioner)

Steve discusses how some boys take on the habitual and dispositional qualities of their family lives. He describes that some boys respond by wanting to emulate their fathers, while others seek to sever all ties with them. This is an example of how some men may reproduce habitus learnt from their fathers, while others are compelled to distinguish themselves from that habitus, demonstrating both continuity and contradiction in constructing masculinity and indicating that boys have a measure of control over how to respond to a given situation (Bourdieu, 2017). The boy's mixed perceptions of their fathers show that some men strive to embody the hegemonic ideal of their fathers even as others work to differentiate themselves from that ideal, discrediting their fathers' constructions of masculinity in acts of protest.

> In their cases, there has been an incident where one child saw his father attack his mother and then his father left the environment and went somewhere else to live. Then the son has become the perpetrator and started to take the role of his father. Then for him to deal with his emotions, he will turn to cannabis and to not conforming to education... Obviously, we have got us three who are positive, and we show them the right conversations to have, how to respect each other. Also, the right jokes to make at the right time, and when it is time to get your head down and work and when it is time to relax. We kind of related to the males a little bit more. So he is starting to engage now more with the female member of staff than he has previously. Obviously, he has got violence issues with woman still. But, with males he has seemed okay. Maybe he thinks 'my father did act that way, but these are positive for me now' and has kind of reflected on it. (Jake, alternative education practitioner)

Jake's above account considers a man who has come to emulate and embody the violence his father displayed in the family home. This reproduction reinforces several accounts, outlined in Chapter Four, of how injurious behaviour is reproduced in the

family home. In this case, the boy’s hostile sexism towards women evidences unhealthy constructions of masculinity that centre around violence towards and domination of women. Crucially, however, and in contrast to previous accounts of how professionals construct masculinity (Baumgartner, 2014), Jake acknowledges how the man’s prior circumstances have impacted his behaviour but points to the boy's capacity for change. Jake reflects that to facilitate this change, rehabilitative support workers may act as positive male role models – a conclusion supported by the relevant (Robb et., al 2015; Harris; 2019) – and he seeks to activate this potential by engaging with the boy. These findings resonate with the boy’s discussions of what works for them: professionals who adopt non-authoritarian methods and speak and behave in a relatable fashion, accommodating the boy’s habitus. However, Jake concede that working with boys can be difficult, even when acting as a more pro-social role model, to engage with those who go on to reproduce the same habitus as their fathers, as such men have already embodied lasting dispositions that are resistant to change.

6.2 Performances of masculinity

This subtheme highlights how practitioners view the boy’s masculinity as performance. Some of these performances affect the men’s engagement with the service, and others may skew the expression and representation of the boy’s masculinity, portraying something other than how the boys have truly come to see themselves. The professionals discuss how the men’s home lives and peer influences pressure them to conform to local norms and affirm that their environments have severe impacts on the men and their experiences of justice

services. They also discuss the difficulties they face in challenging both this culture and the men's embodied, reproduced performances of masculinity.

The impact of early socialisation and family life are significant. Through these social and cultural processes, injurious behaviour is reproduced by way of the reinforcement of certain crime-involved masculinity. Socialisation provides the boys with specific cultural capital, which develops into dispositional practices and limits the men's abilities to operate in other fields (Reay, 2005). This process could also represent the source of difficulties in youth justice practice and the need to discuss and challenge the men's understandings of what masculinity is. Below, several professionals from the two focus-group sites weigh in:

> It's really generational sometimes, their mums and dads have been in the system, so they go on to do that. We get cases where some homes that have had two brothers in custody, and you can almost feel that it is a rite of passage that will happen to them in some point in time. (Steve, YOT practitioner)

> A lot of them have got things that stem from home. So, they have had an upbringing, which has allowed them to see domestic abuse, violence, drink, drugs. A few parents might have gone to jail. Some of their needs become more social and emotional based... kind of beyond us as teachers you know what a mean? (Jake, alternative education practitioner).

> I think it all starts from home. Basically, it is probably how they are getting treated by their parents at home. So, they think it is cool or alright to treat us like they are getting treated at home, because they know they can get away with it. But, they wouldn't do it to other youths in the centre, or their peers, you know what I mean? But, they will do it to a more positive figure like us, so to speak. (Brian, alternative education practitioner)

> You can see the kids whose environment has impacted them and made them vulnerable or led into them doing crimes, because they have got nothing at home. Or, say you can tell that they are not given proper meals. So, if you are left in a situation the only thing they have got left to do is go out and rob something that they can eat. (Colin, alternative education practitioner)

Collectively, the professionals discuss a recurring theme of dysfunction. For his part, Steve discusses how the culture of incarceration is often reproduced generationally. From the professional perspective, this reproduction is highly predictable: ‘it is almost like a rite of passage’. The data indicate that the combination of territorial stigma, poverty, lack of education and lack of role models reinforce practices of masculinity that are damaging to the men’s identities (Tyler, 2013; 2018). For example, Jake describes how the men’s exposure to adversity leads to mental ill-health and learning difficulties, illustrating the transmission of disadvantage through deprivation (Sharkey, Besbris and Friedson, 2016). The practitioners’ belief that the behaviours, mannerisms and ‘ways of being’ a man acquired in the family home come to inform habitual behaviour is consistent with the boy’s accounts. The dispositions accrued by the boys in their family homes and communities can limit their ability to operate in youth justice practice settings as they have not been equipped with the tools or cultural capital to guide them in non-criminal fields. The professionals’ accounts, then, support the need for youth justice services to focus specifically on constructs of masculinity as central to offending and desistance rather than focusing solely on the crime committed. Including concepts of masculinity in the professionals’ work with boys could thereby provoke change as the approaches centred on what it means to be a man would begin to chip away at their ingrained habitus.

Building on the impact that early socialisation has on the boy's habitus, the professionals discuss how despite trying their best to engage with the boys, some cases see a crossover between the street field and the family structure that hinders the men's progress. The alternative education professionals best illustrate this point:

> Well this one learner, his Dad has been in jail for firearms and he thinks his dad is some big player in this area, so he is trying to live up to that. He is trying to show his dad that I can do this. I don't have to be in school. I can come and work with you and we can go on our quads. Stuff like that so he is trying to relive his Dad's childhood through himself... It kind of defeats what we are trying to do. We are trying to help their child, but they are encouraging the behaviour for his son to live up to. (Jake, alternative education practitioner)

> I think we have struggled as well because when it comes to that type of family or even that time of year, he will go out on scrambler bikes with his dad. It is a lose-lose situation. Because, we haven't got that family to speak to and if he gets kicked out of his mum's he goes to his nan's. (Colin, alternative education practitioner)

> I think we struggle as well, because we say right you're going home and he will phone his dad and say 'oh I have been sent home from school' and he will be like 'oh come round to mine then' or pick him up on his quad. There is no sort of support. (Brian, alternative education practitioner)

In these excerpts, the professionals highlight some of the difficulties and limitations of their work. In some cases, they report, there is simply little chance to make an impact. These examples describe one boy's disposition as rendering non-existent any conforming with education or adhering to rules. Although it is argued that

different fields can promote changes in habitus (Costa and Murphy, 2015), in this case, the potential for change is less than likely as the boy's habitus is more strongly influenced by (and reproduces) that of his father. The professionals describe the situation as 'lose-lose' for them because of the lack of support from the family, which further perpetuates the boy's dispositions and reproduction of habitus. This finding further validates the idea that constructions of masculinity manifest in practice settings and present difficulties for professionals who engage with boys.

In addition to the impact one's family can have on a man's habitus, the professionals also discuss the influence of one's peers. Through the professionals' insights into the boy's involvement with their peers, a better understanding of masculinity as performance is illuminated. The professionals reported that a lack of parental guidance or nurturing, particularly for those in care, left peers a primary cause (or indeed the primary cause) of the development of habitus. The dispositions accrued through experiences with peers contribute to a type of masculinity that normalises criminal behaviour:

> You can see a real difference when they're outside and when they're coming in, you sit there thinking, oh wind your neck in, just get in. There is a significant difference in how they present to their friends, there is a softer side sometimes with us, and it depends what they're coming in for. (Helen, YOT practitioner)

> I suppose in relation to peer influence then for me, sometimes it's about being with your friends and having that sense of belonging. But a lot of it is that their home environment is not stable, and it's not a nurturing environment, so

> they're gravitating towards something else and that's where those attachments become stronger. (Lucy, YOT practitioner)

> Gradually, I think with a lot of cases where you get to know them over a number of years, because they keep popping up around the service. They first come in with that sort of swagger I think, and that's when they think they've got to show that I'm tough and no one will mess with me. That's their perception of masculinity, but then they just get comfortable and they get a bit more down to earth and compliant, and you can maybe get somewhere with them. (Steve, YOT practitioner).

The above reports by YOT workers illustrate how the boys navigate between the criminal and penal fields. Helen points to the dynamics associated with performances of masculinity by discussing the difference in how boys present themselves to peers and how they present themselves to her. She reveals that the men will, at times, open up and show a 'softer side', corresponding to the ambivalences discussed in Chapters Four and Five and suggesting some potential for change. Lucy discusses the complexities around the youths' practices as men and asserts that they are often responses to a lack of nurturing in the home environment. This is an example of how the developing habitus is influenced in fields outside of the family home, and in this case, the void where parental nurturing is typically located can be filled by peers, who help to reinforce the stereotypical masculinity that the boys come to emulate (Costa and Murphy, 2015). These data once again foreground the need for youth justice services to acknowledge and integrate the concept of masculinity as a core social origin of offending. Finally taking steps to address masculinity in youth justice services would be akin to treating the cause (the reason why), rather than the symptoms (particular crimes), of an illness (offending behaviour). Such work to

challenge boy's perceptions of 'being a man' could thereby provoke internal changes that could naturally provoke desistance from crime.

Perceptions of what a man is, and how these perceptions manifest in practice, can be better understood by referring to Steve's comments. Steve discusses how men entering the youth justice system showcase an 'initial swagger' and a need to portray themselves as tough. Such portrayals are a valued aspect of their habitus, which, as previously discussed, guides the men's practices in navigating the street field (Fraser, 2013). However, Steve concurs with his colleague that over time, these barriers can be lifted. The removal of these barriers, which allows the possibility of productive work with, can be achieved – according to the boy's accounts – through trust, respect and equality. These findings demonstrate the societal pressures that boys face in conforming to mainstream social norms and, equally, the value of professional work addressing these social norms. As Steve suggests below, the culture of masculinity can have a significant hold on boys:

> It is almost like a performance where they go out and behave that way with their friends. I don't know how much they let their guard down with their friends and how much they'll talk about their thoughts, feelings, or difficulties they're having, whether they'll confide in them for help, but I suspect probably not that much. I think maybe because all they're getting told [about prison] from friends in the community, is not the truth behind it. When you're looking at masculinity, what they want to come out and say is they were fine and they won't necessarily tell you about the times when perhaps we've gone down and seen the lad crying in the cells and they never want their friends to know that about this side of custody. (Steve, YOT practitioner)

Steve points to ambivalences at play, reporting that he perceives masculinity as a façade orchestrated by the boys in an effort to conform to (and reproduce) the culture of male norms and the status quo of toughness in the street field. He discusses his perceptions of the 'rules of the game' that boys play – a choice of words that calls to mind comments made about men evading their vulnerabilities and discussing emotions both by the professionals and in the literature (Bourdieu, 1986; Wacquant, 2002; Heath and Priest, 2015). Steve extends this to the context of incarcerated boys by discussing perceptions and attitudes surrounding custody. Steve reports that though boys portray custody to their friends as 'fine', this depiction stands in contrast to the reality that Steve experiences in his work, supporting his view that masculinity is very much a façade that the boys set out to perform. These examples evidence ambivalences within the boy's constructions of masculinity, which are characterised by public performances of toughness on the one hand and private vulnerability on the other. The insights shared by the boys in Chapters Four and Five demonstrate this ambivalence: some men are willing to discuss their issues with mental health, and others identify their offending behaviour as contradicting their perceptions of the men they want to be viewed as.

The professionals' insights, however, examine more deeply the sensitivities displayed by boys who are removed from the street field. Such removal renders a foreign currency – and one with little value – the social, cultural and symbolic capital that is important in their habitus (Bourdieu, 2017). In the penal field, the men begin to reveal a version of themselves that contradicts their street habitus (Bourdieu, 1998). This can be understood as the youth justice (or alternative education) field promoting a transformation of the men's habitus as they develop new ways to communicate

with professionals whom might not have previously engaged. Understanding masculinity as a performance and the ambivalences surrounding its transition between fields was a recurring theme in the workers' perceptions of the boys they work with. Differences appear between services in this regard: the alternative education programme, unlike the YOT, unites groups of boys in the same vicinity which has implications including the men's perceived need to continue to display masculinity. Part of this bringing-together is a reengagement of the boys through sport, and below, the alternative education practitioners offer their perceptions of how masculinity is performed in this field:

> It is all about 'bigging' themselves up, to look bigger to other people. They think it's cool or good to be seen swearing and to be horrible to people, because they think that makes me hard or that means I can do this, or I can do that. But there are different days when different kids are in and they act differently. So, say if there is one of the lads in that is more outgoing, others will come back a bit and then when he is off, they will step up a bit and be like I'm the alpha male or something, like, I can shout this or I can throw this. (Brian, alternative education practitioner)

Here, Brian describes an example of how a hierarchy takes shape between the learners, regulating their performances of masculinity in practice settings. However, Brian notes that depending on who is present on a given day, a change in the boy's practices can be observed. This suggests that in addition to a hierarchy, there is a dominant male ideal to which the men subscribe in the setting, as evidenced by learners' attempts to emulate 'dominant' who are absent (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This can also be understood as a struggle for symbolic capital as the men seek to enhance their reputations within the education field by

being disruptive. Jake, who sees such behaviour often, questions the authenticity of the boy's practices and describes his attempts to challenge them:

> In terms of the behaviour, it's dependent on who he is and what he has come from, or what needs he has got. We have got a few now in our cohort that will try and be disrespectful to staff quite often, because they know out in the public and in the community, they are not that type of person. So, to become that type of person, they do it in a place where they feel comfortable and where they know that staff can protect them. So, if they talk to staff negatively, they know that staff can't do anything physically to them, so it is their way of kind of portraying this figure that they're not. In terms of their reactions to other peers they know that again staff can protect them away from anything. So, with the behaviour they know they are protected with us. Like recently, one lad became abusive towards the three of us and we know clearly that he is not like that at all away from the centre. But he will portray himself like he is, and it is that battle to tell him that this is not the correct way to behave. You don't need to show off to get this reputation for yourself in school because it simply won't translate into the community. (Jake, alternative education practitioner)

The performances of masculinity that Jake describes affect engagement in ways seen in neither the YOT programme nor the offender-mentoring group. The dynamics of bringing together a group of boys already resistant to education can reinforce the perceived need to adhere to stereotypical male norms, and as Jake observes, some learners respond by seeking to portray themselves as abusive, tending also to show off in attempts to enhance their reputation within the group. However, awareness of his learners' backgrounds and family lives suggests to Jake that these portrayals are inauthentic, not translatable in the street field but rather attempts to be accepted in the service group. Inherent to this proposition are

ambivalences of masculinity: these portrayals take place within a protected educational environment, and unlike other boys in the education centre (who have come from criminally active families), the learners in question (who come from productive families) remain comparatively well behaved outside of the group sporting context.

These differentiated constructions of masculinity can be considered the effects of the relationship between habitus and field, which see men adopt different practices according to their field. The accrual of symbolic capital via misbehaviour is significant in this setting. As Jake argues, 'this [behaviour] would not translate into the community: these learners' dispositions do not equip them with the tools necessary to compete with criminally active peers. In contrast, more criminally inclined boys have a disregard for education embedded within their practices as men, confirming the accounts outlined in Chapter 5. Below, Brian discusses encounters with such individuals:

> We have had learners come in who point blank refuse to do any work whatsoever, and when we ask why and what are you going to do when you leave if you have no qualifications their response is 'well my dad doesn't work' or 'my mum doesn't work'. So, it is what they have got around them and because they have those people around them, they don't want to engage in education and they just dismiss it. (Brian, alternative education practitioner)

The boys that Brian describes here demonstrate just how deeply rooted some of the learners' habitus-based dispositions can be. Whereas the previous example described learners wanting to accrue symbolic capital to enhance their reputations, this example highlights the inequalities and disadvantages, originating in their

parental relationships, that some boys embody in their practices and perceptions (Wacquant, 2002). Flatly refusing to engage with the professionals and the programme may seem like a form of protest masculinity, but in fact, it is counterproductive as it helps to compound the men's disadvantaged positions, strengthening a type of subordinate masculinity and inevitably leading to the commission of a crime (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). In terms of how masculinity affects engagement in practice settings, the data indicate diverse and sometimes contradictory influences, which can be described as a kind of performance. According to the professionals, a hegemonic ideal persists within the programme, but their ability to enact that ideal depends on each man's disposition and social and cultural capital, as to do does their scope to engage with the professionals.

The professionals' accounts support arguments that early interventions to challenge perceptions of masculinity for men at risk of offending are necessary (Duechar et al., 2015). As the professionals highlighted, embodied masculinity exists on a spectrum across boys, with those coming from family backgrounds that are already criminally inclined, or through the care system, is significantly more difficult to engage with. This phenomenon can be understood as the boy's habitus being more resistant to change, as well as reflecting a more deeply ingrained rejection of authority. The professionals perceive other boys, in contrast, as wanting (or feeling compelled) to take up the more resistant stance towards professionals but doing so more as a performance than as a genuinely intrinsic act. This latter group of men also displays a greater number of ambivalences, notably vulnerability and sensitivity. Importantly, rather than downplaying aspects of vulnerability, as seen in Baumgartner (2014), professionals in this study construct masculinity as rather nuanced, identifying

contradictions, in terms of toughness and vulnerability, in boy's own constructions of male identity.

It is significant that professionals identify ambivalences within this type of masculinity linked with offending, given that the concept is currently underexplored in youth justice practice (Baumgartner, 2020). Despite the powerful role of the male ideal and the need to live up to it in regulating male behaviour, the past failure to acknowledge this role in practice as a core variable that affects offending and desisting is unfortunate. First, it has served to reinforce, rather than re-sculpt, existing street habitus, and second, by leading justice practice to focus instead on individual responsibility for offending, it has left the male ideal unchallenged in the minds of boys who offend.

6.3 Different approaches to service provision

The previous sections have addressed professionals' relationships with the boys they work with and how those professionals perceive the men's masculinities as performances guided by peers, albeit surrounded by notable ambivalences. Within this section, different approaches adopted by professionals seeking to engage with will be analysed. First, the professionals from the alternative education programme discuss how their operation differs from mainstream schools – something they perceive as a strength when engaging with the boys in question. Below, Jake and Colin elaborate on what distinguishes the programme:

> We are a little more relaxed with our approaches, we understand them better than the school do. We can spend more one-to-one time with them maybe compared to a typical teacher, if some of them do something wrong, we don't go for their neck right away, we reason with them, obviously if it is consistent or their behaviour is extreme then we have to take a different approach. (Jake, alternative education practitioner)

> There are a lot of targets with mainstream teachers. They're under a lot of pressure. So as Jake said, 'They don't have time to sit with Joe Blogs over there.' Whereas we haven't got strict targets to work to, if somebody needs a bit of time out and doesn't want to do that work that day, they can always do it tomorrow, rather than working to a strict time scale. (Colin, alternative education practitioner)

Here, Jake and Colin point to the value of understanding and varied practice. The two practitioners appreciate that while it is possible to engage boys, universal – in other words, one-size-fits-all – approaches are ineffective. They contend that instead, emphasis should be placed on varied practice. This conclusion also follows from the reports of the interviewed boys, who voiced that the structured environments of formal education and the breakdown of their relationships with teachers led to their expulsion. In contrast, the professionals at the alternative education programme acknowledge these issues and adapt their approaches to help re-engage boys in education. In doing this, alternative education can provide boys with a second opportunity to earn qualifications that could help them move away from crime, especially for those who have previously disregarded or struggled to adapt to educational institutions. This is particularly significant because all of the boys who participated in the study left mainstream education with no qualifications. Further, their habitus and lack of transferable cultural capital limited their perceived

progression and guided them towards crime as a source of economic, social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998; Wacquant, 2019). Brian emphasises this point in the passage below:

> I think it has a good impact on their education because now we have six or seven kids who come in near enough five days a week. Whereas, before they were excluded or just going in once or twice but because they enjoy the situation and they know that we are not there to just shout at them they engage. (Brian, alternative education practitioner)

Boys who offend generally have poor educational attainment, which limits their ability to progress through means considered legitimate (France, 2013). However, this study's findings suggest that for some boys, a better fit may be found in the sort of bespoke educational field created by alternative education providers, whose environments align better with the habitus of disadvantaged men. In addition, alternative education practitioners tend to share their personal experiences with their learners as a means of increasing engagement, as they discuss below:

> We live in the same area as the kids so we know it can be tough, they all know what type of area we live in. I think we have been in their situation, as some of us have been expelled from school so we can relate to them. They see where we have come from, the job we have got, a car, and the clothes we have got. They kind of look at you a bit differently, because we haven't followed a stereotypical path to be a teacher, or we haven't behaved all our lives. Sharing similar situations, it gains respect. (Jake, alternative education practitioner)

> We talk about what we have been through and what we have done. That you don't need to be out selling drugs to be able to go on holiday or go out to festivals. They might say where have you been this weekend and we might

> say blah place, or Barcelona, and they look at you like, 'have you yeah?' (Colin, alternative education practitioner)

The professionals reported feeling that sharing their backgrounds with the boys helped to break down barriers around the field of education and, more broadly, to pacify the conflict between the street and the system. By demonstrating what is achievable for men in the local area – citing successes, experiences and material possessions acquired without resorting to crime – the professionals offer an alternative perspective on the kinds of habitus developed by other men who live in the same area (Bourdieu, 1986; 1998; Collier, 2005). That the professionals live in the same area and share similar dispositions makes them realistic role models and living examples of attainable, productive masculinity. The ability to rely on these shared or within-reach qualities makes it clear that working with men in a mutual and relatable manner can be effective in challenging their views of what it means to be a man. Similarly, education and its fruits can be re-evaluated and appreciated by youth who have historically dismissed it. In terms of identifying how best to meet boy's needs, having sampled from three different organisations (and organisation types) has proved particularly useful. The identification of strengths from each service – alternative education, offender mentoring and state justice services – has brought to the forefront the need to offer integrated practices that synthesise each organisation's best qualities and collectively work with men towards authoring a new, pro-social identity.

Like those of the alternative education practitioners, YOT professionals' approaches to engaging with the boys are rooted in how they communicate. Being respectful and honest – traits also identified as desirable by the boy's accounts in Chapter 5 – are

considered by YOT professionals to be critical components of both forming relationships and inducing engagement with the service, as Helen reports:

> I think we're honest and respectful, we try and treat them as people not as an offender. We've had some horrendous offenders coming through and you must see the young person and you must see their background rather than their offence and we are very honest, we're very open. I think we are extremely respectful and fair in how we manage these young people and I think they see that, although they don't appreciate it within the first few months, they do get it. We have kids coming back here, aged 21 saying, 'this is the only place,' and the majority will have kids, so they're open to those services, but they come back and they go 'can you help us with this because I'm not getting in anywhere else', so there is that attachment. (Helen, YOT practitioner)

Helen discusses viewing the boys and women who enter her service as people, rather than offenders, and despite the severity of their crimes, she considers the effects of their backgrounds, remaining respectful, honest and fair in her interactions. Helen's demonstration of practitioner discretion reflects the spirit of the 'child first, offender second' approach, which has been officially adopted by the Welsh Youth Justice Service (Haines and Case, 2018) and seeks to avoid punitive sanctions whenever possible.

Helen also mentions that initially, people may not appreciate her work. Through the building of relationships, the development of trust and the establishment of strong rapport, however, Helen's charges eventually realise that she is there to help. The process of forming these relationships eases the barriers between young people and professionals to a great degree, and Helen even reports that some young people

return as adults to thank her or ask for additional help. Helen's practice, which can be understood as local variation in the delivery of youth justice services, shows both her awareness of the young people's habitus and her ability to adjust to their needs (France, 2015; Shamus, 2018). These findings are supported by the interviewed boys, whose accounts often mentioned initially disparaging views of structural services, owing to their habitus and histories of being 'let down', but also acknowledged that work and engagement can generally begin once trust and respect are earned. Lucy and Steve, adding to Helen's comments, describe the practical complexities of trying to engage people:

> We bring it down to the lowest level and dissect it. So, you must unpick what their beliefs are, and then dissect it all the way through. At each point normally they are alright because it isn't done in a confrontational way. We work in the third person; it is better than actually accusing them. (Lucy, YOT practitioner)
>
> We use case studies, like this has happened to Bob and how is Bob feeling now, and should they have done that to Bob? Rather than if it's right or wrong. Quite often it might not be the session where you're sitting with them, but more the informal time when you're taking them to places or when they do a bit of reparation you get the cogs working. (Steve, YOT practitioner).
>
> Some of them don't mind DVDs, they remember things from it whereas they may not remember worksheets as much. With the DVDs there is a visual offence then real people coming on and talking about emotions and they can see that impact it has on families. (Lucy, YOT practitioner)

Both Lucy and Steve discuss the variety of methods employed at their YOT practice to accommodate young people's different learning needs: visual presentation, written materials and case studies are all on offer. The availability of these approaches show the professionals' attempts to recognise the men's habitual dispositions and, to an

extent, to cross over into their fields of existence in the pursuit of enhanced engagement (Bourdieu, 1990; Grant, 2016; Shamus and Sandberg, 2016). Broadly, the YOT practitioners approach the young people by discussing each element of an offence in the third person, thereby avoiding the direct assignment of blame, which could antagonise the young offenders. Steve highlights that case studies are also used to try and illuminate the consequences of the young people's actions in a nonpunitive way, once again seeking to avoid direct blame while still illustrating the impact of their crimes.

The variation in practice that Lucy and Steve adopt shows how it is possible to better engage young people in the youth justice system (Taylor, 2016). For example, Steve describes that it is in informal environments such as in the car on the way to an appointment where he sees 'the cogs working'. The achievement of success in informal settings is made possible by the window of opportunity in which practitioners remain with boys outside of a formal, authority-rich setting, as reported in the literature (Harris, 2019). The use of visual methods such as DVD presentations, which Lucy states can be more effective when it comes to information retention and putting the impacts of crime into perspective, are additional adaptations made by the YOT programme.

However, success and adaptation are not always easy. Steve describes what he believes is a common scenario for the boys he works with:

> It's almost like a jigsaw puzzle and there are pieces missing for them so, they're not all together and they have these sort of ideas coming in, bits and pieces. They've got lots of problems anyway and difficulties in childhood, and

> to find their role in life. Who they are personality-wise might take them longer than it would for people coming from those more privileged type of background. (Steve, YOT practitioner)

Steve asserts that disadvantaged young people can be confused about their identity and role in life. This confusion can be explained by field norms and the process by which cultural and social capital gained during early socialisation form a sort of habitus that is incompatible with the conventional opportunity structure (Bourdieu, 1992; 1993; Costa and Murphy, 2015). Unlike youth from middle-class families, who are exposed to different forms of culture and equipped with different kinds of capital, enabling them to progress in institutional settings such as school, the boys in this study largely lacked parental guidance and live-in care; only their most basic physical needs (food, clothing and housing) were being met. Rather than emotional and practical support, these boys faced abuse, neglect and rejection. It is this that leads to the confusion of identity that Steve describes as the 'missing pieces' of a 'jigsaw puzzle'. As the boys themselves reported, they acquire the alternative forms of economic, cultural and symbolic capital discussed throughout the study as street capital, further limiting their ability to enter the legitimate opportunity structure and guiding them towards offending (Sandberg, 2008; Fraser, 2013; Wacquant, 2019).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed professionals' perceptions of the boys with whom they work, focusing in particular on how professionals attempt to engage with the boys in practice settings and the importance of forming relationships in making progress.

The professionals' comments discuss their perceptions of the implications of social deprivation, domestic abuse and other forms of disadvantages and how these affect boy's thoughts and practices as men.

I have drawn attention to professionals' views of how boy's masculinity represents one or more kinds of performances that are heavily influenced by both the youths' peers and the professionals' attempts to counteract the effects of peer pressure. Over time and through their work with the interviewees, the professionals began to challenge the former group's thoughts and practices as men by taking different approaches better suited to the professionals' increasingly developed understandings of the men's complex needs. Professionals practised leniency with rules and flexibility of approach in the alternative education programme settings, where they manage to provide an education to boys who would otherwise go without it. Shared backgrounds also proved important for engaging with the boys, and individual professionals may draw on their unique backgrounds to assist and enhance their work.

The chapter's central contribution to knowledge is highlighting how professionals challenge constructions of masculinity prized by the boys. These constructions are commonly based on essentialist understandings of maleness and include stereotypical qualities like aggression (Smith, 2009). The professionals, in contrast, perceive masculinity as more contradictory and sometimes paradoxical, taking into consideration the boy's vulnerability and their experiences with disadvantage, which they attempt to help the men address and work to promote change.

Chapter Seven: Concluding discussion

7.0 Introduction

The first part of this chapter discusses how boys make sense of their masculinity through their habitus and note that this often creates a mismatch with youth justice services. The implications of this incongruence for policy, practice and future research are expounded.

Following this is the issue of how boys who offend are theoretically considered. Currently, criminological theory seems preoccupied either with individual motivations for offending at the expense of structural and contextual factors or vice-versa (France, Bottrell and Armstrong, 2012; Muncie, 2009; Costa and Murphy, 2016). This theorising is problematic, attending to the crime or the 'making of the crime' while neglecting the interplay of agency and wider social structures in determining youth offending (France, Bottrell and Armstrong, 2012; Phoenix, 2016). Thus, the second part of the chapter applies the concepts of habitus (based on various synthesised capitals) and reflexivity to analyse how masculinity is constructed in practice settings, acknowledging both subjective experiences and the wider social structures contained therein. This theoretical approach enabled a deeper understanding of how boys are influenced by their environment – an influence which, in turn, forms boy's habitus and predisposes them to offend. Indeed, the impact of wider social structures, the current education system and the internalisation of political implications associated with social class (austerity and perceptions of working-class boys) becomes embodied and visible in the boy's reports of their experiences.

The interview and focus-group data collected in the study indicate that ‘traditional’ authoritarian methods are incompatible with the habitus of boys who offend. This habitus is thought to be characterised by a lack of tangible cultural capital (such as educational qualifications), resulting in the sealing off of employment and other status opportunities. The findings raise concerns about the effectiveness of such approaches, which risk reinforcing stereotypical male attitudes and behaviours. As it stands, punitive approaches risk encouraging boys to socially engage in ways that can be destructive to themselves, those close to them and their communities. Such problems extend into state service provision (both social and youth justice services), which the boys described as difficult to engage with. The data indicate that more egalitarian approaches to rehabilitating boys are more likely to empower them to reflect and change. While discussing these issues, the chapter offer insights on participants’ experiences as men, the kinds of capital desirable in their fields of existence and the impact of entering the youth justice system

7.1 Men, making sense of their masculinity

The findings of Chapters Four, Five and Six proposed that disenfranchised boys are not adequately described by the stereotypically aggressive and violent form of masculinity. Neither do boys who offend lack the ability to engage in reflection, which is a prerequisite to desisting from offending. Whilst aggression and violence play important roles in boy’s constructions of masculinity, current literature neglects the complexities of boy’s thoughts and practices (Plummer, 2016; Stanko, 2017). This section examines how boys involved with youth justice services make sense of their

masculinity, focusing on the interplay of habitus and field. Of particular focus as a significant gap in understanding was the lack of agency in the form of choice and self-determination ascribed to boys (Smith, 2009; Baumgartner, 2014). The boys featured in this work provide accounts that refute such a notion, revealing ambivalences in how they manage the complexities of living in disadvantaged communities where crime and offending behaviour are commonplace.

Indeed, the tendency of youth justice services to view boys who offend as an 'undifferentiated mass', focusing on their commonalties (Baumgartner, 2014; Dominelli, 2016) was found to be problematic. Such a view of male offenders' subjectivity reinforces class-based stereotypes of criminality and neglects the complexities that bear influence on their lives. As this study has shown, once one moves beyond the base similarity of having committed an offence, the lives of boys who offend are widely varied. Some are involved in music; others care for disabled people and several work in legitimate jobs. Looking at study participants' future potential in terms of their variety, rather than heavy-handedly focusing on the commonality of past criminal activity, could constitute a superior form of service delivery and questions the validity of punitive ideologies. Indeed, adapting Bourdieu and Wacquant's way of thinking helped uncover the diverse, complex and contextual influences at play for marginalised boys whilst avoiding individualised blame or judging their offending.

The findings from Chapters Four and Five support an argument that the boy's predispositions resulted in oppositional tendencies towards youth justice provision. They also imply that approaching men through punitive measures serve only to

reinforce this antagonistic nature and, more broadly speaking, to reproduce social inequality. For example, a combination of structural disadvantages, beginning in school settings, can perpetuate social inequality at a structural level, as argued by Willis (1977), because professionals' jobs are considered superior to manual, working-class jobs. This conceptualisation contributes to the reproduction of a classed society, particularly for boys whose experiences at school do not resonate with their needs or lived realities. This process is readily apparent in the lives of the men in this study, each of whom had been excluded from mainstream school and each of whom looked upon traditional education with distaste. Chapter Four analysed the men's withdrawal from school as a protest form of masculinity (Tomsen and Hobbs, 2017) by which the men exerted control of their situations, expressing a counter-value system of nonconformity that sharply recalled Willis's (1977) argument that the schooling system is an extension of capitalism. This rang true for the interviewees, who embodied the local hegemonic masculinity and more often than not ended up involved in crime.

However, an important distinction must be drawn with respect to Willis's (1977) classic text. Since its publication, there has been mass de-industrialisation of working-class communities, disrupting generational pathways into working-class jobs and leaving boys confused about their identities and life courses. No longer were there 'jobs for life' or apprenticeships, through fathers' connections, where a criminal record would not necessarily be detrimental to one's work opportunities. The structure of available work opportunities radically changed, dismantling the prior process of acquiring employment. For this reason, habitus has become for many boys more of a hindrance than an advantage: more institutional capital, such as

qualifications, is required to gain employment. These forms of institutional capital, however, are simply not valued in the street field, and as such, habitus has little use value in this field.

The interview excerpts in Chapters Four and Five demonstrate how the studied boys internalise their environments and embody this internalisation in their practices as men, which helps them to make sense of their masculinity. These men demonstrated an awareness that various social, environmental and structural disadvantages affected their probability of offending and entering the youth justice system. In Chapter Four, interviewees reflected on what resources they deem important for constructing their masculinity in different fields, as well as their experiences of early socialisation – being perceived as tough, replicating the behaviour of older men and the reproduction of injurious behaviour that existed within their family homes, for example. Interviewees' experiences of growing up, and their involvement with youth justice services, were analysed along the lines of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which in this study represented an embodiment of the boy's deep-rooted histories in their environments. Being tough, being respected and feared, never backing down and expressing a willingness to engage in violence all served as symbolic shows of masculinity, as did ownership of the proper fashion goods and disregard for school and other authorities. As argued by McNay (2000), cultural norms relating to gender and power are acted out through bodily practices. For these boys, cultural norms and the accumulation of power are best understood through their efforts to accumulate 'street capital', which is a combination of being feared (symbolic capital), association with gangs (social capital), the proceeds of crime (economic capital) and their knowledge of how to navigate the criminal field (cultural capital). These findings are

significant in challenging the reductive view that male offending behaviour is innate, offering in its place a more sophisticated view: that offending is a habitual and dispositional manifestation of masculinity within the street field.

The study revealed the ways in which social class, disadvantage and cultural expectations of manhood limited the kinds of masculinity the boys displayed (Sandberg, 2018). For example, the common adoption of aggression and violence can be understood as the development of a dispositional form of street capital – and a mechanism of coping with residing in a pro-aggression environment and socialising with pro-violence peers. Local environments play an important role in boy's perceptions and the kinds of behaviours they display, and they emphasise the cultural capital available to boys in what Bourdieu (2001, p. 64) describes as 'schemes of perception', projected through bodily practices. These schemes of perception are the processes by which the boys strive towards the local hegemonic masculinity that dominates their context, and they are characterised by codes, or 'rules of the game', that peers enforce. Throughout the interviews, the boys agreed that criminal behaviour is socially accepted and viewed as a part of everyday life. For most of the boys, the commission of crime was an alternative opportunity and value structure created in response to their subordinated position.

All of the boys who participated in the study described a sense of being marginalised within society by the disadvantages they faced. By the time the boys enter the youth justice system, they have often developed an anti-authoritarian attitude when it comes to school, police and other structured systems. Exploring this phenomenon through habitus, capital and fields helped to better understand the effects of the

complex interplay between social class, limited opportunity and overly punitive approaches in shaping the thoughts and practices of the boys in question (Bourdieu, 1990; Murphy and Costa, 2016). Their thoughts and practices are influenced by their habitus, which serves as an internal system of preferences developed throughout their history of lived experiences. Participants described what influenced their ways of being, from their upbringing to their earliest socialisation with community peers. Some suffered from disrupted family homes, where violence, incarcerated parents and siblings, drug and alcohol addictions, and mental ill-health reigned. Participants also reported residing in deprived communities affected by gun and knife crime, gangs and drug dealing. This interplay of familial and communal circumstances forms lasting dispositions that limit boy's legitimate outlets of success. Instead, the men continue to exist in the street field, where crime is the primary source of economic, social, and cultural capital, as well as the symbolic capital of being respected, feared and known to engage in extreme violence
(Wacquant, 2002; Sandberg, 2018).

This street capital is one part of a boy's knowledge of the rules of the street field and one part of their ability to apply that knowledge in practice to survive (Wacquant, 2002; Sandberg, 2018). More broadly, street capital encompassed the boy's social resources and their status in the community. The men's circumstances disadvantaged them when they entered the schooling system, and although most made it to high school, all participants in the study were expelled without having completed an education. To help bridge the gap between theory and practice, and to better understand how boys come to enter the youth justice system this thesis takes

care to attend to the persistent dispositions that lead participants to develop their own moral, economic and behavioural preferences.

The boys offered evidence of what Wacquant (2017), Tyler (2018) and Slater (2018) describe it as a territorial stigma. This stigma is embedded in the boy's experiences of growing up in the housing estates in which they reside. The term describes the stigma attached to certain areas referred to as 'sink estates', a derogatory term used by the media and political figures to describe social-housing estates that allegedly reproduce poverty, worklessness and crime (Tyler, 2018). In reality, the term serves as a distraction from mass disinvestment in social housing (Slater, 2018). The symbolic violence exhibited in territorial stigma deflects blame for crime and deprivation onto the residents of these areas, making them scapegoats for social and structural inequalities that are perpetuated through neoliberal policies. Wacquant (2009) describes this phenomenon as the 'curse of being poor' and as symbolic violence from the 'powers above': government policy and media rhetoric that help to reproduce inequality. Overwhelmingly, the boys lived in such areas: accounts from Chapters Four and Five reveal how disrupted family relations, lack of educational attainment, a low-status socio-economic background and association with criminally active peers profoundly affect the boy's habitus. Chapter Four details the men's evidence of the territorial stigma associated with residing in these impoverished areas, which they combat by accumulating street capital. This street capital influences the boy's displays of masculinity, which is in many ways governed by peers, who police attire, behaviour and the struggle for (economic, cultural and symbolic) capital while simultaneously reinforcing aggressive and violent masculinity, eventually leading to entering the justice system.

The findings of Chapters Four and Five have certain implications for practice, chief among them that understanding masculinity through habitus, as a durable way of being and one that is resistant to ‘the system’, challenges both the compatibility and the very viability of short-term interventions that are principally rooted in punishment. The findings support the idea expressed by Case and Haines (2015) and Wacquant (2009) of breaking away from risk-based approaches and punitive measures, whose practical application is inherently adversarial to boy’s habitus. As shown in Chapter Five, the boys evaluated the offender-mentoring group – whose work was individualised, meeting the needs of programme participants in an effort to help them integrate back into society – as more effective for them than traditional youth justice approaches that they had experienced.

This study, therefore, indicates that there is scope to engage with disenfranchised boys – and that understanding how they make sense of their masculinity is more important to this engagement than previously thought. As highlighted in the literature review, there has been little discussion of, the inclusion of or professional training for the identification and addressing of boy’s issues of masculinity (Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019). The current approach to maleness in the youth justice system – treating maleness as a risk factor – downplays the significance that constructions of masculinity play in forming identity and social practices. Curing this deficit by understanding masculinity as part of habitus, in connection with how thoughts and practices are shaped by boy’s environment and socialisation, could help professionals align their approaches more with the boy’s behavioural patterns and transcend the usual conflict between fields. In Chapters Four and Five, the boys offer

several indications that their perceptions of professionals' relatability, empathy and compassion formed the basis of effective working relationships.

7.3 Autonomous action within social and structural constraints

Chapter Five addressed the complexities of boys' thoughts and practices, highlighting the presence of reflexivity in their accounts and emphasising their capacity for agency (Shammus, 2018). With respect to this latter context, the boy's accounts clearly showcased their ability to adapt and change their behaviour in response to their environments. Their comments not only demonstrated emotional intelligence and sensitivity but also revealed potentially perceived 'weaknesses' that would not typically come to mind when working with groups of boys such as these. The men described their behaviour in constructing masculinity as an act of adopting the practices of their older peers, which would then become normalised.

A common feature of this peer-informed masculinity was what Baumgartner (2014) describes as a local hegemonic masculine ideal of 'being hard' – a willingness to fight and to show no weakness from a moral perspective. This ideal is an adapted form of Connell's (2005) hegemonic masculinity: the premise that all men subscribe to an ideal man but are, depending on the degree to which they can attain that ideal, subordinated by or complicit in its construction. The group of boys interviewed for this study can best be described as subordinated and marginalised, lacking the financial, educational and cultural resources to rise to the level of complicity, much less to the complete attainment of the ideal itself. What remains to subordinated men is to offer a form of protest masculinity; for the men in this study, that masculinity manifested in nonconformity at school and in other authority contexts, as well as the

subscription to alternative financial, educational and cultural resources – often obtained through crime – needed to 'be a man'.

The study sample was cross-sectional, including both teenagers and adolescent men. This age range, represented by participants aged 14 to 24, is often when young people acquire the skills and resources that determine their future lives (e.g. education, training and employment) (Robb, 2010). The boys in this study reported in Chapter Four that it was around their teenage years that they most were influenced by peers, experienced violence, used substances and committed crime. Some described these influences and experiences as part of a vicious cycle, feeling that they were a 'product of their environment' – the social and structural disadvantages they have experienced. In general, the belief that men like these are products of their environment feeds into the wider social stigma attached to their areas of residence, compounding real disadvantage and poverty with the social perceptions of the areas being 'sink estates' inhabited by 'troublesome youth' (Wacquant, 2014; Slater, 2018; Tyler, 2018). This theory of social inequality and causality is reproduced in both the portrayal of a deprived area and the lives of the boys who live there (Slater, 2018; Tyler, 2018). The men of this study responded, both to this perception and to the real disadvantages they faced, with a form of protest masculinity which, through expressions of nonconformity, situated the men opposed to the society that encumbered them with structural disadvantage. Sadly, this form of protest masculinity serves to cement the men's subordinated positions by further alienating them from mainstream society.

The evidence gathered this study offers a different insight – one beyond the stereotypical assumptions of male behaviour as innate – and challenges existing weakness in conceptions of masculinity by revealing the complex nuances of men's capacity to act and decide for themselves (France, 2008; Smith, 2009; Baumgartner, 2014). A significant finding in this area is that although the men admitted that their opportunities are limited and that they may have faced several disadvantages, they demonstrate awareness not only of their own space within their fields and the desire to gain street capital but also of the risks associated with such action and of inevitable occurrences beyond their control. Several boys discussed their experiences with mental ill health, which is a personal topic understood within the literature as an area that men are reluctant to discuss (Heath and Priest, 2015). Documenting marginalised boy's discussions of sensitive matters that might be perceived as weakness is important for this research area as it contravenes prior suppositions that groups of working-class men lack the emotional intelligence to articulate sensitive topics. This finding validates burgeoning assertions of the same in more recent literature (Simpson and Richards, 2019). This study finds that in the right setting, marginalised boys are perfectly capable of expressing sensitive emotions – a point which intensifies the urgency of the need that services begin working to facilitate this type of engagement. The boy's own work with their complex emotions distinguished them from mere passive subjects, once again evidencing their active agency.

These findings – and indeed this study at large, whose purpose was to capture and prioritise the voices of marginalised boys – demand consideration of certain elements. For example, the men displayed an ability to articulate not only their

emotions but also the strengths and weakness, as they perceived them, of the youth justice system. By virtue of their experiences, these men are effectively experts, and their insights constitute important contributions of new knowledge in terms of how services can better meet boy’s needs in the future by giving them a voice and incorporating discussions of masculinity into youth justice practice. The primary theme uniting the boys assessed that services that approached the boys in a non-authoritative manner were the most successful, suggesting that approaches rooted in rehabilitation are better suited to challenge the boy’s perceptions of what being a man means. With respect to the goal of increasing desistance amongst males, the adoption of practices that shy away from the political discourse of youth justice that is framed by notions of risk management, punishment and draconian sentencing is both required and supported by the literature (Phoenix, 2016).

Furthermore, the importance of including more boys in this area of research is also evident. Despite disparaging views of authority and a number of serious offences, participants were reflective and able to articulate their views on their personal situations and society as a whole. Even though the men would traditionally be looked upon as anti-social and delinquent, they approached questions about reforming youth justice practices not only with the expertise of experience but with the thoughtfulness that accompanies informed useful responses. As described in Chapter Five, several boys were able to obtain employment through their work with the mentoring group, and this, the boys say, is a direct result of how the programme approached and worked with them. Choices to work with boys in a non-punitive way proved to catalyse transformations in some boy’s lives, even though those boys had been socialised their entire lives to oppose the system.

The interview data covered by the theme ‘alternative economic capital’, discussed in Chapter Four, indicates that while the men subscribe to conventional male aspirations of financial stability, they strive for that stability through criminal means in an alternative economic structure. The significance of these accounts is the ambivalences inherent in the juxtaposition of stereotypically masculine traits of toughness against vulnerabilities and conflicting perceptions about conforming to male norms (Jewkes, Flood and Lang, 2014). For example, in Chapter Five, many study participants articulated aspirations of exiting the criminal domain, securing legitimate employment and avoiding peers in their area – but lacked the means to achieve these conventional aspirations. The boys discussed aspects of their masculinity that contradict their performances of masculinity in the street, supporting the argument that in the context of youth crime, masculinity should be understood as ambivalent in nature. Masculinity’s status as changing, complex and sometimes self-contradictory confirm that various masculinities, rather than a single homogenous form, exist. Recognising the masculinity of men who offend as multifaceted is important for developing an understanding of masculinity’s relationship to crime as more complex than the straightforward yet limited association previously assigned to it. Understanding masculinity as multifaceted highlights its potential, if incorporated into practice, as a factor at the core of both youth offending behaviour and the ability for men to desist. Engaging in work that challenges a boy’s thoughts of what it means to be a man, for example, could help professionals and boys understand each other better, bridging the mismatch that is currently apparent in how services are viewed.

7.4 Masculinity in youth justice practice settings

The findings of Chapters Four and Five indicate that for the boys, youth justice and the wider social-care structure are incongruent with their habitual and dispositional nature. This mismatch perpetuates the conflict between the ‘street’ and the ‘system’, serving to reproduce a status quo in which ‘the system’ is a collective adversary. The findings add new knowledge that challenges the very philosophy behind punitive and authoritarian approaches to work with boys, which are more akin to retribution than rehabilitation. Such approaches represent more than mere punishment for a crime committed; they also fuel the fires of conflict between the interlinked criminal and penal fields. The findings in Chapter Five indicate that as measured in terms of desistance, the most successful boys were those who perceived professionals as making personal investments in them, understanding their needs and engaging in compromise via professional discretion. Although masculinity was not explicitly addressed as part of this study’s work with the boys, the data revealed that the boys did begin to question their identities as offenders, reflecting on its origins and impacts as well as their future selves beyond crime.

What the findings in Chapter Four and Five have added to recent literature is the variation in men’s practices who offend with arguments made that contest previous assumptions in this area which understood masculinity and offending through essentialist notions (Baumgartner, 2020; Blagden and Perrin, 2019; Smith, 2009). For example, when analysing the data and arriving at these findings, it became clear that the concept of habitus would be a useful means of showing how various social practices influence the lives of boys and recognising how identity formation is shaped

by social positioning, opportunity and privilege throughout one's life. A man's environment contributes to lasting dispositions that shape his perception of the world he lives in; when this is understood, a man's relationship with crime is not read as an internal deficiency but rather as his interpretation of and response to marginalisation perpetuated through structures that include school, social services and youth justice services. This is particularly relevant to the findings of Chapter Five, which point to the necessity that services adopt practices that better align with and understand the habitus and circumstances (or field) of male service users. The findings similarly suggest that incorporating concepts of masculinity into youth justice practice is a viable means of achieving this goal.

The lack of such incorporation was highlighted in Chapter Two's literature review, which also discussed the value that incorporating theories of masculinity could bring to practice settings (Johnstone, 2001; Dominelli, 2002; Baumgartner, 2012; 2014). Although there has been much discussion linking masculinity and offending behaviour (exploring, e.g., how aggression, violence, drug use and offending serve some boys as social and cultural resources for constructing their masculinity), the voices of boys themselves, particularly concerning how masculinity is played out in practice settings, has been lacking (Colllison, 1996; France, 2015; Tomsen, 2017). Current understandings are limited to commonalities shared between boys, resulting in a singular, or essentialist, theoretical conceptualisation of masculinity. Differentiations in the form of masculinities have been denied, and for this reason, it is key that this study was grounded in the boy's perspectives, seeking to understand what being male meant to them. Studies of masculinity outside the realm of youth crime have focused on the diversity of male practices, demonstrating more nuanced

approaches to how masculinities are constructed and re-constructed by individual men as they navigate different stages of their lives (Pringle, 2013). Yet the topic of masculinity has remained underexplored as a factor in youth justice practice, as echoed by the practitioners cited in Baumgartner (2014), who describe boy's masculinity only in relation to their offending, aggression and propensity for violence.

The absence of men's insights in youth justice practice presented a gap in understanding of how men internalise, embody and make sense of their masculinity. This knowledge could be significant to understanding why men offend most prolifically and make up the majority population of the youth justice system (Messerschmidt, 2012a; 2012b). The literature on masculinity and crime to date reduces the construction of masculinity to a few distinct traits and actions, predominantly aggression, violence and risk-taking behaviour, which the literature equates to boys 'doing masculinity' (Messerschmidt and Tomsen, 2017).
This limited understanding left unknown how the complexities of boy's lives – such as intersections of social, environmental, and structural factors – influence their thoughts, practices and ability to move away from crime.

All boys in the study shared disparaging views of services with which they have been involved, including social services, youth offending services, child and adolescent mental health services, and probation. Concordantly, disregard for authority was a commonality amongst the boy's constructions; its prominence is also supported by existing literature (Holligan and Deucher, 2014; Heath and Priest, 2015). In practice settings, this dispositional trait manifested as trust issues, feelings of non-relatability and perceptions that professionals did not understand the interviewees'

circumstances. As outlined in Chapter Five, however, the participants also affirmed that certain practitioners challenged their ways of thinking and behaving, noting that this successful engagement was based on respect and mutual understanding. Shared backgrounds were a powerful tool for engagement: professionals who resided in the same areas as the boys, shared similar interests with them or had previously been involved in crime were effective in establishing positive rapport and effective relationships with their charges. On the other hand, practitioners with whom the boys had little in common, including women, could also be effective because what the boys appreciated most was practical help, respect, trustworthiness and an understanding of their situation.

Participant' accounts evidenced a challenge to previous knowledge in this area, which perceives the masculinity of boys who offend as homogenised (Dominelli, 2002; Smith, 2009). That the boys of this study discussed why they might be violent and aggressive in certain circumstances suggests that violence and aggression are by no means definitive aspects of their behaviour. Indeed, the boys – most of whom had progressed away from offending behaviour – remained aware of and reflective of their experiences. They often spoke of personal developments in their lives, challenging the stereotypical performance of masculinity portrayed in the literature on youth crime (Smith, 2009). The boys did resemble certain literature – that on crime desistance – in that the men were not (and are not) 'doomed to deviance' (Blagden and Perrin, 2018, p. 17), and neither are their biographies written for them; rather, they possess the capacity to change (Maurna, 2001). When asked which aspects of engaging with services had been effective in assisting with this change (their transitions away from crime), participants indicated, to varying degrees, that their

engagement with services led them to think and behave differently. Notably, the men expressed desires to reconstruct their masculinities in a post-offending context. Paths such as espousing family values and getting a job became new avenues to being or becoming a man.

The type of service participants was involved played an important role in terms of how they engaged. Recruitment of participants from the public (youth offending team), private (alternative education provider) and voluntary (offender-mentoring group) sectors proved beneficial, delivering broad insights into multiple services, each of which took a different approach to promote desistance. As highlighted in Chapter Two, state-run youth justice is currently dominated by risk factor analysis, whose primary mode of operation is to determine the risk of reoffending (Haines and Case, 2015). The one-dimensionality of this approach leaves it significantly flawed; it is unable to explain why men offend or assess their capacity for change, and aside from highlighting maleness as a risk factor, it makes no further mention of masculinity as a point of interest. As pointed out by Case and Hampson (2019), the current paradigm of assessing people, quantifying them on a metric of risk, not only dehumanises the justice process by devaluing the judgement of youth justice professionals but also fails to hear or give weight to the insights of the young people themselves.

However, emerging work in the third sector highlights the value of engaging men on masculinity issues and promoting self-reflection on male identity and behaviour (Blagden and Perrin, 2018). The findings of this thesis add new knowledge to this area by bringing boy’s understandings of their masculinity to the forefront of youth

justice practice through the concept of habitus, which acknowledges masculinity as a core variable in offending and desistance. For example, the findings of Chapter Five demonstrate that the habitus of boys who offend is incompatible with traditional authoritarian approaches to youth justice, indicating that for services to better induce desistance, it is necessary to approach men on terms they find more favourable. As Bourdieu (1990, p. 133) sets it forth, habitus is 'consistently subjected to experiences, and therefore affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure', indicating that although durable, habitus is not eternal. In other words, approaches to engaging boys must avoid reinforcing stereotypes by way of punitive measures; instead, they should seek to modify habitus through rehabilitation. The incompatibility of the boy's habitus with the authoritarian model was most evident in the men's comments on state-run youth offending teams and schooling, both of which take an authoritarian approach that demands a certain level of conformity. In contrast, the men responded well to the mentoring group and alternative education programme, both services that adopted more egalitarian methods. As such, these services aligned better with the boy's habitus, and correspondingly, they better aligned with the individual men's needs. Indeed, both of these services actively focused on the boy's individual needs, and both were effective in provoking self-scrutiny concerning what it means, to be a man. In combination with the fact that the alternative education programme and offender mentoring group both outperformed the youth offending team in achieving desistance, this knowledge suggests that discussions about masculinity issues can be critical in promoting change. Therefore, working towards authoring a new, prosocial identity by discussing issues of masculinity – working with 'the man' rather than the offence – could be more effective than punishing offending and requiring

reparation. What is offered here is practical solutions of working toward a more male-friendly and child-friendly approach which recent research has advocated for (Creaney, 2020; Case and Heins, 2020)

Another benefit of the study's recruitment of a voluntary, a public and a private service is that logistical limitations that bound the public practitioners became evident, whereas practitioners with the other two services were not similarly restrained. This distinction translated to tangibly different experiences for the boys. The mentoring group, for example, which assigns a volunteer mentor to a person serving a community order following their release from prison, was more flexible in nature than the youth offending team. The mentoring group was capable of offering a unique kind of support that centred on emotional understanding and guidance for reintegration into society, and as the principles of the group's foundations were inherently rooted in the men's ability to desist from crime and successfully reintegrate, it naturally treated the boys as active agents capable of making their own decisions. The mentors were better able to identify with the men's habitus, as indicated in Chapters Four and Five by several interviewees, who discussed feeling comfortable with their mentors and able to discuss sensitive issues such as mental health needs and other vulnerabilities (in stark contrast to their views of other services). The mentoring group also offered practical assistance with the men's needs, and this was well-received; as the group was not subject to government policy or regulation, it enjoyed the flexibility necessary to centre itself around the individual needs of the boys. In this setting, the anti-authoritarian element is evident in the boy's masculinity – a change that can be understood as the direct result of this particular service's individualist, non-punitive approach.

In contrast, the youth offending team, which is subject to government policy, offered a more generic service: criminal awareness courses, knife crime courses, restorative work and weekly (or fortnightly) visits to one's caseworker. Some boys did acknowledge the courses' usefulness in raising their awareness of the impacts of crime, both of themselves and others. However, others viewed the service as superficial, boring and ineffective, emphasising that the personality of their caseworker was key to their engagement. Indeed, engagement was most likely for those who were able to form a trusted bond with their caseworker. Some YOT caseworkers were able to better assist their charges by not only meeting their practical needs but also forming a relationship in which the boys listened to and respected what they had to say, contributing in turn to the men's changing perspectives, thoughts and practices as men. As in the case of the mentoring group, it proved key for professionals to exercise discretion and variation in approaching their work. Subtle discretionary practices like offering leniency in terms of appointment times and organising schedules that best suited the men were valued as a form of compassionate understanding of the men's circumstances. It was a core finding with respect to the YOT group was despite the group being logistically limited (e.g. obliged to engage in risk assessment) and framed by punitive measures, the service still provided value to a number of the boys, as they acknowledged in their interviews.

For its part, the alternative education programme set a different agenda than did the YOT and the mentoring group. Its objective was to reintegrate young people into education through sport and an alternative educational environment with fewer

restrictions than with mainstream schools. Considering that all the boys interviewed for this study had been excluded from mainstream education and had no formal educational attainment, a key function of this service was to prevent boys from finishing their high school years without any qualifications. Unlike the mentor group and youth offending team, which worked with boys on a one-to-one basis, the alternative education setting brought groups of boys together. In this setting, performances of masculinity had much more obvious impacts on the boy's engagement, as outlined by the boy's descriptions of competition over being the toughest, funniest and most popular. There, kudos and bravado became important aspects of performances of masculinity. Some of the boys from the alternative education programme hinted at the impact this dynamic had on their engagement, commenting that even if they knew answers to questions in class, they would not shout them out to the teacher because doing so would not represent the type of masculinity they aimed to portray.

Thinking in theoretical terms of how cultural, symbolic and social capital are accrued (Bourdieu, 2005) through performances of masculinity, it appears that the boy's behaviour in the alternative education setting adhered to local norms as part of their street habitus. Despite operating in the field of education, this capital was pursued through displays of misbehaviour. Overall, though, the participants felt that alternative education setting was a better match with their habitus because of their less authoritarian approach. As highlighted in the literature, the traditional education structure favours middle-class groups who already possess cultural capital, having been exposed to it by their parents, and this prior possession gives such students an advantage when they enter the field of education (Reay, 2001; 2004). The alternative

education programme does not require prior cultural capital of this kind, and it offers to boys like those of the study an environment that better accommodates their needs. The men's positive responses to this sort of environment demonstrate that despite the frequency with which boys who offend fail to gain qualifications in education, it is possible to reintegrate them into the education field by taking a different approach. These findings are significant in that a major disadvantage that contributes to the boy's offending is their lack of legitimate resources by which to progress in mainstream society. Many turn to drug dealing and crime as means of gaining financial stability (Earl, 2011), but these boys can be offered the chance to gain an education by programmes that opt to break away from the conventional education structure, as by using sport as a tool. Men who are able to re-enter the educational field in this way may be more likely to desist from offending.

This section has focused on the impact that masculinities have on boys engaging in youth justice practice settings. As highlighted earlier, a part of their habitus was their rejection of authoritative structures, as a consequence of which punitive measures did not align with their habitus but instead served to reproduce the oppositional relationship between 'street' and 'system'. Significantly, however, the offender-mentoring group and the alternative education programme were successful in engaging with the boys, highlighting the potential that such services have to challenge perceptions of masculinity. These findings have radical implications for how youth justice could be better designed to meet the needs of boys who offend, and they solidify that discussions of issues of masculinity are a key aspect of promoting change. Understanding masculinity as part of boy's habitus and how it is deeply ingrained in their thoughts and practices comes with a recognition that their

views on authority are durable and resistant, helping to explain why state-run services whose foundations are rooted in punishment can be particularly ineffective in engaging with boys. In contrast, the volunteer mentor service and the alternative education programme proved more effective in crossing the ‘battle lines’ between the street and the system by utilising more egalitarian approaches that focused on the boy’s capacity for change.

7.5 Beyond the conflict between the ‘street’ and ‘penal’ fields

The adoption of Bourdieu’s concepts afforded an alternative approach to developing a theory of masculinity and youth crime. Consideration of the existing weakness in how criminologists view youth crime, which rests on the structure-versus-agency debate (France, 2008; Phoenix, 2016), led to the decision to draw on Bourdieu, whose anti-dualist theories render the debate between structure and agency a false dichotomy. The use of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital and field to understand boy’s practices provided a novel benefit: the analysis of how structure intersects with subjective experience. Expanding on the more recent usage of Bourdieu’s concepts in the study of crime, particularly in recognising the conflict between the street and penal field (Fraser, 2013; Fraser and Atkinson, 2014; Harding, 2014) this study added to the insights of this conflict by identifying masculinity’s role in it.

In addition, whereas previous work has argued that separate fields are incompatible, this study has added to the body of literature by examining the potential crossover of fields in the dynamics of youth justice practice, including how that crossover is mediated by constructions of masculinity (Fraser and Atkinson, 2014). The street and

penal fields are inextricably linked, as the criminal practices of the street field lead youth to enter the penal field – the youth justice system. Traditionally, these two distinct fields have been understood as in conflict (Shammas and Sandberg, 2016), and this conflict was evident in the many disparaging views that the boys held of all institutional structures. Particular, disdain was reserved for social services, who were blamed for separating families and consigning youth to miserable experiences in care homes. However, the findings highlighted that the perceived incompatibility of these fields rests on the ideological intent to punish rather than to rehabilitate: services adopting punitive approaches (which are inherently authoritarian) had the least success in crossing into the street field to reach boys. Underlying sentiments that marginalised groups are risks that require adequate management help to further perpetuate the marginality of these groups; in engaging with them under current paradigms, the state is not providing social welfare but rather protecting mainstream society from those viewed as undesirable (Wacquant, 2016).

The findings of Chapters Four and Five, however, contribute something different in this area and show that to an extent, the crossover between fields is possible: the alternative education provider's and offender mentoring group's adaptations of more egalitarian, change-focused approaches went some distance in mitigating the mismatch discussed throughout this thesis. The data lends urgency to Wacquant's (2009) and Case and Heines, (2015) calls to abandon risk assessment and risk management in social work in favour of a return to its previous core principles of social welfare, protecting marginalised groups and supporting the rehabilitation of those who offend.

The use of habitus to explain how boys make sense of their masculinity across different fields evoked the resemblance of the Willis's (1977) classic text *Learning to Labour*, whose analysis showed how notions of counterculture and defiance of authority lead working-class boys to working-class jobs. Though in this study boys are led not to working-class jobs but occupational criminality, the process by which a capitalist society reproduces inequality is persistently relevant 40 years after the text's publication. This study advances aspects of Willis's conception of education as 'out of sync' with working-class boys by highlighting the effectiveness of the alternative education field in re-engaging boys who do not conform with mainstream education. Inherent in this success is a crossover of two usually conflicting fields and the potential to remedy a traditional mismatch between boys who offend and the value (or lack thereof) they assign to their education. Indeed, the findings of Chapter Six question the supposed universality of opportunity through education. In reality, this opportunity is out of reach for certain groups; like Willis (1977), this study confirms that working-class men are generally adversarial to education as they see it as unrelated to their objective needs. Interviewees indicated that for this traditional mismatch to be addressed, a greater variety of practices that appeal to the boy's lived realities are needed. In addition, and contrary to much of the extant literature, study participants demonstrated reflexivity when recounting the diverse influences that brought them into contact with the youth justice system. Noteworthy in the men's accounts is that they can hardly be described as passive, idle or lazy, prevalent descriptors that feed into negative stereotypes of an 'underclass' (Slater, 2018). On the contrary, they aspired for financial security just as most men do, and they routinely displayed entrepreneurship and innovation in pursuing it. Indeed, accruing street capital requires skilled craftsmanship, as demonstrated by some of the more

sophisticated criminal methods the boys undertook for financial gains, such as county line drug distribution.

Bourdieu’s concept of fields was particularly useful in understanding the men’s agency, how social norms are internalised how value is assigned to certain practices. In the street field, the boy’s social groups offered them a sense of belonging, and older men were viewed as role models. The street field offered the boys opportunities for both financial gain and status within their individual territorial domains, which shaped their identities as men. When entering the penal field, however, the men’s habitus becomes more identifiable, and the capital they may have accumulated no longer serves them (Murphy and Costa, 2016). The street–system mismatch identified throughout the thesis has been overlooked when designing services to meet boys’ needs, particularly when setting the policy that governs state-run youth justice services (Murphy and Costa, 2016). Some more recent insights from community-based programmes address how the concept of masculinity influences boy’s identity formation and their propensity to commit crime, and these insights support the idea of integrating work on masculinity into youth justice more broadly (Blagden and Perrin, 2018). Direct work on masculinity within youth justice would afford greater understandings of boy’s habitus, enabling youth justice to overcome the conflicting nature between the street field and the penal field. Rather than reinforcing the narrative of offenders that punitive approaches intentionally or unintentionally propagate, the findings detailed in Chapters Five and Six indicate that services can assist boys in authoring a new, pro-social identity – and that discussions of masculinity can be key to this process. The inclusion of a voluntary-sector mentoring group in the sample allowed this study to reiterate

findings made by Blagden and Perrin (2018) in the realm of working with men on their perceptions of masculinity and individual needs. Although the mentoring group examined in this study did not focus primarily on masculinity the way that Blagden and Perrin (2018) did, similarities arose in that the services examined here was founded on the principle of men's capacity to change.

To be more precise, this perspective of men as having the capacity to change is significant in advancing service provision that promotes the voice of young people and supports recent calls for youth justice to be more child-centred (Creaney, 2020; Hains and Case, 2019) to better meet the needs of children. What this study adds to this line of thinking is new information confirming the importance of addressing constructions of masculinity with boys in a child-centred way. Appropriate discussions of issues relating to masculinity in youth justice practices settings could help boys work towards authoring new, pro-social identities. The problematic aspects of services such as restorative justice highlighted above and the focus on the boys taking responsibility for their offending both individualise blame and neglect the influences of shared male practices and boy's need to conform to social norms (Smith, 2009). However, a more holistic male-centred approach to youth crime – one which could address the questions of why boys offend and how relevant offending is to the male identity – is possible. To realise it, services must instead make efforts to address shared male practices, to understand how they impact the probability of offending and to directly ask boys about their experiences with conforming to social norms.

Moving beyond a focus on boy's individual crimes and instead considering the wider socio-environmental aspects that lead to offending can help services to transcend the conflict that so often governs relations between fields. Chapter Five's coverage of the recurring theme of relationship-forming included that professionals capable of relating to the boys were crucial in enabling and triggering change. The significance of a relational aspect, whether it be a shared background, perceived feelings of care, respect or professional discretion, was evident. This finding exemplifies in practice how professionals can forgo reproducing the 'street versus system' status quo, and more importantly, it supports a shift back towards rehabilitative, rather than retributive, approaches to youth justice. Understanding the street field as a creation of the state – a result of criminal legislation, policing strategies, penal facilities, courts and, ultimately, the neoliberal era itself – is imperative to comprehending how masculinity is shaped and reshaped by different fields (Wacquant, 2009). State and media actions constitute many of the structures with which marginalised men's experiences intersect – both media portrayals of troublesome youth and the state's insistence on being 'tough on crime' tend to focus predominantly on marginalised boys (Wacquant's, 2009), for example. These boys are problematised as social security risks from which middle-class groups need state protection. If, instead, more egalitarian approaches were adopted, and services acknowledged and strove to understand how structures intersect with boy's lives, then services could become increasingly youth-friendly, user-led, meaningful and effective in their service of young people.

7.6 Professionals' perspective – reinforcing or challenging masculinity

Despite some recent acknowledgements of the potential value of including masculinity issues in work with boys who offend (Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019) the way professionals in youth justice settings construct the masculinity of the men they work with is predominantly limited to their offending behaviour and distinct set of traits (violence, aggression, low temper) (Baumgartner, 2014). These perceptions help reinforce the stereotypical link of masculinity and crime that this study aimed to progress beyond. An issue with how practitioners construct the masculinity of the boys they work with was the lack of agency they ascribed to them and how this insinuates men are powerless to desist from crime (Baumgartner, 2014).

A key question for this study was *How do practitioner's challenge or reinforce constructions of masculinity* It has been highlighted by several authors (Tomsen, 2017; Smith, 2009; Bottoms, 2018) that a homogeneous portrayal of masculinity and offending behaviour still prevails in the YJS and this downplays the complexities of boys' varied practices whilst validating existing notions of stereotypical masculinity. Considering how youth justice policy implicitly targets men with being male identified as a risk factor, there is a lack of discussion of masculinity in practice and this indirectly reinforces negative masculinities. Masculinity is understood as socially learnt in families and through peers who regulate male behaviour but the literature portrays men as only having access to this type of masculinity without any acknowledgement of their ability to resist and think independently (Smith, 2009; Tomsen, 2017). This understanding is problematic as it questions the scope of youth justice in facilitating desistance.

This study builds on the findings of Baumgartner, (2014) who found that YOT practitioners did not understand boys to have the ability to desist from local hegemonic masculinity and indicated they believed them to be passive beings which suggest they do not ascribe agency to the men they work with. In addition, despite the constructions of masculinity being linked with offending behaviour professionals in Baumgartner, (2014) did not perceive including issues around masculinity in their work, as necessary. Here lays a weakness in this area as on one hand, professionals are well aware of a link between masculinity and offending yet no efforts are made to address this in practice (Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Caulfield, 2010). Thinking more broadly in terms of youth justice practice an issue with professionals not understanding boys to have agency is the contradictory assumption that they cannot change. Facilitating change, as in, guiding the boys toward desisting from crime is a key objective of youth justice yet if professionals at the point of delivery have the underlying assumption that men are passive subjects then this questions the scope of services in promoting change (Goldson, 2008). The limited view of masculinity in this way underestimates the significant role gender plays in both offending and more importantly desisting.

However, as the practitioners from this study discuss in Chapter Six, they, on one hand, concur with the existing notions of stereotypical masculinity but on the other hand and crucially they do not perceive this as fixed. The discrepancy between behaviours was argued as an interaction between fields and how professionals were able to cross over and become more compatible with the habitus of the boys they work with (Grenfell, 2014). What was evident from the data in this study was how masculinity was understood as a performance portrayed amongst other boys but in

practices settings, there were opportunities to challenge this. Although practitioners did not consider the concept of masculinity in their work per se, the data indicated it was embedded inexplicitly throughout by challenging the persona of the 'offender' as a social construct and as a result, questioning what being a man means to them. Although, they conceded that some boys were too immersed in the street field and were difficult to engage the interplay between masculinity and offending was evidently much more complex.

The practitioners from the AEP who were men from the same area, understood the limitations boys face and the pressures to live up to local male stereotypes but importantly they indicated how they challenged these stereotypes rather than reinforced them. In chapter six the practitioners discussed how they make attempts to reengage marginalized boys back into education through sport which itself is a gender-focused approach. It is argued by Blagden and Perrin, (2018) that finding a hook to engage with boys can be a catalyst for engaging with them. The findings from the practitioners at the AEP concur with this understanding as the basis or hook is to use sport to appeal to the boys (Coalter, 2012). The practitioners also used their social and cultural capital in subtle and innovative ways. For example, some practitioners perceived themselves to be positive male role models to the boys and described their work as actively challenging the local hegemonic male ideal. The practitioners were in effect examples of men who had followed a different path but were still relatable to the boys and were able to offer alternative ideas of what being a male means without being perceived as an outsider or authoritative figure.

The findings from the practitioners are significant in advancing understandings around what Scourfield (2003) discusses as *occupational discourses* and how each service has its own policy, procedure and constraints which limits how masculinity is constructed. Previous research has highlighted the associated limitations in work with men, particularly with how masculinity and offending are viewed as normative and characterised through risk-orientated language. What this study has shown as with the AEP group was how professionals recognize that different children learn in different ways and a universal approach to education is disadvantageous to marginalized boys which are reiterated by the boy's accounts of education in Chapter Four and Five.

However, the AEP were more flexible in their approach to educating the boys and it was argued that they were better able to recognize and align with the boy's habitus as a result. In contrast, the occupational discourse of the YOT is dominated by the language of risk (Smith, 2011) and guided by risk factor analysis where the masculinization of men is centred on the risk of offending and rooted in a punitive ideology. This limited perception of focusing on reparation for the crime neglects issues of masculinity relating to vulnerabilities and societal pressures to conform that arose in chapters four and five and coexists as more ambivalent masculinities.

In chapter six the YOT professionals acknowledged their occupational limits of relatively short contact with the men and feeling helpless in cases with young people facing multiple adverse circumstances. However, despite the occupational discourse limitations associated with YOT work and the limited constructions of masculinity by practitioners observed in previous studies (Baumgartner, 2014) participants from the

present study indicated their belief that masculinity was more diverse with scope for change. Indeed, the stereotypical notions of masculinity and toughness, violence and offending were all present, but issues of masculinity were much more complex when understood as part of habitus and an embodiment of their social histories. With many professionals discussing the adverse circumstances the boys live with the findings were a key contribution of new knowledge as these perceptions contrast with previous accounts of how YOT workers exclusively construct the masculinity of the boys they work with concerning their offending (Baumgartner, 2014). The data in chapter six highlighted the vulnerabilities and adverse circumstances that affect boys who encounter youth justice services indicating ambivalences in this type of masculinity as professionals describe often contradictory behaviour and conversations.

This study has highlighted the potential value of incorporating the concept of masculinity in youth justice practice as both the boys and professionals identify the commonalities of the men's practices relating to their offending behaviour but also the evident ambivalences that contradict these practices. How masculinity could be incorporated in practice is via building trusted relationships, based on respect, practical help and understanding with the boys. Once a trusted relationship had been established there was room for boys and practitioners to begin to deconstruct their social construction of masculinity. All though this was not an explicit approach it was evident implicitly, particularly in Chapter Four where the interviewees discussed changing performances of masculinity and how through self-realisation that was encouraged by key professionals, they formed a bond with.

These findings add to the literature in this area which has begun to focus on social constructions of masculinity more explicitly (Baumgartner, 2020; Blagden and Perrin, 2018; Harris, 2019). Therefore, highlighting how discussing issues relating to masculinity both commonalities and differences could be beneficial for promoting the rehabilitation and re-authoring of male identities away from crime. Masculinity has been analysed using the concept of habitus which helped to understand how the commonalities of male practices are an embodiment of the men's lived histories (Fraser, 2013). However, all though the thoughts behind their practices are lasting and durable they are influenced by the different fields they enter. For this study, it was evident that establishing approaches that are both male-friendly and appropriate to men could provide a platform for issues around masculinity to be addressed in practice.

7.7 Recommendations for practice

This PhD has brought original insights into boy's constructions of masculinity and their experiences of offending services. An original contribution of these insights is establishing the ambivalent nature of the practices of men who offend which has provided much-needed understanding beyond the stereotypical links between masculinity and offending. To this end I recommend the fowling recommendations for practice for more gendered response to offending behaviour by boys:

- A greater emphasis is placed on deconstructing issues around masculinity relating to peers, environment, education, families in work with men. This could be facilitated in youth justice practice as part of their assessment and court order.

- Training workshops for professionals on how to better engage with boys. I have already delivered nine workshops with a variety of different professionals and received excellent feedback all though these workshops were centred around child criminal exploitation the issue of masculinity was also discussed. To raise better awareness of the link between masculinity and crime such workshops could help professionals in their work with boys

- A more detailed exploration into the role of masculinity and how issues related to offending could be integrated when working with boys. As shown in this study it is possible to engage with otherwise disenfranchised men but this requires a more context-sensitive approach.

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7.8 Concluding remarks

To conclude, the PhD gave those 'not usually heard' an opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions regarding their involvement with youth justice services (Pinto, 2000:98). The study was significant in putting masculinity 'on the map' of youth justice by providing a platform for the gendered lens perspectives of boys (Baumgartner, 2020; Domenelli, 2002; p.8). A key contribution was the noted ambivalences that exist in the boy's constructions of masculinity which revolved around change, contradiction and continuity meaning that essentialist/stereotypical/fixed notions of boys who offend are redundant and require further thought (Bourdieu, 1990; Baumgartner, 2020). The study has demonstrated the need for more genderised youth justice responses and the potential of deconstructing issues relating to masculinity and offending.

A key theoretical contribution was applying Bourdieu's tools to unmask the underlying logic of boy's experiences of youth justice services (Harding, 2014). Although Bourdieu's methods have increasingly been adopted in criminology, they remain rarely used in a youth justice context (Shammas and Sandberg, 2016). In this original study adopting Bourdieu's conceptual framework to explore the link between habitus and two conflicting fields of the street and the system helped analyse the interplay between subjective experience within structural limitations – how masculinity was socially constructed and influenced by criminogenic factors.

The gaps identified in the literature review was that insufficient attention has been paid to the impact constructions of masculinity has for boys engaging with youth justice services (Cowburn, 2010; Hearn, 2009; Baumgartner, 2020). This study has added to previous efforts and highlighted the value of incorporating masculinity issues and promoting alternative forms of masculinity (Blagden and Perrin, 2018). For example, there were notable ambivalences that portrayed much more diverse male practices than has previously been associated with boys who offend. There is much more to be said about the sensitivities and vulnerabilities that exist in the lives of boys who offend and how this intersects with their constructions of masculinity. Although adverse circumstances within the boy's lives including their families, communities and peer groups predispose boys to offending and guide their habitus toward antiauthoritarian thoughts and practices this is not definitive. As the findings from this study suggest that the link between masculinity and crime revolve around contradiction, change and continuity. Using the concepts of habitus, capital and fields to understand the practices

of boys were key in demonstrating the contradictory and more nuanced construction of masculinity.

For example, when the boys are taken out of the street field their habitus which helps guide their construction of masculinity experiences new contextual factors which challenge their habitus in different ways (Costa, 2015). Predominantly as argued throughout is a mismatch between the boys and the system which has been explained as part of the 'feel for the game' and 'the way things are' with police and authorities considered natural adversaries to boys who offend and this is embedded in the street field culture and the unconscious mindset (Bourdieu, 1990, p56). The data from the study offered new insights into how practice and policy could be better differentiated to meet the needs of boys rather than reinforcing this mismatch. There is an irony within the data as rehabilitative and individualised approaches which were present, particularly in the mentoring group and alternative education provider shared stark similarities to the kind of services offered before New Labour's New Youth Justice. The irony here is that this thesis calls for reverting back to diversionary models of youth justice adapted in the 1980s.

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Appendix A – table of boys

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Living situation	Location	Convictions	Service accessed
Daniel	16	Mum and Dad	Liverpool	Arson, criminal damage	AEP
Craig	14	Mum	Knowsley	Assault, theft, criminal damage	AEP
Dean	15	Dad	Knowsley	Assault, criminal damage	AEP

John	16	Mum	Knowsley	Assault	AEP
Peter	14	Mum and Dad	Knowsley	Assault and criminal damage	AEP
Callum	15	Mum	Knowsley	Theft, criminal damage	AEP
Tommy	16	LAC	Liverpool	Assault, racially aggravated assault	AEP
Patrick	15	LAC	Knowsley	Assault, theft	AEP
Chris	22	alone	Liverpool	Domestic violence, dangerous driving, conspiracy to supply class B	MG
Darren	24	Supported housing	Liverpool	Attempted murder, threats to kill, aggravated robbery	MG
James	18	Supported housing	St Helens	Aggravated vehicle taking, burglary, assault	MG
Mattew	22	Supported housing	Sefton	Armed robbery, possession of firearms with intent to endanger life	MG
Ethan	15	LAC	St Helens	Theft of motorbike, dangerous driving, possession of class A intent to supply, possession of a bladed article	MG
Sean		alone	Liverpool	Possession of firearms with intent to danger life, intent to supply class A	MG
Ashley	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, criminal damage, burglary	YOT
Conor	15	LAC	St Helens	Theft, criminal damage	YOT
Daniel	15	LAC	Knowsley	Theft of motor vehicle	YOT
Owen	14	LAC	St Helens	Criminal damage, assault	YOT
Gary	16	LAC	St Helens	Theft, fraud, criminal damage. Assault	YOT
Adrian	17	alone	St Helens	Criminal damage, robbery	YOT
Neil	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, possession of bladed article	YOT
Ray	15	LAC	St Helens	Assault, burglary, a fray	YOT
Simon	14	Mum	St Helens	Assault, arson, criminal damage	YOT
Dean	15	Mum	St Helens	Theft, criminal damage	YOT

Appendix B - table of professionals

Name (pseudonym)	Organization	Role	Time spent at organisation
Helen	YOT	Youth support officer	7 years
Lucy	YOT	Youth support officer	4 years
Steve	YOT	Youth support officer	12 years

Colin	AEP	Teacher	2 years
Jake	AEP	Teacher	3 years
Brian	AEP	Teacher	2 years

Appendix C – Semi-structed interview guide for boys

Interview guide – boys

Introduce self and discuss the study Demographic questions

1. **What area are you from?**
2. **What is like in your area?**
3. **What is like as a lad growing up in that area?**
4. **What are your group of friends like?**

5. **Can you give me any examples of what would be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in friends?**

6. **Have you ever felt pressured to behave in a certain way?**

Service questions

7. **How did you end up be a part of this service?**

8. **What type of things do you do?**

9. **What are the professionals like who you work with?**

10. **What is important to you in person-professional relationship?**

11. **Have you been involved in other services?**

12. **Do you think the services meet your needs?**

13. **Could the service be improved in anyway? Any examples?**

14. **Do you have anything else to add that could maybe help inform these types of services to help other boys in the future**

Thank you for giving up your time really appreciate it

Appendix D – focus group questions

- Can you describe the boys you work with?

- What needs do the boys have?

- Do you feel like you are equipped to deal with the needs of these boys? If not what would you like to see change?

- Do you think services could be better designed to meet these needs? If so how?

- Is there different approach's towards engaging with female offenders'?

- Do you think being a man has an impact on how they engage with you as professionals?
- Is your services gender specific in anyway?
- Are there any male stereotypes that are evident amongst the boys you work with?
- How do boys behave? Why do you think they behave like this?
- How and in what ways do you work with the boys to try and help promote positive change

Appendix E -Thematic analysis table

theme one: 'I feel like I am just a product of my own environment': male habitus in the street field

Sub-theme 1

Disrupted family relations

- **Looked after child (LAC) care for by the state**
- "been in care since I was a kid"
- "got took away from my Mum"
- "no rules or boundaries"
- "left on my own"
- "had to grow up fast"
- "do everything for myself"
- "mum couldn't handle me"
- "Dad always in and out of nick (jail)"

- **Physical/domestic abuse**
- "Dad was hitting my Mum"
- "brother always battered me"
- "I battered my own dad because he used to hit my mum"
- "I used to hit my mum throw things at her"
- **Drug and alcohol abuse in the family home**
- "smoked spice with my mum and sisters"
- "My mum was heavy on the drink"
- "always smoked weed and drank me and me brother"

Sub-theme 2 Rejection, negotiation, and attitudes toward education

- **Rejection**
- "I just fucked it off"
- "teacher are stuck up"
- "teachers don't get us"
- "nobody's telling me what to"
- "get kicked out on purpose"
- **Negotiation**
- "they [AEP] realise different kids need different approaches"
- "only end up doing an hour a week"
- **Attitudes**
- "no ones really assed about education"
- **Sub-theme three: subordination through adversity**
- **Street field**
- "product of my environment"
- "grew up in a rough area"
- "no opportunities"
- "a lot gun crime"
- "everyone selling drugs"
- **Violence and gangs**
- "shot my mums house"
- "mate in wheelchair"
- "you take on their problems"
- "beef with other gangs"
- "people knew what I was about"
- **Sub-them four: managing and policing performances of masculinity**
- **Dress code**
- "Tracksuits"
- "North face "
- "always got to have the best clothes"
- "you have to wear certain clothes to fit in"

- “that’s when you know their one the boys”
- **Male habitus**
- “you got to act hard”
- “you just want to be like one of them”
- “show no fear”
- “smoking cannabis”
- “snorting cocaine”
- “you got to act older”

Sub-theme five: alternative economy

- **Need for Status**
- “feel in love with the money”
- “seeing your mates in nice cars”
- “I was and stupid”
- **Street economy**
- “going OT”
- “serving the fiends”
- “robbing drug dealers”
- “doing burglaries”
- “robbing cars”

Theme two: Ambivalent masculinity possibilities and limitations for youth justice

- **Sub-theme one: Mismatched services**
- **Mistrust**
- “I don’t like them”
- “they’re all dickheads”
- “they haven’t got a clue”
- “use your words against you”
- “YOT is a load of shit”
- “unrealistic”
- **Sub-theme two: Forming relationships**
- “I respect her for what she does for me”
- “you can just tell that he cares”
- “they go out of their way for you”
- “they alright you know, they understand”
- **Sub-theme three: Engagement and understanding**
- “they lead you on right path”
- “I didn’t realise at first but they do actually help”
- “they bring it all out of you”

Appendix F- professional information sheet

How does offenders' masculinity impact their engagement with support services?

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this study, which I am carrying out towards obtaining a PhD. This information sheet provides details about the study you are being asked to consent for and participate in. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me. My details are provided at the end of this information sheet.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of the study is to explore your perceptions of how you engage with the boys you work with. The main aim is to discuss your perceptions around masculinity and how relevant this is when working with boys. In particular, how you think being a man impacts how they engage with your service. I would like to identify the different behavioural expectations for them as

a man and what impact this has regarding how you engage with them to see how services may be better calibrated with the needs of boys.

What do I do if I am happy to take part?

Once you have read the following information sheet if you are happy to be involved in the study could you please contact me via the email address or my telephone number which is provided at the bottom of this sheet and I will arrange with the organisation to visit the site to answer any questions you my have and organise the focus group interview. Written and verbal Consent will be obtained immediately prior to the interview commencing by filling out a consent form provided and verbally once the recording begins.

Do you have to take part?

No. Involvement in the study is voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether or not you take part.

What will happen to me if I consent to take part in the study?

If you decide to take part in the study you will be asked to participate in a focus group interview with other professionals at a time and date that suits all. The interview will last approximately 40-60 minutes and will discuss how you engage with the males you work with. The focus is not about judging anyone but rather to increase professionals' understanding of the boys they work with and finding out how the service can be better calibrated with the needs of boys. The interview will be audio-recorded and typed up; once the interview is typed up the recording will be deleted. The typed up interview will be stored securely and your name, other names and places will not be used.

What will happen if I change my mind about taking part?

You are free to withdraw from the study at anytime without reason. However, any data collected through the focus group at that point would not be withdrawn as this could make the rest of the data meaningless and ineligible.

Will taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. The only exceptions are when information disclosed presents harm to you or others, then confidentiality would not be upheld and the head of the organisation would be informed.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A research report will be produced for the respective services and Edge Hill University. Should any of your words be used as quotes in reports or publications, your name and places mentioned will be changed so the information is not identifiable.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been granted permission by The Faculty of Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee at Edge Hill University

What if there is a problem?

If for any reason you are unhappy with the research process please inform me. If you are unhappy with how your problem is dealt and would prefer to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact:

Clare Austin, Associate Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancs, L39 4QP, *Tel*. 01695 650722 or austincl@edgehill.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you are happy to take part and would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any further information please contact –

Stephen.mansfield@edgehill.ac.uk
01695654325

Dr. Michael Richards

richarmi@edgehill.ac.uk

Appendix G – Professional consent form

Questions	Please sign initial here
I can confirm that I have read and understood the professional participant information sheet version number 1 21/06/2017 for the above study.	
I can confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactory	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time however I know that I cannot withdraw any data provided by me up to my point of withdrawal	

I understand that all data will be kept anonymous but will be used as part of I's PhD and potential future research and publications	
I agree to our focus group interview being audio recorded and I understand that all recording will be stored on password protected files that only I will have access to and will be deleted once typed up	
I give consent and agree that anonymized quotations taken from the interview that was conducted on ……. can be used in the study and any future published work	
I understand that anonymous data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from Edge Hill University or other regulatory authorities for audit purposes where it is relevant. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my anonymized data.	

Participant signature	Date
Researcher signature	Date

Appendix H – professional consent form

Edge Hill University

HOW DOES OFFENDERS MASCULINITY IMPACT THEIR ENGAGMENT WITH SUPPORT SERVICES - PROFESSIONAL'S CONSENT FORM

Questions	Please sign initial here

I can confirm that I have read and understood the professional participant information sheet version number 5 for the above study.	
I can confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactory	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time before, during and up to 14 days after taking part in an interview	
I understand that all data will be kept anonymous but will be used as part of I PhD and potential future research and publications	
I agree to our focus group interview being audio recorded and I understand that all recording will be stored on password protected files that only I will have access to and will be deleted once typed up	
I give consent and agree that anonymised quotations taken from the interview that was conducted on ……. Can be used in the study and any future published work	

Researcher signature	Date

Participant signature	Date

Appendix I – over 18 information sheet

How does offenders' masculinity impact on their engagement with support services?

Participant Information Sheet Over 18s– interviews

This information sheet gives you answers to commonly asked questions. If you have any further questions, please do contact Stephen Mansfield. My details are at the end of this information sheet.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study aims to find out how men engage with community support services. The study considers what your ideas of being a man are and how these ideas are have developed through your experiences with friends, family and the area you live.

The purpose is to find out how services could be better designed to meet the needs of males. By gathering information directly form yourself and other boys there is an opportunity for your voice to be heard and for you to talk about your experiences.

Do I have to take part?

NO. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do take part you are required to sign a consent form which is attached to this sheet confirming you understand the study and are willing to be involved. If you choose not to take part in the study, this will **not** affect your access to services.

What will happen to me if I decide to take part in the study?

You will be asked to take part in an interview about the different services you access. This will take about an hour of your time. The interview will take place at xxxxx and will be recorded if that is okay with you.

What will happen if I do not want to carry on with the study?

You can change your mind without giving a reason and withdraw from the study before the interview, during or up to 14 days after. In this case, any information provided by you, will be destroyed and not included in the study findings.

Will anyone else know what I talk about in the interview?

Anything we talk about during the interview may be used for my study. However, your name will not be included so nobody will know what you have said. The only time I would have to tell somebody is if you tell me about something that might be harmful to you or others. In this case I would have to inform the programme leaders or other third party if issues are raised about the programme leaders and seek advice from the supervisory team.

All information collected during the study will be stored on a secure computer at the university with access restricted to Stephen the lead researcher. None of the stored

material will contain any of your details so nobody will know what you have said

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study are to form part of my PhD and may be published in journals and presented at conferences. Should any of the things you said be used, your name will not be used and your identity will not be revealed

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and supported by the Faculty of Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee, Edge Hill University.

What if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy with the research in any way, please tell us. If you would prefer to talk to someone outside the research team, or if you are not happy with the way we deal with your problem, you can contact:

Clare Austin, Associate Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Edge Hill University,

Ormskirk, Lancs, L39 4QP, *Tel.* 01695 650722 or austinc@edgehill.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact us with the details below:

Stephen Mansfield

Phone- 07802615647

Email: stephen.mansfield@edgehill.ac.uk

Dr. Michael Richards

Email: richarmi@edgehill.ac.uk

Appendix J – Over 18 consent form

Questions	Please sign initial here
I can confirm that I have read and understood the over 18s information sheet version number 5 for the above study.	
I can confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactory	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time before, during and up to 14 days after taking part in an interview	
I understand that all data will be kept anonymous but will be used as part of I PhD and potential future research and publications	
I agree to our interview being audio recorded and I understand that all recording will be stored on password protected files that only I will have access to and will be deleted once typed up	

I give consent and agree that anonymised quotations taken from the interview that was conducted on ……. Can be used in the study and any future published work	

Participant signature	Date
Researcher signature	Date