

*The importance of space, place and
everyday life for the reintegration of
prisoners and criminal desistance*

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the impact of place on the choices and decisions of released prisoners to desist from offending. It takes as its starting point recent research evidence that large numbers of prisoners in the US and UK are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods to which they return after release only to reoffend and be re-imprisoned. Rather than assume there is a direct equivalence between criminal behaviour and place, it investigates how place differences interact with individual differences to determine the pathways taken by prisoners over the life course. Thus, it assesses how both structural and agentic factors affect reoffending and/or criminal desistance in the places prisoners grow up, in prison, and the places to which they return after prison.

As well as criminological literature, the study draws on a wide range of social scientific materials on the importance of space, place and everyday life. Most prominently, it refers to geographical, sociological and psychological analyses which have explored the reciprocal nature of people/place relationships. In particular, the perspective within human geography that 'just as people construct places, places construct people' has informed the research design adopted for the study. This incorporates both a quantitative mapping exercise to show the geographical distribution of prisoners from Greater London and a qualitative account of the meanings, emotions and attitudes of a sample of prisoners towards the places they inhabit, and the influence these have on reoffending and/or criminal desistance.

The main conclusions of the thesis are that most prisoners from Greater London are drawn from wards which are socially deprived. During childhood, a shared experience of specific places shapes criminal behaviour which is interpersonal and fundamentally experiential in nature. Then, having enjoyed the thrill and excitement of 'crime as play', persistent offenders grow up to embrace 'crime as a way of life'. Many prisoners profess an inclination to give up crime, but the different ways they respond to prison does not encourage them to 'go straight'. Although the process of criminal desistance is not dependent on moving away from local criminogenic environments, it may be constrained by social characteristics and social relations in the places most prisoners return to after release. The thesis ends by discussing the implications of this life course perspective for prisoner reintegration policy.

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List of abbreviations

CAS	Census Area Statistics
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EPU	Estate Planning Unit, Directorate of Security, HMPS
GIS	Geographical Information System
GLA	Greater London Authority
HMPS	Her Majesty's Prison Service
IIS	Inmate Information System
LGA	Local Government Association
NOMM	NOMS Offender Management Model
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
OASys	Offender Assessment System
RDS	Department of Research Development Statistics, Home Office
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SPSS	Statistical Products and Service Solutions
YOI	Young Offenders Institution

Introduction

Over the past ten years, as the prison population has increased in England and Wales by over a quarter (Home Office, 2005a) to become the highest imprisonment rate in western Europe (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2007), recent government administrations have sought to reduce increasingly high rates of reoffending by ex-prisoners. Since the Labour Government came to power in May 1997, penal policy has been directed towards reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners on two broad fronts. First, reviews of the sentencing framework (Halliday, 2001) and the criminal courts (Home Office, 2002a) have led to the implementation of new sentencing arrangements contained in the 2003 Criminal Justice Act designed to restrict the liberty and tackle the offending behaviour of persistent offenders. Second, a review of the correctional services (Carter, 2003) has led to the creation of a single National Offender Management Service (NOMS), which combines and coordinates prison and probation services and aims to reduce reoffending by persistent offenders through ‘end-to-end offender management’. A major component of both these approaches is the need to coordinate services in prisons with those outside in the community (SEU, 2002). In keeping with the Labour Government’s approach to joined up government and community participation generally (Newman, 2001), this is to ensure that the contribution of local people and organisations, as well as local resources and services, are harnessed to support the reintegration of prisoners back into the local communities they return to after release.

Although it has not been specifically articulated in the reviews that have informed recent penal policy designed to reduce reoffending, the acknowledgement that successful prisoner reintegration depends on local community involvement is closely related to a corresponding issue - the effect of place on reoffending. While the concept of community as defined in the symbolic sense of shared values, shared identity and shared culture need not be coterminous with discrete places (Massey, 1997), community is generally understood as “a social network of interacting individuals, usually concentrated in a defined territory” (Johnston *et al.*, 2000: 101). Within political circles especially, community cooperation and

support is usually considered to promote moral and civil conduct and thereby solve social problems in specific local settings (Low, 1999). However, while community involvement has been a central feature of recent policy initiatives to reduce crime in specific places such as local crime and disorder reduction partnerships and youth offending teams, the link between community, place and reoffending and/or criminal distance has not been assessed to a significant extent¹.

In order to draw out the connections between community, place and reoffending and/or criminal distance, this thesis discusses prisoner reintegration, or re-entry as it is called in the US - the process by which prisoners are released from prison and supervised after release in the community - in the context of the relationality between people and place. Grounded and informed by an ontological perspective that has become fundamental to human geography, “that just as people construct places, places construct people” (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001:7), it assesses whether reoffending and/or criminal distance is constituted in and through the places inhabited by convicted criminals: the places they grow up, prison, and the places they return to after they are released from prison. Criminal distance has been assessed as a gradual, long term process leading to cognitive or identity change which usually includes periods of relapse, but eventually results in the complete abandonment of crime (Laub and Sampson, 2001). It is generally accepted that most criminals eventually give up crime as a result of ageing (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1995) and/or human choice acting in conjunction with situational and structural context (Sampson and Laub, 1993). Some criminologists argue that offenders successfully desist by making the internal changes necessary to lead a crime free life through their own efforts (Maruna, 2001); whereas others focus on social circumstances, events and/or turning points which aid or obstruct the criminal distance process (Farrall, 2002). By tracing the ‘pathways’ taken by convicted criminals between the community and prison over the life course (Visher and Travis, 2003), this thesis considers the extent to which reoffending and/or criminal distance is affected by social circumstances, events and/or turning points which are place specific.

Recently, criminologists have attempted to explain rising rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment and explored various ways in which to reduce crime committed by prisoners who each year are released back in to the community in ever increasing numbers (Petersilia, 2003; Maruna *et al.*, 2004). It has been argued that in the US over the past few decades, the prioritisation of penal rather than social responses to the problems of inner city neighbourhoods such as poverty, lack of employment, family instability and homelessness has resulted in rising rates of imprisonment, particularly for a so called urban ‘underclass’ of people (Feeley and Simon, 1996). As a consequence, increasing numbers of prisoners originate from and, after their release from prison, return to a small number of deprived urban neighbourhoods (Lynch and Sabol, 2001). This is thought to have inflamed an oppositional culture, ‘a code of the streets’, especially amongst poor black people, many of whom feel they are unfairly targeted and treated by law enforcement agencies (Anderson, 1999). Centred on gang loyalties and “hypermasculinist notions of honor, toughness and coolness” (Wacquant, 2001: 110), this culture has transformed prison life and then been exported back to further disrupt the neighbourhoods from which it evolved. The continual flow of large numbers of male offenders out of and back into socially deprived neighbourhoods has further damaged community cohesion and trust, and reduced the capacity of local residents to provide support and exert informal social control; thereby tipping community life into a downward spiral of crime and violence (Clear *et al.*, 2003). The result is a constantly revolving door between prison and certain inner city neighbourhoods (Petersilia, 2003).

In the UK, the connection between prisoners and urban deprivation is not as straightforward or racially defined as in the US. However, some attention has been given recently, especially in relation to crime, reoffending and social exclusion – the process by which individuals or groups become marginalised and unable to participate in mainstream society - to where prisoners come from and the personal and social circumstances they return to after release. For example, it has been recorded that the highest number of prisoners per thousand of the population are drawn from inner city areas (Howard, 1994); and that “before they ever come into contact with the prison system, most prisoners have a history of social exclusion” (SEU, 2002: 18). It has also been found that prisoners in Scotland are

mostly drawn from a small number of socially deprived local government election wards, primarily within the city of Glasgow (Houchin, 2005).

Given the apparent ‘symbiosis’ between prison and specific urban neighbourhoods (Wacquant, 2001), an apposite question to ask is whether a shared experience of social deprivation is a factor in increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment. However, while this is an obvious question, it is not a straightforward one. Fundamentally, it is complicated by the fact that, aside from personal and social circumstances, reoffending may be influenced by unmeasured individual level attributes such as a genetic or psychological predisposition to (re)offend which are unrelated to place, either directly or indirectly (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Furthermore, reoffending may be a rational and deliberate action which is carried out regardless of where former prisoners return to live, or what happens to them after they are released from prison (Felson, 1998). Therefore, in order to answer the question directly, it is necessary to address what since the late 1970s has emerged as a key issue for social theory - the relationship between structure and agency. That is the various structural interrelationships which govern and shape human action such as class, family, the economy, institutions and geographical location on the one hand; and the ability of individuals and groups to act and to make purposive decisions and choices which shape their own lives on the other. By drawing on theories and research literature on the importance of space, place and everyday life from a variety of social scientific disciplines including most obviously criminology, but also human geography, urban sociology and psychology, the thesis explores the extent to which behaviour which supports or obstructs criminal desistance develops through the dialectical interplay of structure and agency.

In line with contemporary social theory, the approach taken throughout the thesis is that structure and agency are not mutually exclusive concepts. Because human action is not wholly determined by social structure, and neither is it the product of unfettered free will (Giddens, 1991), an understanding of the processes and pathways which lead to criminal desistance requires intimate knowledge of the extent to which prisoners exert control over, or are conditioned and constrained by, social and environmental circumstances.

Furthermore, because different individuals exposed to the same environment experience it, interpret it and react to it differently (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995), the ways in which prisoners relate to the spaces and places they inhabit over the life course is never uniformly apparent. For instance, group or collective identity may be as substantial and real as personal identity (Jenkins, 2004); and imagined and idealistic representations of reality may be as crucial for the development of purposeful human agency as objective and material conditions of existence (Castoriadis, 1975). Therefore, the relationality between prisoners and place, and its impact on criminal desistance, can only be understood in relation to the ways prisoners make sense of the world in which they live (Giddens, 1976, 1984, 1987, 1990, 1991).

It is necessary at the outset to define what I mean by space, place and everyday life and to make clear the connection between these somewhat contested and abstract terms. It is commonly assumed that space is a more abstract term than place in that it denotes expanse, a distance between two points (Auge', 1995). Place, on the other hand, is bounded; it is a specific locale geographically situated in space, given meaning and substance by the people who live there. Place therefore is 'a locus for identity' (Hubbard *et al.*, 2004), delineated from space by the sense of attachment and belonging people have to it. Since the 1970s, when human agency, meaning and value emerged as central concerns within human geography, concepts of space and place have tended to be treated synonymously. Rather than consider space as a geometric container of significant places - as is the case in much 'positivist' spatial science (Cloke *et al.*, 1991) - it is conceptualized as a "'mental thing' or 'mental place'" (Lefebvre, 1991: 3). The idea that space is symbolic and should be conceptualized for example in cultural or religious terms as well as practically in mathematical or capitalistic terms (*ibid*) suggests that space, like place, is socially produced and therefore can only be understood in relation to human experience and activity. As such, "'space' and 'place' require each other for definition" (Tuan, 1977: 6).

This brings us to the concept of everyday life. Although it might be assumed that the trivial, routine and repetitive nature of everyday life is unavoidably boring and humdrum, a tradition of social scientific inquiry has sought to reveal the extraordinariness within everyday lived experience (see Highmore, 2002). Indeed, it is in the trivialities of everyday

existence that the constraining effects of modern urban life are most keenly felt (Lefebvre, 1984). Everyday life is distinguished by all the sensations contained in daily existence: boredom and inertia certainly, but also more extreme moments “of delight, surrender, disgust, surprise, horror, or outrage” (Harvey, 1991: 429). Moreover, it is in ‘the practice of everyday life’ that individuals seek to deflect dullness and conformity by engaging in ‘tricks’, ‘tactics’ and ‘spatial practices’ of resistance (de Certeau, 1984). Therefore, everyday life is characterised by difference. It is differentiated by class, gender and race; and also by space and place - the countries, cities, neighbourhoods, streets and homes in which everyday human activities and social relations occur.

It is within this social scientific tradition that the thesis explores the link between place of residence, prison, reoffending and/or criminal desistance. Throughout it is argued that place is meaningful because it both enables and constrains human agency and activity, and the outcomes of people’s everyday lives (Dear and Flusty, 2002). Through awareness and subjective experience of place, individuals develop a sense of who they are and their social standing in the world. Moreover, ‘the affective bond between people and place’ (Tuan, 1974) is strongest when it is experienced locally and time increases its significance (Relph, 1976). Late modern² transport and communication systems may have caused social relations to become increasingly stretched out in time and space (Giddens, 1990), resulting in a growing sense of ‘placenessness’ (Relph, 1976), as well as increasing amounts of time spent in transit, airports, motorways, hotels – in ‘non-space’ (Auge, 1995). But the displacement effect of late modernity is not all encompassing. Owing to spatial divisions of labour and distinct patterns of geographical differentiation, “most people still live their lives locally, their consciousness is formed in a distinct geographical place” (Massey, 1984: 117). Throughout the thesis, it is suggested that the tendency of people to remain attached to specific locales is particularly true of prisoners, especially those who grow up in deprived urban neighbourhoods, experience imprisonment for a significant number of times, and return repeatedly to the same places of residence after release.

The thesis begins by exploring key theories, concepts and research agendas which have analysed the physical, psychological and social (inter)relationships between crime,

criminality and place. Literature on the link between space and place and geographical patterns of offenders and offending is reviewed (see Bottoms and Wiles, 2002); as is research on the impact on reoffending of spending time in prison (see Liebling and Maruna, 2005), and of returning to deprived urban neighbourhoods after prison (see Petersilia, 2003). Throughout, the significance of space and place is discussed in reference to the link between social context and criminal behaviour (a sociological approach), as well as individual explanations of criminal behaviour (a psychological approach). Various explanations of crime and place are reviewed particularly in terms of the purchase they have on the finding that prison populations appear to be drawn from certain urban neighbourhoods. Overall, the intention is to assess approaches to crime and place which emphasise the impact of social constraints and geographical differentiation; as well as approaches which stress that human action is voluntary, a product of the pathways and choices open to different people in different places (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992).

Then, in order to accommodate both structure and agency and investigate the extent to which structural influences interact with individual differences to increase the probability of reoffending and/or criminal desistance (Moffit, 1997), the thesis examines crime and place in relation to various social scientific materials on everyday human experience and the meaning of space and place (for example see Relph, 1976; Lefebvre, 1984; de Certeau, 1984). Following an appraisal of the applicability of this literature for criminological spatial analysis, in the second part of the thesis the finding that prisoners live in specific areas is considered within a longitudinal framework encompassing pre-prison, in-prison and post-prison circumstances (Visher and Travis, 2003). This analyses criminal behaviour along a pathway, the direction of which is strongly influenced by experiences and events which occur in the places inhabited by convicted prisoners over the life course. By tracing the development of criminal behaviour it is intended to explore the complex of factors, both individual and social, which together explain why some prisoners continue to offend after release, while others do not.

The methodological design of the research includes both a quantitative and a qualitative component. To supplement the spatial analysis of prisoner residence previously completed

in England and Wales (Howard, 1994) and Scotland (Houchin, 2005), it includes a geographical description of the home addresses of prisoners who come from the metropolitan area of Greater London. This serves to establish whether prisoners are drawn from certain parts of the city which, as has been shown to be the case in the US and Scotland, are characterised by high levels of social deprivation. Then, by exploring the feelings attitudes and interpretations of a sample of prisoners from Greater London towards the places they have lived, an assessment is made of the relationship between behaviour and place, and decisions to (re)offend. An interview framework grounded in existential phenomenology and based on story telling or narrative research has been employed. This methodology is intended to reveal subjective aspects of human life such as memories, emotions, motivations, understandings and perceptions, and is considered best suited to an examination of whether “people in a shared cultural and linguistic community name and identify their experience in a consistent and shared manner” (von Eckartsberg, 1998: 15).

The research has three key objectives. The first is to map the geographic distribution of the home addresses of prisoners who live within the metropolitan area of Greater London. The second is to assess whether prisoners share common life experiences and events in relation to the places they grow up, prison and the places to which they return after they are released from prison; and the extent to which feelings and attitudes towards these places influence their propensity to reoffend. The third is to assess the relevance of the relationality between prisoners and place for prisoner reintegration policy and criminal desistance. The principal research questions to be addressed are as follows:

Is the prison population within the metropolitan area of Greater London spatially patterned in that it is drawn from specific parts of the city? Is there a link between social deprivation and imprisonment?

How do prisoners relate to the places they inhabit - the places they grow up, prison and the places to which they return after they are released from prison? In what ways are their perceptions, understandings and the meanings they have of the places they inhabit linked to reoffending and re-imprisonment?

How important is the relationality between prisoners and place for the process of criminal desistance? What are the implications of this for future prisoner reintegration policy?

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One describes the relationality between crime, criminality and place and the influence of place on offending, reoffending and re-imprisonment. It also discusses a range of sociological, geographical and psychological materials on the importance of space, place and everyday life generally for human behaviour and personal and social identity. Chapter Two presents the research design and the methodologies involved in the study. It describes and justifies the approach taken and raises some key issues of validity and reliability associated with the data used. Chapter Three presents new information on the geographical distribution of the home addresses of prisoners from Greater London, and assesses the extent to which prisoners are segregated within areas which are socially deprived. Chapters Four, Five and Six present the findings derived from the interviews with prisoners: Chapter Four deals with their personal and social circumstances before prison; Chapter Five with their experiences in prison; and Chapter Six with their experiences after they are released from prison. Finally, Chapter Seven revisits the research questions, concepts and theories referred to in Chapter One, and concludes by assessing the significance of the research findings contained in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six for prisoner reintegration policy and criminal desistance.

Notes

¹ Farrall and Sparks (2006) cite the two exceptions of Hagan (1977), who has suggested that space based factors can influence criminals to either engage in or refrain from offending; and Meisenhelder (1977), who has referred to 'the spatial dimension of desistance'.

² In this context, the term late modernity is used to encompass the economic, social and technological transformations that have occurred over the past few decades. In a wider context it is sometimes used conjointly with the term post modernity. This denotes a new social movement or philosophical approach which rejects rationalism and over arching explanations of human nature and instead emphasizes difference, relativity and the fragmented nature of contemporary human experience.

Chapter One

The relationality between prisoners and place:

Key literature, concepts and theories

Introduction

This chapter describes the key literature on crime, criminality and place in relation to the places prisoners grow up, prison, and the places to which they return after they are released from prison. The chapter begins by noting the findings and recommendations of recent academic research and policy initiatives which have addressed the problem of increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment. In particular, it presents empirical research evidence which shows that prison populations in both the US and UK are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods; and discusses the impact of this on reoffending, re-imprisonment and criminal desistance. It then refers to a range of criminological, geographic and social scientific literature to explain the geographical distribution of offenders. In doing so, it discusses criminological research specifically related to crime, criminality and place; literature on the sociology and effect of imprisonment; as well as social scientific and geographical perspectives on the significance of space and place generally.

Having established that space and place is essential to aetiological considerations of criminal behaviour, a longitudinal framework is developed which considers factors associated with reoffending, re-imprisonment and criminal desistance along a pathway which starts in the places offenders live before they go to prison, continues in prison, and then resumes in the places they return to after they are released from prison. The chapter ends with a discussion of various social scientific materials on the relationality between prisoners and place which stresses the importance of giving equal weight to background structural factors linked to criminal behaviour and criminal desistance; as well as

foreground meanings and interpretations that together shape how prisoners behave in the places they inhabit. This phenomenological approach guides the qualitative study of a sample of prisoners from Greater London presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Criminal desistance, place of residence and imprisonment

As prison populations have risen over the past fifteen years throughout western countries, there has been a commensurate increase in rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment. In the US, recent figures show that of the 1.4 million prisoners in state and federal prisons, nearly a third are rearrested within the first six months, 44 per cent within the first year, and over two thirds within three years of their release (Langan and Levin, 2002). In total, 52 per cent of prisoners are returned to prison within three years of their release for either a new crime, or a technical violation of their parole conditions (*ibid*). Similarly in the UK, a total of 61 per cent of prisoners are reconvicted within two years of being released, and the reconviction rate for male prisoners under the age of 21 over the same period is 73 per cent (Home Office, 2004a). It has been estimated that about 40 per cent of prisoners are reconvicted and recommitted to custody within two years of their release (*ibid*). Furthermore, 96 per cent of prisoners under the age of 20 who have 11 or more previous convictions are recommitted to custody within two years of their release (*ibid*).

In order to investigate the reasons for increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment, researchers and policy makers have recently assessed the personal and social circumstances of prisoners, in particular the extent to which they are a socially excluded group within society (Petersilia, 2003; SEU, 2002). A range of initiatives have been introduced. In the UK these include various forms of offender rehabilitation and treatment such as cognitive behavioural programmes which aim to address dispositional factors linked to criminal behaviour, as well as new administrative and management practices which take account of “social and institutional factors [which] enable prisoners to use the treatment programmes successfully” (Clarke *et al.*, 2004: 40). They also include a range of community based services aimed at addressing various personal and social problems

prisoners face after they are released from prison including the need to find housing and employment (SEU, 2002). In the US, federal monies have been made available to improve prisoner reentry services for serious and violent offenders (Office of Justice Programs, 2002 in Maruna *et al.*, 2004). However, although prisoner reintegration has leapt to the top of the policy agenda, it is thought that initiatives implemented to date do not indicate a fundamental change of approach to prisoner reintegration (Maruna *et al.*, 2004). For example, in the US parole remains firmly focused on control orientated services rather than rehabilitation and reintegration (Petersilia, 2003); and in the UK, while a range of ‘risk management’ programmes have been developed to tackle individual factors linked to reoffending, wider social issues and contexts have been ignored such that there has been a “lack of attention [on] the impact of social constraints... and [the] incentive to desist from crime” (Gray, 2005: 952). For example, while the introduction of the National Offender Management Service has been welcomed for integrating the work of the prison and probation services, it has been criticised for concentrating too much on management structures and systems, and too little on the more subtle processes that support offender rehabilitation and criminal desistance (Raine, 2006).

Criminal desistance - a new paradigm in prisoner reintegration practice

In search of ‘a new paradigm in reintegration practice’ (Maruna *et al.*, 2004), academic criminologists have explored the reasons for high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment within a broader social context than is usual in studies of recidivism. Rather than focus on the prescription of treatment, the calculation of risk, or evaluations of existing programmes of support, they have sought the answer to a more fundamental question: how, why, when and under what circumstances do offenders eventually desist from offending? (Palmer, 1995). In comparison to recidivism, which traditionally is measured in relation to specific outcomes such as re-arrest, reconviction and/or re-imprisonment - each of which fail to reveal anything about the complex of factors and processes involved (Maltz, 1984) - criminal desistance is conceptualised as a longitudinal process which takes place over the life course (Laub and Sampson, 2001). Desistance may be prompted by a singular event

such as marriage or gaining employment, but it is shaped and reshaped gradually by the constraints and opportunity structure of the social world in which people live (Maruna, 1999). Furthermore, because “desistance stems from a variety of complex processes - developmental, psychological and sociological” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 3), the various factors associated with desistance interact to produce different outcomes (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Farrall, 2002; Maruna *et al.*, 2004; Burnett, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to assess the impact of social and environmental context on the decisions of released prisoners who desist from crime (Rex, 2001; Farrall, 2002); as well as the ways ex-prisoners think, reason and act upon the decisions they make, and the extent to which these factors combine to increase or decrease the likelihood of them avoiding crime in the future (Farrall and Bowling, 1999).

Briefly, there are three broad explanations for criminal desistance. First, the ageing process causes offenders to mature and eventually ‘burn out’ (Glueck and Glueck, 1940). Age is such a primary factor it “occurs regardless of what else happens” (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 136); and its effects work independently of any other possible correlates such as marriage, place of residence, or employment (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Second, desistance is related to offenders “acquiring ‘something’... which the desister values in some way and which initiates a re-evaluation of his or her own life” (Farrall, 2002: 11). Education and completing schooling (Farrington *et al.*, 1986), employment (Graham and Bowling, 1995), getting married (Warr, 1998), and becoming a parent (Leibrich, 1993) are all significant aids to desistance. However, because “families, jobs, age, or time cannot change a person who does not make a personal effort to change on the inside” (Maruna, 2001: 32), the third explanation of desistance suggests it is also dependent upon offenders establishing a new non-offending identity (Baskin and Sommers, 1998; Burnett, 2000; Gove, 1985; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Leibrich, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Shover, 1996; Uggen *et al.*, 2004). By forming within themselves a commitment to change, offenders “recast their criminal pasts not as the shameful failings that they are but instead as the necessary prelude to some newfound calling” (Maruna, 2001: 9).

The complex of factors involved in criminal desistance is continually shaped according to the personal histories of offenders and their changing reactions and attitudes to various life transition events. Therefore, in order to “get to grips with the social and personal contexts within which the processes of desistance are embedded” (Farrall, 2002: 226), it is necessary to consider prisoner reintegration within a life-course perspective. Only then is it possible to assess how “individuals returning home from prison have been shaped by their offending and substance-abuse histories, their work skills and job histories, their mental and physical health, their prison experiences, and their attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits” (Visher and Travis, 2003: 91). It has been suggested there are four key stages to every prisoner’s life experience, each of which contains a range of personal and social characteristics related to criminal desistance: These include the following:

- **pre-prison circumstances** - place of residence, mental and physical health, relationships with family and friends, substance misuse, education and work history;
- **in prison experiences** - severing of ties to family and friends, institutionalisation, exposure to criminogenic influences, and initiation to drugs;
- **immediate post-release experiences** - returning to high risk places and situations, re-establishing ties with family and friends, finding a place to live, and a job;
- **long term post-release integration experiences** - stable place of residence, re-establishing commitment to family roles, reintegration into community life, stable employment, relinquishing contact with delinquent peers (adapted from *ibid*: 94).

Geographical concentration – where do prisoners come from?

Having outlined the main explanations of criminal desistance, this section assesses the extent to which personal and social characteristics related to criminal desistance, as well as being common to the social worlds of prisoners generally, are also place-specific. Ever since the first half of the nineteenth century, the history of criminological spatial analysis has shown that the areal distribution of offenders is not random, but instead is concentrated

in specific areas of cities (Bottoms and Wiles, 2002). Recently, spatial analyses of the residential location of serving prisoners have revealed that the personal and social characteristics of ex-prisoners such as a lack of education, health disadvantage and poor job prospects are directly related to the places in which they live. In the US it has been shown that large numbers of prisoners originate from within a small number of deprived urban neighbourhoods to which they return after release, creating what has been described as “a self-perpetuating cycle of escalating socio-economic marginality and legal incapacitation” (Wacquant, 2001: 114). For example, of prisoners released in 1998, five states – California, Florida, New York, Ohio and Texas – accounted for just under half of all prisoners released nationally (Lynch and Sabol, 2001). Furthermore, at meso-levels of analyses it has been found that a large proportion of released prisoners return to a small number of urban neighbourhoods within specific states. The findings contained in these studies include the following:

- In the late 1980s, three quarters of all prisoners in New York State came from just seven neighbourhoods in New York City, of whom 47 per cent were re-imprisoned within a year of their release (Ellis, 1993 cited in Wacquant, 2001).
- In Brooklyn, New York, 11 per cent of the city blocks are home to 50 per cent of ex-prisoners, yet only 20 per cent of the Brooklyn population as a whole lives in these neighbourhoods (Lynch and Sabol, 2001). Imprisonment rates in the Brownsville neighbourhood of Brooklyn are 150 times that of another Brooklyn neighbourhood which is only a few blocks away (Clear *et al.*, 2003).
- In some parts of Washington DC, 25 per cent of adult black males are imprisoned per day (Lynch and Sabol, 1992 cited in Clear *et al.*, 2003).
- In the state of Ohio, 22 per cent of prisoners return to Cuyahoga County, which is home to just 12 per cent of the state’s population. Of these, 79 per cent return to the city of Cleveland, and just under a third return to just five communities within Cleveland (La Vigne and Thomson, 2003).

- In 1998, Los Angeles County in California received 30 per cent of all state parolees, even though its residents comprised only 12 per cent of the total state population (Petersilia, 2000).
- In the city of Tallahassee, Florida, crime rates have been shown to increase dramatically in a small number of neighbourhoods one year after large numbers of prisoners return to live there (Rose *et al.*, 1999). All 125 residents included in a sample of people living in two small neighbourhoods in Tallahassee reported that they had a close relative in prison (*ibid*).
- In the state of Maryland, 59 per cent of prisoners return to Baltimore city, and under a third of these return to just six of Baltimore's 55 communities (La Vigne and Kachnowski, 2003).
- In the state of Illinois, 51 per cent of prisoners return to Chicago, and over a third of these return to just six of Chicago's 77 communities (La Vigne et al., 2003).

The interconnectivity between prison and specific neighbourhoods has become more distinct as the prison population in the US has increased and an 'underclass' of mostly black people characterised by intergenerational poverty and dependency has emerged (Wacquant, 2001). It is argued that poverty, marginalisation and prison have become closely entwined as a result of exclusionary social policies implemented by successive US government and state administrations, and backed up by police action. Beginning in the 1970s, a new mode of penalty based on the 'risk management' of 'unruly groups' (Feely and Simon, 1996: 368) has focused primarily on "populations rejected by the depleted institutions of family, work and welfare" (Garland, 2001: 135). In turn, the prioritisation of penal rather than social responses to the problems of inner city neighbourhoods such as poverty, lack of employment, family stability and homelessness has engendered an oppositional culture amongst marginalised groups founded on a currency of reputation, respect, retribution and retaliation, and given a threatening visual presence by dressing in

particular styles and communicating with physical gestures (Anderson, 1999). This new urban culture, “with its ardent imperative of individual ‘respect’ secured through the militant display and actualization of readiness to mete out physical violence” (Wacquant, 2001:110-111) has been exported to prisons where it has supplanted the previous ‘inmate code’ of camaraderie and mutual trust, and then been exported back to further disrupt the neighbourhoods from which it evolved (Rose *et al.*, 1999). As a consequence, prisons and deprived urban neighbourhoods have come to resemble each other. According to Wacquant (2001: 97, emphasis in original):

This carceral mesh has been solidified by two sets of concurrent and interrelated changes: on the one end, sweeping economic and political forces have reshaped the structure and function of the urban ‘Black Belt’ of mid-century to *make the ghetto more like a prison*. On the other end, the ‘inmate society’ that inhabited the penitentiary system of the US during the postwar decades has broken down in ways that *make the prison more like a ghetto*.

To date, a similar case has not been made in the UK. Generally, European cities do not demonstrate the same concentrations of poverty as in the US, and neither are they as segregated by race or class (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998). Moreover, because policy makers have been more inclined than their US counterparts to test out various initiatives which aim to divert young offenders from custody, thus obviating the need for incarceration (Pitts, 2003), imprisonment rates are nowhere near as high. Nevertheless, there are signs that in terms of social differentiation and separation the UK is moving closer to the US. It has been reported there is now a mosaic of wealth and deprivation in major cities throughout England such that “most of [the] examples of socio-economic collapse are concentrated in relatively small neighbourhoods (Robson *et al.*, 2000: 25). Since the late 1970s, social separation has increased throughout the UK as a consequence of successive government administrations pursuing free market economic strategies which, while they have increased standards of living for most people, have increased the gap between rich and poor (Ball *et al.*, 1989). For example, throughout the 1980s, as higher income groups exercised a ‘right to buy’ into the private sector property market, less well off groups were forced to relocate to designated areas of social housing (Pitts, 2003). As a consequence, distinct areas of social deprivation have emerged characterised by large numbers of low

income families, high levels of unemployment, an over representation of black and minority ethnic groups, as well as crime and social exclusion (SEU, 1998).

In terms of race, family formation, work and political allegiance, research has revealed that an emerging 'underclass', as distinct from a 'working class', now exists in specific parts of Britain (Buckingham, 1999). For example, in terms of race it has been observed that "the counterpart of an underclass on the model of American blacks is best found amongst Afro-Caribbeans in Britain (Lash and Urry, 1994: 157). There is a growing concentration of ethnic minorities living in pockets of deprivation within metropolitan areas throughout the UK (Ratcliffe, 1997), such that in London 70 per cent of the residents living on the most deprived housing estates are from ethnic minorities (Power and Tunstall, 1997). In terms of work, in certain neighbourhoods within UK cities rates of youth unemployment are over 60 per cent (Pitts, 2003). And in terms of crime, it has been reported that "males destined for the underclass [are] nearly 50 per cent more likely to have been in trouble with the police, and twice as likely to have been to court accused of a crime than boys destined for the lower working class" (Buckingham, 1999: 64).

Unsurprisingly, most UK prisoners per thousand of the population are poor, unemployed and disproportionately ethnic minority in origin (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997). And in terms of geographical distribution, they are drawn primarily from inner city areas, a consequence of differential sentencing procedures practiced by the courts, as well as differential crime patterns between urban and shire areas (Howard, 1994). Moreover, two recent research reports - one relating to England and Wales and the other to Scotland - have found that the distribution of prisoners throughout the UK corresponds to geographical patterns of social deprivation. In England and Wales it has been reported that "the highest rates of prisoners in the population are found in metropolitan areas such as Greater London, Merseyside and the West Midlands, where there are also the highest rates of deprivation and family poverty" (SEU, 2002: 18). And in Scotland, where a systematic spatial analysis of the home addresses of Scottish prisoners was carried out, it has been found that one quarter of all prisoners come from just 53 of the 1,222 local government election wards. This equates to an imprisonment rate for these wards of 421 per 100,000 compared to an

imprisonment rate for the whole of Scotland of 130 per 100,000. In addition, an imprisonment rate of 953 per 100,000 of the male population from the most deprived communities in Scotland was recorded. Of the 53 wards most represented, 35 were in Glasgow, eight in Edinburgh, three in Aberdeen and two in Dundee. The report concluded that in Scotland there is a direct link between offending, becoming a prisoner and place of residence:

If you are a man and come from some of our communities, not only is it likely that you will remain poor, you will be unemployed and will have poor health; it is also likely that you will spend part of your life in prison. The increased probability of spending time in prison is both a consequence and indicator of the deprivation of the community from which you come (Houchin, 2005: 23).

The spatial dimension of criminal desistance

Several key issues and themes emerge from the spatial analysis of prisoner residence which have important implications for prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance. An obvious one is that populations of 'structurally irrelevant people' (Castells, 1996), who have become marginalised from mainstream society, increasingly are subject to penal sanction and imprisonment (Bauman, 1998). There is nothing new in this of course. Distinct patterns of poverty, social deprivation and crime have been documented ever since the industrial revolution; and aggregate levels of criminal behaviour have been closely linked to social deprivation in particular places (see Bottoms and Wiles, 2002). It has also long been recognised that prison populations are largely comprised of poor and marginalised people (Mathiesen, 1974). However, because criminological spatial analysis has focused primarily on place-based factors linked to the onset of criminal behaviour, the link between place and reoffending and/or criminal desistance has not been assessed to a significant extent (Visher and Travis, 2003).

What do we know about the connection between persistent criminality and social and environmental context? There has been a limited amount of research carried out on the effect of criminogenic environments on reoffending. This has found that criminal

desistance is facilitated when offenders 'knife off' their immediate criminogenic environments (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995), avoid contact with 'law-violating or norm-violating peers' (Akers, 1990), and/or develop new social networks and attachments (Baskin and Sommers, 1998). It has also been found that allowing for differences in police procedures and risk of detection - although in other respects social behaviour and lifestyle remain unchanged - offenders who move out of certain urban environments are hindered from committing crime at the same rate by changes in their living circumstances (Osborne, 1980). And more recently it has been shown that moving from a deprived to a more prosperous area has a positive effect on reducing crime rates, particularly for violent male offenders (Kling and Liebman, 2004).

However, research conducted so far has been concerned mostly with rates of reoffending at individual levels. Because the samples used have been small and self-selecting it has revealed far more about individual differences and much less about the impact of neighbourhood factors on aggregate populations (Kling and Liebman, 2004). Furthermore, researchers have not investigated what it is about moving to specific neighbourhoods that might cause people to desist (Farrall and Sparks, 2006). For example, whether a change in social position, or the impact of differential 'neighbourhood effects' such as different patterns of socialisation or a decline in relative deprivation, affects emotional and psychological life, which in turn affects criminal desistance. Overall, there has been insufficient attention paid to which kinds of offender - male or female, violent or acquisitive, experiential or instrumental - is most affected by neighbourhood effects, and at what point in the life course. And lastly, there has been no research conducted on criminal desistance in relation to offenders who throughout their lives not only share a common residential background, but also the experience of imprisonment.

It is important to distinguish offenders from prisoners, reoffending from re-imprisonment, and recidivism from reconviction (Maltz, 1984) for the simple reason that imprisonment affects people. It has long been accepted that imprisonment stigmatises people (Goffman, 1968), and that "being caught and branded as deviant has important consequences for one's further social participation and self-image" (Becker, 1963: 31-32). More recently, it has

also been documented how imprisonment socially excludes offenders by leading to unequal education and employment opportunities and a reduction in material and social capital (SEU, 2002). Therefore, prisoners must undergo a period of reintegration back into society, which, if they are to successfully desist from offending entails that they make good “in the face of widespread social stigma, limited career opportunities, and social exclusion” (Maruna, 2001: 27). However, although the way prisoners respond and adapt to imprisonment was a major concern of prison sociologists during the middle period of the last century, apart from a few studies of long term confinement (for example, see Cohen and Taylor, 1972) there have been few attempts to assess the experiences and emotional responses of prisoners today, and how these affect their behaviour after release (Liebling and Maruna, 2005). In particular, the impact on reoffending and criminal desistance of imprisoning large numbers of people who, as a consequence of having grown up in the same deprived urban neighbourhoods and being imprisoned together, share a common biography and life trajectory is poorly understood.

In order to explore the spatial issues and themes associated with criminal desistance further, the thesis therefore aims to address the following central research questions which are interlinked:

Is the prison population within the metropolitan area of Greater London spatially patterned in that it is drawn from specific parts of the city? Is there a link between social deprivation and imprisonment?

How do prisoners relate to the places they inhabit – the places they grow up, prison and the places to which they return after they are released from prison? In what ways are their perceptions, understandings and the meanings they have of the places they inhabit linked to reoffending and re-imprisonment?

How important is the relationality between prisoners and place for the process of criminal desistance? What are the implications of this for future prisoner reintegration policy?

The next section describes the general approach which has been taken to answer these questions and the key literature, concepts and theories which have been employed to focus upon them.

Criminological spatial analysis of crime, criminality and place - different perspectives

How can we account for the clearly defined spatial distribution of offenders across urban space? Throughout the history of criminological spatial analysis there has been a concerted attempt to explore the contextual nature of criminal behaviour, and articulate the connection between crime and environment. A fundamental issue in this work is how to conceptualize criminal action in relation to the social processes which enable and constrain everyday human life. To what extent is criminal behaviour determined by social structure; and/or to what extent is it determined by individuals acting in a voluntary capacity, of their own free will? Do the causes of criminality lie collectively within society, or do they lie within the individual? Psychologists and sociologists alike have considered the causes of crime to include a mix of individual, collective, structural and agentic variables (Bandura, 1989; Burt, 1925; Evans, 1980; Friedlander, 1947; Matza, 1964; Mays, 1964). For example, the behavioral psychologist Albert Bandura (1973: 43) has written:

Man is neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted helplessly by environmental influences. Rather, psychological functioning is best understood in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between behavior and its controlling conditions.

However, owing to a tendency for theories of criminal behaviour to develop either side of this complex dichotomy, various approaches have emerged which conceptualise crime, criminality and place in markedly different ways. In simple terms, criminal behaviour is thought to be either an essential part of human nature, underpinned and shaped by the social structure of urban environments; or else a product of shared social and cultural practices within those environments. I now present the major elements of these approaches to show

how they each explain the link between crime, criminality and place. By describing how they account for the evidence that crime and criminality is spatially patterned, it is intended to reveal their relative strengths and/or weaknesses in relation to the observation that prison populations are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods. Given that the onset of criminal behaviour as well as criminal desistance develops over the life course, as a consequence of the choices and decisions individuals make in different places (Sampson and Laub, 2005), it is intended to reveal the extent to which the major explanations of crime, criminality and place accommodate both social structure and voluntary action.

The irrelevance of space and place – criminality as human nature

A classical approach to crime and criminality, which since the 1980s has been revisited by conservative US academics associated with a branch of criminology commonly referred to as 'right realism', suggests that the social, economic or political nature of crime is unfounded and therefore of no, or only minor importance, in the onset of criminal behaviour. Adopting a tough law and order response to the problems of urban decay and the threat posed by the burgeoning 'underclass' (Ericson and Carriere, 1994), this approach draws on a long criminological tradition which suggests that individual factors are central to explanations of crime and criminality (Lombroso, 1876). In its updated form it considers that criminality is caused by biological and/or psychological deficits which, because they form early in life, influence criminal behaviour long before communal or neighbourhood processes can take effect.

Not that criminality develops entirely separately from environmental context. But it is generally considered that micro rather than meso level contexts affect criminal behaviour the most. In particular, the family is considered to be the most significant influence on the early development of criminal behaviour. Poor parenting and child rearing practices activate a biological predisposition to commit crime (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985). Children who benefit from good standards of parental supervision are insulated from criminal impulses, inculcated with the right social values and, as a consequence, develop

the self control necessary to avoid criminal temptation. In comparison, children who are brought up by bad parents “tend to be impulsive, insensitive, physical (as opposed to mental), risk taking, short sighted, and non verbal, and they will tend therefore to engage in criminal and analogous acts” (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990: 90). Parenting is considered to be such a pervasive influence that it predicts criminal behaviour in adolescence independently of neighbourhood or overarching structural factors such as poverty, social class, or economic opportunity (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985).

More controversially, it has also been suggested that criminality results from the behaviour, norms and lifestyles of the ‘underclass’ themselves. Almost exclusively applied to black populations living in urban ‘ghettoes’ within the US, it is argued that female headed households and a breakdown in morality are particular characteristics of a permissive counter culture which revels in labour market inactivity, welfare dependency and crime (Murray, 1984). In this framework of analysis, geographical segregation, be it on class, race or religious lines, is not considered to be socially produced. Rather it stems from a fundamental human characteristic of individuals to want to live amongst people similar to themselves. Despite the efforts of social reformers and governments since the middle of the nineteenth century to promote social integration, as a consequence of economic incentive and/or rational self interest, people in different income groups continue to live in different neighbourhoods from each other (Ormerod, 2005). It follows that uneven geographical distributions of offenders within society are mere aggregations of like-minded and similarly motivated individuals. They are either a reflection of random “underlying distributions of constitutional factors” (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985: 103); or else a consequence of the ‘culture of poverty’, “the self-defeating actions by poor people themselves” (Mead, 1997: 13). This results, wherever they may live, in non-work, unwed childbearing, and a tendency to indulge in criminal acts (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994).

Ideas such as these have informed the development of US penal policy over the past twenty five years, which, as previously noted, has resulted in a dramatic increase in prison populations drawn increasingly from urban black communities (Wacquant, 2001). During the same time, the prison population in the UK has also increased - not least because of the

importation of US penal initiatives such as ‘three strikes and you’re out’ sentencing policies (Cavadino *et al.*, 1999). However, the idea that crime is solely a product of poor parenting, or a breakdown in traditional morality amongst a small minority of dysfunctional families has not been accepted to the same extent in the UK, especially within the academic community (Novak, 1997). While ‘underclass’ concepts have been applied to UK policy arenas (Murray, 1990; and for a commentary see Young, 2002), for the most part academic criminologists have been far less inclined to pursue purely individual explanations of criminal behaviour. Instead, an alternative criminological approach has developed which considers spatial distributions of crime and criminality, rather than being a consequence of personal and social characteristics of poor people themselves, to be “an inevitable result of their poverty” (Young, 1996: 444). Before examining this rival perspective, another approach to crime and criminality which also draws on both psychological and economic theory and practice is considered.

Rational criminal calculation and environmental context

This approach suggests that the way offenders perceive and understand different signals and events within different environmental contexts triggers criminal behaviour. Based on the psychological tradition of ‘behaviourism’ which emphasises how human behaviour is learned within different environmental contexts (Skinner, 1938), this general approach has informed two specific criminological perspectives on crime, criminality and place. One is that urban form, the architecture and design of cities, influences people to behave in criminal ways. For example, housing estates comprised of multi-storey buildings, overhead walkways and dark underpasses, because they increase anonymity and reduce community involvement, provide attractive and lucrative environments for criminal activity (Coleman, 1985). Such architectural environments are highly vulnerable to crime because they “can teach children to adopt criminal decisions, and this learned disposition can then cause them to see all situational weaknesses as rational opportunities for crime” (Coleman, 1989: 109-110).

The other perspective is that criminal behaviour is the outcome of immediate choices and decisions people make in given situations. Based on classical social control theory - that human behaviour is governed by the economic concept of expected utility (Hollin, 1992) - it suggests that, because people generally are motivated by self-interest and personal gain, crime does not require a particular motivation or pathology. It arises naturally as a result of human choice, and therefore is “committed mainly by people who are tempted more and controlled less” (Felson, 1998: 23). For crime to occur regularly in a place, three basic conditions have to be met. First, there must be a sufficient number of motivated offenders; second, a ready supply of desirable targets; and third, an absence of capable guardians - for example parents, teachers, police, or security guards etc. (Cohen and Felson, 1979). As a matter of course, through routine activity - day to day movements at home, school, work, or socializing with friends - potential offenders learn that some places offer greater criminal opportunities than do others. Because environmental awareness and understanding is likely to be more acute close to home, potential offenders deliberately choose targets that are well known to them in or near to the places they live (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1981). For example, in the UK it has been found that offenders in the city of Sheffield travel only 1.93 miles from their homes to commit crime (Wiles and Costello, 2000). As a consequence, although crime occurs in all parts of urban environments, high crime areas tend to correlate closely with areas which also contain large numbers of offenders (Mawby, 1979).

These ideas have given rise to a growing branch of what has been referred to as ‘administrative criminology’ which, it is argued, is more concerned with preventing and mapping the distribution of crime than understanding its causes (Young, 1996). Today, it is commonly assumed that the distribution of crime conforms to three basic characteristics: a small number of offenders commit a large number of crimes; a small number of victims suffer a large number of crimes; and a small number of areas suffer a disproportionate amount of crime (Trickett *et al.*, 1995). The geographical distribution of criminal offences is related to the availability of crime targets, and the absence of measures to block criminal opportunities and prevent criminal acts (Clarke, 1992). Employing increasingly sophisticated computerised geographical information systems (GIS), spatial analysis has shown that crime clusters in specific micro-locations, or ‘hot spots’ (Sherman *et al.*, 1989)

throughout urban areas including apartment buildings, street corners and street networks (Taylor and Gottfredson, 1986); as well as larger spaces such as neighbourhoods (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991), city centres (Wikstrom, 1991), and shopping and entertainment complexes (Wiles and Costello, 2000). In terms of social policy, national and local government, as well as private interests, have attempted to prevent crime by 'defending' (Newman, 1972) high crime spaces and places against the threat of potential criminals; for example by implementing crime prevention building and planning standards, using increasingly sophisticated surveillance systems such as CCTV, and partitioning public space into so called 'gated communities' (see Crawford, 1998).

Criminal motivation and social structure

Rather than focusing on the geographical distribution of criminal offences, the third approach to crime, criminality and place attempts to furnish "a 'vocabulary of motives' for delinquency" (Downes, 1988: 177). In particular, it stresses the extent to which criminality is a product of the constraints imposed by social structure at a variety of spatial levels. Because, historically, this approach has sought to relate aggregate patterns of offender distribution to social antecedents such as urbanisation and unemployment, it is dealt with in some detail.

Ever since the Enlightenment, when it was first advanced that human motivation and action derives from social background and circumstance rather than fate and original sin, attempts have been made to explain the existence of aggregate patterns of offenders. Initially, by mapping the distribution of crime in relation to various social factors such as climate, diet, the provision of education and illegitimacy it was found that crime rates vary in different countries according, *inter alia*, to population density and inequality (Quetelet, 1831; 1842; Guerry, 1833.). Most importantly, it was found that rising crime was closely associated with the growth of cities:

The countries where frequent mixture of the people takes place; those in which industry and trade collect many persons and things together, and possess the greatest activity; finally, those where the inequality of fortune is most felt, all things being equal, are those which give rise to the greatest number of crimes (Quetelet, 1842: 27).

From the beginning therefore, crime and criminality were fused together in the public imagination with processes of urbanisation and social inequality. During the early part of the nineteenth century industrial capitalism uprooted large populations of people throughout Europe, breaking up traditional place-based communities and dramatically altering people's perception of city life (Williams, 1973). For the first time people throughout England flocked to newly industrialised regions in search of work - London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, all of which were unable to provide even the most basic public services to accommodate them. In London they congregated in what became known as the 'rookeries', overcrowded housing blocks hastily erected by private landlords in the boroughs north and east of the city centre - Kings Cross, Bethnal Green, Bermondsey, Stepney and Southwark. Disease ridden, without clean water and traversed by open sewers, such areas quickly became synonymous with crime, provoking fears within middle class society that cities were a breeding ground for corruption, violence and political insurrection (Hall, 1988). Case studies carried out by Victorian social reformers revealed that criminals were not evenly spread throughout London, but tended to live in particular parts of the city. For example, it was reported that between 1841 and 1850 two of the seven Metropolitan Police Divisions in London, containing the districts of Hoxton and Westminster, produced 65 per cent of the cities alleged criminals (Mayhew, 1862 in Morris, 1957: 62). The sense of alarm and public outcry this provoked led to a series of social 'reforms', hastily adopted by city planners to ensure that the so called 'dangerous classes' were spatially segregated from the 'urban bourgeoisie' (Jones, 1971).

Social disorganisation

Of course, the growth of cities and urban crime was not unique to England. Some fifty or so years later, using detailed statistical analysis, ethnographic observation and in-depth

interviewing techniques, researchers at the Chicago School of Sociology in the US proposed that so called 'delinquency areas' were a product of a natural process of urban development in all modern commercial-industrial cities. Using Chicago as a case study, they explained how the rapid influx of ethnic immigrants from Europe, and the migration of black and white rural farm labourers to urban centres seeking employment, resulted in ethnically diverse concentrations of poverty. It was shown how Chicago had expanded from its centre in a series of five concentric circles (Burgess, 1925). Surrounding the non-residential core business district was a 'zone of transition', so called because of the constant flux caused there by waves of ethnic immigrants attracted by the ready availability of cheap housing. The city expanded as waves of immigrants replaced established residents who, once they had the means to, moved out to more affluent areas which had developed towards the city margins and the commuter belt. Suggesting this process was ecological, it was explained that, just as in the natural world plant and animal species unable to adapt to changing circumstances perish and die, people unable to achieve sufficient economic power to move remained segregated in the 'zone of transition', where they formed a distinct community - a "purgatory of 'lost souls'" (Burgess, 1925: 56).

By computing and plotting the home addresses of juvenile delinquents dealt with by school authorities, the police and the courts according to census tracts, it was found that large numbers of offenders resided within the 'zone of transition' and gradually decreased in number the further out from the city centre you travelled (Shaw and McKay, 1932; 1942). The reason given for this was that in certain parts of the city delinquency developed as a consequence of peasant immigrant communities having to adapt to an alien urban environment. Using ethnographic research methods to explain the statistical findings, it was suggested that the decline in influence of traditional forms of behaviour, the loss of personal and social interaction between people, and the severing of family ties caused social bonds to loosen and eventually break down. The result was 'social disorganization', a process by which the rules that normally govern behaviour are relaxed (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1920).

Subsequently, the spatial analysis carried out at the Chicago School of Sociology has attracted a good deal of criticism. Early on it was pointed out that areas with high offender rates are not necessarily socially disorganized. Indeed, delinquents frequently act according to an alternative set of highly organized values and concerns (Whyte, 1943). They also often live within communities characterised by dense family networks and close kinship ties (Bottoms and Wiles, 1997). Furthermore, as a theory of criminal behaviour, social disorganization neglects to specify which factors within the total social and economic framework of factors predict which outcomes. For instance, by linking criminal behaviour directly to a lack of social bonds and cohesion, it fails to recognize the degree to which a city population “consists of relatively homogenous groups, with social and cultural moorings that shield it fairly effectively from the suggested consequences of number, density and heterogeneity” (Gans, 1968: 99). As noted by Ruggiero (2001: 16), the Chicago School over extended the relationship between cities and crime. It concentrated too acutely on “mechanisms of disorganization, led by discontent”, and it tended to downplay “the opportunities arising from urban aggregations”. Finally, and most troublingly, the Chicago School perpetuated the idea that crime is a consequence of cultural inferiority. “Influenced by both the salubrious and the toxic aspects of early twentieth-century culture” (Musolf, 2003: 60), it made the mistake of assuming that crime is a group pathology caused by a failure of immigrant communities to learn core American values.

In terms of the spatial distribution of offenders specifically, two important qualifications have been made to the work of the Chicago School. First, although the same concentric patterns of offender residence were found in a total of sixteen cities throughout the US including Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Richmond (Shaw and McKay, 1942); and later studies confirmed similar patterns, for example in Baltimore (Lander, 1954) and Seattle (Schmid, 1960); subsequent analysis has shown that cities do not necessarily expand organically in concentric rings around a central core area (Evans, 1980; Mays, 1964; Morris, 1957). For example, in different economic and social contexts cities expand in sectors (Hoyt, 1939), or around a series of nuclei (Harris and Ullman, 1945).

Second, rather than being contained within areas as large as census tracts, which in the US contain thousands of people, subsequent studies have shown that offenders are concentrated in much smaller locations, for example in small housing complexes situated both within and peripheral to inner city areas. For example, in the UK, where patterns of urban development have been more differentiated than in the US, it was observed that 'delinquency areas', rather than being a product of 'natural' urban processes, were socially constructed (Morris, 1957). Areas of high crime formed as a consequence of deliberate housing allocation policies, which had the unintended effect of drawing people with a propensity to offend to particular residential neighbourhoods. During the 1950s and 1960s, in an attempt to reclaim Victorian built inner city slum areas, local government relocated residents *en masse* to new public housing estates, many of which were situated on the outskirts of cities. Because families with the severest needs tended to be re-housed together, groups of people with a range of adverse characteristics, including a higher than normal propensity to offend, settled in particular neighbourhoods (see Morris, 1957 on Croydon; and Bagley, 1965 on Exeter; Baldwin and Bottoms, 1976 on Sheffield; Davidson, 1975 on Hull; Jones, 1958 on Leicester - all in Evans, 1980). The social life of these neighbourhoods - the styles of parenting, schooling, peer networks, the perceptions of outsiders and the actions of social control agencies - gradually caused levels of criminal motivation to increase such that over time they developed, what have been referred to as, 'community crime careers' (Bottoms and Wiles, 1997).

Residential segregation – crime and the 'underclass'

Since the pioneering work of the Chicago School, the complexity of urban development has been revealed. Abandoning the idea that urban development is a natural, ecological process, increasingly it has been considered in relation to social and economic context. Patterns of urban differentiation like those described above are now generally thought to be a result of major social and economic transformations brought about by deindustrialisation and a shift to an economic system of 'disorganised capitalism' (Lash and Urry, 1987). Economic restructuring - occasioned by the deregulation of national economies, the demise of Fordist

mass-production, the emergence of flexible forms of work organisation, and new spatial divisions of labour - has transformed the urban landscape of western capitalist countries (*ibid*). During the 1970s and 1980s, urban sociologists and geographers focused on the effects of these transformations, in particular the extent to which they resulted in uneven distributions of power within capitalist societies. For instance, they conceived of space and place as being socially constructed within market economies (Lefebvre, 2003); by the uneven capital investment in land (Harvey, 1973) and the power of the state to organise patterns of collective consumption (Castells 1977). It was argued that within the global capitalist system, places are treated as commodities. As such, they are continually 'made over' in the continual drive for capital accumulation and short term investment (Harvey, 1982). Places regenerate or degenerate when:

the landscape shaped in relation to a certain phase of development (capitalist or pre-capitalist) becomes a barrier to further accumulation. The geographical configuration of places must then be reshaped around new transport and communications systems and physical infrastructures, new centers and styles of production and consumption, new agglomerations of labor power, and modified social infrastructures (Harvey, 1996: 296).

On the one hand, the new economic order has increased flows of money, goods, services and information (Sassen, 1991). As capital has become 'deterritorialised' and people have become 'distanciated' (Giddens, 1990), social relations have become increasingly stretched out in time and space. There are some positive benefits to this. An important one is that people are no longer tied to places of work - "for richer and poorer, in health and in sickness, and until death them do part" (Bauman, 2001: 22). However, while some people have been able to take advantage of opportunities offered by global transport and communications technology, others have found themselves "on the receiving end of space-time compression" (Massey, 1993: 62). Because "differential access to the scarce resources required to acquire market capacity... leads to the restriction of mobility chances" (Harvey, 1989: 118), large numbers of people remain confined within their immediate localities. Although attempts have been made to alleviate the effects of uneven urban development, for example through place marketing and stimulating local economies (Imrie and Thomas, 1999), such efforts frequently fail to keep pace with urban change. As a consequence, while

some places have been turned into “citadels of power”, others have been “singled out for stagnation, deterioration, and a return to ‘nature’” (Lefebvre, 2003: 70, 80).

Although residential segregation is a feature of all global cities (Sassen, 1991) nowhere are its effects more in evidence than in the US, where the number of people living in poverty nearly doubled between 1970 and 1990 (Jargowsky, 1997), and large numbers of black people now live in ‘apartheid’ conditions socially isolated from broader society (Massey and Denton, 1993). In contrast to most white people, who have been able to ‘leave the city behind’ and relocate to suburban areas where new service sector employment opportunities are located, due to a lack of education and relevant work experience, most black people have remained stuck in inner city ‘ghettoes’ (Wilson, 1987). While a major reason for this is the anonymous operation of the market in land, it has been argued that in some cities racial segregation has been intensified as a consequence of the activities of landlords and government institutions, for example the imposition of deliberate restrictions on occupancy in ‘white only’ residential areas (Davis, 1990). Together, these structural, institutional and political constraints have created ‘ungovernable spaces’ (Lash and Urry, 1994) in which resides a jobless ‘underclass’ defined by its: isolation, long-term unemployment, absence of training and skills, welfare dependency, female headed households, and an alternative set of mores and values which increase “the likelihood that residents will rely on illegitimate sources of income” (Wilson, 1987: 53). In contrast to the behaviourist or culturalist views of the ‘underclass’ posited by ‘right realist’ criminologists described earlier, it is present day capitalism, in particular labour market disadvantage (*ibid*), and/or the active and deliberate exclusion of groups of people who are “exiled to the netherland out of the bounds of society” (Bauman, 2004: 39), that causes clear cut spatial concentrations of social deprivation and criminal behaviour.

Social disorganisation revisited

Throughout the last century, growing evidence for a link between social deprivation, crime and place (Hope, 2001) has persuaded some criminologists and urban sociologists to

reanalyse the basic tenets of social disorganization theory. More precisely, the assumption that crime increases in areas where economic conditions reduce the capacity of local people to exert control at the neighbourhood level and demonstrate non-criminal values (Rose *et al.*, 1999) has resulted in a new branch of criminological spatial analysis which has focused on the effects of living in socially deprived, high crime urban communities (Bottoms and Wiles, 2002). However, rather than suggest that social deprivation in and of itself is a direct cause of criminal behaviour, this new perspective suggests that physical and social variables interact in deprived communities to produce specific outcomes, one of which is a reduction in informal social control and neighbourhood cohesion. These 'bundles of spatially-based attributes' (Galster, 2001) - for example housing and environment, peer group influence, quality of public services, family and friend networks and absolute and relative deprivation - are thought to be highly correlated and together impact on the general behaviour and attitudes of residents (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Brooks-Gunn *et al.*, 1993; Buck, 2001; Elliot *et al.*, 1996; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001)¹.

In terms of criminal behaviour specifically, rather than suggest that inequality in particular places causes crime directly, it is the relationship between inequality and the quality of social relations in particular places that creates social conditions amenable to crime. For example neighbourhood change, an increase in abandoned buildings (Skogan, 1990), combined with changes in owner to rental or single to multiple housing accommodation (Schuerman and Kobrin, 1986), stimulates out-migration and "reduces the capacity of a neighbourhood to regulate itself through formal and informal processes of social control" (Bursik, 1988: 526). Furthermore, deprived neighbourhoods reduce the capacity of residents to develop 'collective efficacy'. In other words to form attachments to the places they live: to demonstrate mutual trust and a willingness to intervene for the common good, supervise teenage delinquents, and gain access to institutional resources and social support (Sampson *et al.*, 1997). This analysis has shown that the low socio-economic status of residents who live in socially deprived neighbourhoods has a clear effect on rates of crime committed by individuals and groups, who in individual respects (both biological and psychological) have a low risk of offending (Wikstrom and Loeber, 2000). The conclusion

drawn is that the “strongest evidence links neighbourhood processes to crime” (Sampson *et al.*, 2002: 458).

Criminal motivation and cultural practice

The final approach to crime, criminality and place suggests that geographic concentrations of crime and criminality are primarily a reflection of the cultural heterogeneity of society. Because of its grounding within social scientific theory, this approach is also dealt with in some detail. Interestingly, cultural theories of crime are related to both structural and individual theories of crime and criminality. The former of which, as we have seen, suggests that distinct criminal cultures arise according to social relations in different parts of cities, while the latter considers criminal behaviour to be an inherent failing of individuals, or is endemic to particular groups of people such as the ‘underclass’ (Murray, 1984; Herrnstein and Murray, 1994). Indeed, comparisons between ‘social delinquency’ and ‘psychiatric delinquency’ (Morris, 1957) have been made for some time in studies of crime and place; although in recent years, aetiological explanations for the existence of distinctive criminal cultures have widened and become more entrenched as a consequence of the split between ‘right realist’ and ‘left realist’ criminological perspectives. Having described the tradition within criminology that considers criminal culture to be a biological or psychological predisposition, the following section elucidates the view that criminal culture is situational and socially produced.

First given expression by the sociologist Georg Simmel (1995), and later developed within the Chicago School of Sociology, the idea that “mind takes form in the city and in turn urban form conditions mind” (Mumford, 1938: 5) has informed a variety of cultural approaches to criminality which suggest that criminal behaviour is a product of the way normal people respond in normal ways to abnormal social circumstances. Early on it was suggested that as a reaction to the scale, density and heterogeneity of life in modern industrial cities, generic urban cultures developed which were characterised by anonymity, loneliness, isolation, detachment, aversion and hostility (Wirth, 1938). Drawing on the

theoretical perspective that urban culture is distinct from rural culture, it was suggested that criminal culture arises when people lack the opportunity to achieve economic success within mainstream society (Merton, 1938). Therefore, criminal culture develops “in somewhat the same way as have all social traditions, that is, as a means of satisfying certain felt needs within the limits of a particular social and economic framework” (Shaw and McKay, 1942: 320.). Although a failure to achieve financial success is not unique to urban dwellers, it is most keenly concentrated in urban areas which lack the structural supports necessary to allow local residents to realise economic standing and gain.

In some parts of the city attitudes which support and sanction delinquency are, it seems, sufficiently extensive and dynamic to become the controlling forces in the development of delinquent careers among a relatively large number of boys and young men. These are the low-income areas, where delinquency has developed in the form of a social tradition, inseparable from the life of the local community (*ibid*: 315-16).

Sub-cultures

While such ideas remain current, they have undergone serious reappraisal. In particular, criminologists have attempted to define more clearly what is meant by criminal culture, and to isolate the exact mechanisms by which it is transmitted. For example, the idea that criminal behaviour is culturally transmitted within intimate personal groups such as the family or peer group networks through exposure to ‘definitions favorable to violation of law’ (Sutherland, 1947) explains crime as a collective act, or “the outcome of an interaction process among a plurality of individuals” (Cohen, 1966: 21). In poor urban neighbourhoods, coherent criminal sub-cultures develop collectively through a process of ‘reaction-formation’, a psychodynamic mechanism which causes working class adolescents, not equipped to meet middle class standards of academic achievement to behave in ways diametrically opposed to the dominant value system (*ibid*). Furthermore, different forms of criminal sub-culture arise according to the social characteristics of different urban neighbourhoods. For example, income producing crimes such as theft and burglary are most likely to occur in relatively organized neighbourhoods, where older

successful criminals act as role models; whereas, lacking the means to gain recognition in any other way, so called 'conflict activity, "bopping', street fighting, 'rumbling' and the like... represent an alternative means by which adolescents in many disorganized urban areas may acquire status" (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960: 183).

Today, cultural explanations of crime and criminality remain prominent, not least because of cultural theories relating to the 'underclass'. However, sub-cultural theories of criminal behaviour have undergone substantial revision - in particular for placing too great an emphasis on the distance between criminal sub-culture and mainstream society; a tendency to pathologise whole, especially working class communities; ignoring the role of the state and power; and failing to explain the reasons for residential inequality (Lilly, *et al.*, 1995). Rather than consider "delinquent subculture as a simple microcosm of lower class culture" (Downes, 1966: 62), recent cultural theory has explored the way in which specific local experiences, interpretations and understandings have merged with global influences within capitalist society and the media to create values and customs which define cultural practice in different places (Giddens, 1991). Criminal culture is no longer analysed solely in terms of place of residence, class location, absolute deprivation, or local history and tradition, but within a much broader social context; one which encompasses *inter alia* changing conceptions of masculinity, patterns of consumption, architecture, advertising, the mass media, the normalization of drug use, and the expansion of penal sanctions. In short, criminal culture is no longer considered separate from or outside mainstream culture; instead it is very much a part of it (Young, 2002).

Local/global cultures

The term 'glocalisation' is sometimes used by geographers and sociologists to describe the dialectical relationship between macro-, meso- and micro-levels of spatial analysis - between global and national influence, social and environmental context, and local and indigenous interpretation (Soja, 1995). Within criminology, the extent to which criminal culture is a synthesis of global and local influence has become a key issue of debate,

particularly in relation to crime and social exclusion (Young, 2002). Criminologists who suggest criminal culture is locally produced argue that poverty, unemployment and social isolation in particular places result in the formation of distinct criminal cultures. Some of these are utilitarian in nature. For example, in the UK new micro-economies of subsistence and survival are thought to have developed in socially marginalised areas which revolve around the exchange of labour and goods, as well as acquisitive forms of crime such as car theft, burglary and drug dealing (Taylor, 1999). And in the US, the spatial and social isolation of unskilled black people in marginalised urban neighbourhoods has resulted in crime being accepted and condoned as normative considering the local environment in which they live. For example, Wilson (1997: 70) has written of the US ghetto:

The more often certain behaviour... is manifested in a community, the greater will be the readiness on the part of some residents of the community to find that behavior not only convenient but also morally appropriate. They may endorse mainstream norms against this behavior in the abstract but then provide compelling reasons and justifications for this behaviour, given the circumstances in their community.

Cultural responses to social isolation are thought to be particularly highly organised within US ghettos. Although on the face of it ghetto culture appears to be wantonly destructive and violent, closer inspection reveals it to be “organised according to different principles, in response to a unique set of structural and strategic constraints that bear on the racialized enclaves of the city as on no other segment of America’s territory” (Wacquant, 1997: 346). Thus, organised cultures of local resistance develop in socially excluded communities. Based on a shared ‘politics of location’ (hooks, 1990), racial, social and economic marginalisation has shaped local cultural responses which are deliberately opposed to mainstream society. For instance, the imprisonment of large numbers of black people from specific urban neighbourhoods has provoked antagonistic attitudes towards the police and the legal system (Rose and Clear, 1998). Once residents in marginalised communities perceive the police and judicial system to be “a hostile imposition rather than a social institution that serves the community” (Anderson, 2001: 136), oppositional cultures develop which are consciously opposed to mainstream values enshrined within civil law.

A different view is that while crime in deprived communities may be organised and instrumental it can also be experiential and seductive in nature (Katz, 1988). Criminologists who consider criminality to be a product of wider cultural practices argue it is immersion in and sensitivity to mainstream culture, not exclusion from it, that gives rise to resentment and discontent. Rather than structural inequality, or absolute levels of income *per se*, more important is how deprivation relative to others causes an increase in sensitivity to low social status (Young and Lea, 1984). This in turn leads to feelings of stigma, shame, anxiety and violence (Wilkinson, 2005). As susceptible to the pleasures of consumption, the enticements of popular culture, and the subtle influence of the mass media as everyone else, but unable to satisfy their desire for status and recognition within wider society, the poor and marginalised turn to crime (Young, 1999). Providing the means to acquire products essential for acceptance within today's "culture of consumerist narcissism" (Lasch, 1980), as well as the vicarious popularity and self-image that comes attached to a fully realised criminal lifestyle, crime offers the socially deprived a way of constructing a new identity for themselves. For instance, it provides a way for the poor and marginalised to exert power and authority in the places they live. In the UK, during the summer of 1991, rioting that took place on low income, peripheral housing estates within the urban conurbations of Tyneside, Oxford, Coventry, Bristol and Cardiff was attributed to young men who, through lack of employment, had no recognized role in their communities. With no public or family status to bolster their sense of value and respect in relation to others, they took to the streets, where they adhered to "a cult of honour and loyalty which exempted them from everything that demanded responsibility" (Campbell, 1993: 170).

In this local context, criminal culture is not utilitarian; it is symbolic and experiential. It enables young men who have no pride, dignity and self-respect to achieve power, recognition and masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993). For people who occupy 'forgotten spaces', crime is often a sensual and symbolic act. With no alternative forms of diversion or amusement available, it offers release in "a frequent delight in excess, a glee in breaking the rules, a reassertion of dignity and identity" (Young, 2003: 408). However, while crime can generate power and meaning, it can also be purposeless and random. Prone to the inherent anxieties and frustrations involved in gaining status and recognition within modern

consumerist society, and fully aware of their lack of opportunity in life to achieve it, groups of young men in specific locations have been found to exhibit “a novel and quite disturbing type of despair... the presence of virtually total cynicism and nihilism: virtually no opinions, no realistic expectations, no hope and no fear of authority” (Hall and Winlow, 2004: 277). Because fear, pain and depression can arise from a lack of opportunity to accrue self respect and a sense of achievement within wider society, groups of young people in specific social situations tend to share values, identities and a common culture which embraces experiential criminality as a way of life.

Neither one thing nor the other – the limitations of separate methodologies

Four different approaches to crime, criminality and place have been presented. In one, place is considered to be relatively unimportant compared to individual or family level attributes of offending. In another, place is important, but only in the sense that it shapes the behaviour of people who are already motivated to offend. In another, place determines criminal motivation by constraining or failing to control individuals such that they seek illegitimate solutions to personal and social problems. And in another, places contain aggregate populations of offenders who, through a process of socialisation are bound together by a unified collective consciousness, a common criminal culture. Because there is fundamental disagreement over whether places “vary in their capacity to help cause crime, or merely in their frequency of hosting crime that was going to occur some place inevitably, regardless of the specific place” (Sherman *et al.*, 1989: 46), each of these approaches offers only a partial reading of the relationship between crime, criminality and place. Indeed, as separate constructs of criminal behaviour, they leave out more than they contain (Barak, 1997). What appears to be most crucial about the relationship between crime, criminality and place is that social and environmental context is as important to understanding how crime occurs (or does not occur) as are developmental and psychological factors (Laub and Sampson, 2001). As such, they cannot be treated separately.

To briefly take each of the different approaches in turn. The theory that criminal behaviour is biological or psychological does not account for the fact that crime and criminality is spatially patterned. It therefore has little purchase on the observation that prison populations are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods. The idea that criminal behaviour develops within micro-situations such as the family, independently of neighbourhood processes, or overarching structural factors such as class or employment status assumes that “what goes on inside the family can usefully be separated from the forces that affect it outside” (Currie, 1985: 185). Instead, individual, family and neighbourhood factors interact in ways which can reinforce criminal behaviour. For example, economic disadvantage can reduce the capacity of parents to maintain effective standards of discipline and supervision within the home, which, in turn, can increase the likelihood of adolescent delinquency (Sampson and Laub, 1994: 538).

The idea that criminal behaviour is shaped by the physical environment has informed the development of a variety of target hardening and surveillance measures which aim to ‘design out crime’. As useful as this schema is for explaining the geographical distribution of offences and preventing particular types of crime in specific locations, in treating places merely as geometric containers in which routine social interaction takes place, it fails to explain distinct geographical patterns of offenders within society, or the root causes of criminal behaviour (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992). Situational crime prevention strategies, and the rational choice and routine activity theories of behaviour which underlie them, reduce the analysis of criminal behaviour to a set of cognitive characteristics which, it is assumed, can be controlled with recourse to a set of actuarial solutions (Feely and Simon, 1994). At worst, this approach is an extreme form of environmental determinism (Mayhew, 1979); at best, it is simplistic (Canter, 1977).

Structural approaches which simply “read off the specifics of places through the general laws or tendencies of capitalism” (Thrift, 2002: 106) are also overly deterministic. Because they tend to fix space and place within a common economic framework, structural approaches which suggest that people are constrained and made immobile by the global economy fail to account for the way places are comprised of porous networks of social

relations which differ according to a complex range of factors including gender and race (Massey, 1994). Therefore, crime is not solely a product of social disorganization or geographical differentiation. It is as much about power, emotion and personal identity as it is about economic and social structure (Katz, 1988).

Finally, the argument that criminal culture develops collectively through cultural practice assumes that criminal behaviour is a product of overall class structure, and that all marginalised communities develop the same cultural traits. In fact, all places are different and, irrespective of social class, race or degree of social isolation, they contain diverse populations comprised of working people, the unemployed, single parents, nuclear families, young people, old people - people who are just as likely to move out of an area, or attempt to improve the quality of their lives through legitimate means, as they are to resort to crime. As such, it has been argued that, for example, criminal culture in black ghettos:

cannot be explained solely by a unitary logic of oppression and exclusion... Political-economic forces create the structure within which the ghetto exists... but ghetto dwellers are not simply bearers of social relations or victims of social structure. Understanding life in the ghetto requires granting its residents far more agency... and being prepared to accept an understanding of causation more varied and less deterministic than a single uniform logic of racial exclusion that sweeps all in its path (Newman, 2002: 1595).

Before attempting to reconcile these different structural and agentic approaches, and formulate a supplementary methodological approach to studying crime, criminality and place, it is necessary to describe a place where it is possible to observe the relationality between people and their environment at particularly close quarters: in prison. As well as punishing and incapacitating offenders, it is a fundamental aim of imprisonment to address the causes of crime and criminality - be they psychological, behavioural, structural, or cultural. Yet, even though the relationship between the self and the environment is central to the prison experience, the personal impact of imprisonment, and its role within prisoner reintegration and the process of criminal desistance, remains poorly understood (Toch, 1992).

The place of imprisonment

Throughout the last two centuries, during which imprisonment has been the cornerstone of the modern penal system, there has been fundamental disagreement over the purpose and value of prisons. Ever since the second half of the eighteenth century, when prisons ceased to be places of incarceration for people awaiting trial, execution, deportation, or payment of debts, and became places of punishment in their own right, they have had a dual purpose (Ignatieff, 1978). It is a fundamental characteristic of penal systems in modern western societies that punishment is justified on the grounds that it is deserved for the crimes offenders commit, and that it helps reduce the incidence of crime in the future (Walker, 1991). Punishment is delivered by confining offenders against their will; reductions in crime are facilitated by incapacitating, deterring and reforming offenders to behave as law abiding citizens after their release. While some commentators argue that ‘prison works’ for the simple reason that it takes offenders off the streets and incapacitates them (Wilson, 1975); others assert prison “causes recidivism [and it] cannot fail to produce delinquents. It does so by the very type of existence that it imposes on its inmates” (Foucault, 1977: 265-266).

Traditional approaches to prisoner behaviour

Traditionally, prisons are understood to be monolithic places, self-regulating and securely insulated from the outside world; places which are structured and organised both temporally and spatially in order to enforce ‘disciplinary monotony’ and render prisoners ‘docile’ (Foucault, 1977: 141). Prisoners are thought to respond to the conditions of their confinement in uniform ways. There are two major schools of thought. First, imprisonment imposes an ‘indigenous’ sub-culture on prisoners; and second, prisoners ‘import’ into prison the behavioural characteristics of the particular culture to which they belong on the outside.

The 'indigenous' model suggests that prisons are people processing factories, their *raison d'être* to mortify and humiliate prisoners by subjecting them to a series of deprivations: of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy and personal security (Sykes, 1958). Deprivation is "symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors" (Goffman, 1961: 15-16). The level of separation from the outside world is made more extreme by strictly enforced mechanisms of interior discipline and control, which are specifically intended to bring about "a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self" (*ibid*: 24). These include 'batch living', the categorisation and segregation of prisoners into relatively undifferentiated groups; a lack of privacy and security; a strict timetable of routines and activities; a code of discipline based on privileges, sanctions and rewards; and the stripping away of previous identities through, for example, the imposition of prison numbers, prison haircuts and prison clothes. Prisoners respond to the rigidity of prison life in set ways. Some keep themselves to themselves, or attempt to confront prison authority by being defiant. Some stoically endure their captivity, or form relationships with other prisoners in order to present a united front; others become mentally depressed and commit suicide (Sykes, 1958). Pervading all these responses however, is a uniform sense of defeat. Most prisoners are marked by 'personal failure', 'self pity' and 'time wasted or destroyed' (Goffman, 1961: 66). They are "lonely individuals", totally reliant on the distribution of privileges, and constantly fearful of the imposition of sanctions (Mathiesen, 1965: 12).

The 'importation' model on the other hand suggests that prisoners respond to imprisonment in ways that are an extension of the "type of experiences a man has had with other persons before he came to prison" (Clemmer, 1940: 1). The most common reaction is to adhere to an 'inmate code' of behaviour which derives from their predominately working class and poorly educated backgrounds within deprived urban neighbourhoods. While this can provide a sense of cohesion and community, it can also harden into a 'criminal code' or 'thief subculture', characterised by a tough and intransigent approach to prison life, and a readiness to return to crime after release (Irwin and Cressey, 1962). Moreover, prison culture is a reflection of wider demographic, economic and political changes within society

generally. In the US, during the 1960s and 1970s, due to the increasing politicisation of black people, it was found that large numbers of prisoners owed allegiance to violent gangs, membership of which depended on ethnic origin and place of residence (Jacobs, 1979). Importation theories suggest that, rather than be brought low by imprisonment, prisoners remain largely unaffected by it. By putting themselves into 'cryogenic suspension', they wait out their time until release (Sapsford, 1983: 76). Some cut themselves off from the outside world and put all their energies into surviving prison. Others attempt to change their lives by cooperating with the prison authorities and studying or training (Irwin, 1970). Even long-term prisoners do not lose "their identities as a result of being processed through the prison system" (Cohen and Taylor, 1972: 148). They remain consistent as individuals and retain the capacity to resist by asserting "their superiority over their guards, and [developing] ways of dealing with attacks upon their self-conceptions" (*ibid*).

Structure and agency in prisons

Although usually considered as alternative responses to imprisonment, for some time it has been accepted that these two models of adaptation are not mutually exclusive (Thomas, 1977). Prisoner culture is an amalgam of both institutional structure (the indigenous model) and personal agency (the importation model). Therefore, social life in prison is not uniform, and it does not necessarily conform to fixed forms of behaviour. Instead, it is "both patterned and ordered and at the same time, dynamic and changing" (Jewkes, 2005: 377). Recently, the tension between structure and agency in prisons has been highlighted by institutional geographers and criminologists who have argued that prisons should be considered "less as prior, stable, fixed entities, and more as made, dynamic, fluid achievements" (Philo and Parr, 2000: 513). Power relations vary considerably in prisons, as do the ways in which prisoners respond and adapt to the various restrictions placed upon them. Although they are highly structured environments; "in reality prisons quite commonly seethe and boil with human agency, passion and conflict – in ways that are not infrequently magnified and rendered more intense precisely by the constraints and frustrations encountered there" (Sparks *et al.*, 1996: 68). For example, different forms of

prisoner resistance - illicit trading networks, gang allegiance, violence, bullying and racism (King and McDermott, 1995) – are everyday characteristics of prison life which challenge the maintenance of security and control.

As such, there is not one prison context but many. Prisons come in all shapes and sizes. They contain different categories of prisoners, and they maintain different forms and levels of security and surveillance. For example, in the UK some prisons date from medieval times, while others are positively futuristic in design. Whereas high security dispersal prisons are designed and managed to securely separate prisoners off from society, open prisons attempt to reconnect prisoners to society, to their families and support networks on the outside. Some prisons, especially Victorian prisons, are situated in densely populated areas of cities; other more modern prisons tend to be situated in remote rural areas. Some prisons, particularly local prisons, are severely overcrowded; others have remained relatively untouched by increases in the prison population over recent years. Furthermore, prison regimes are influenced by local conditions and practices negotiated on a daily basis by prisoners and staff alike. Some prisons are relatively safe; others are rife with bullying, racism and theft. Some prisoners are held close to their homes; others are sent to prisons hundreds of miles away. Some prisoners remain in their cells all day long; others spend the majority of their time on the landings, playing head games of ‘cat and mouse’ with staff (McDermott and King, 1988), or engaged in prohibited trading networks involving drugs and mobile phones (Valentine and Longstaff, 1998).

The ‘reform’ of prisoners

Notwithstanding a growing acceptance that prison systems are changing, particularly as a consequence of recent rises in incarceration rates, there has been little new research on the effectiveness of prisons to reform offenders. Much of the extant literature on adaptive modes of behaviour dates from the last century and was carried out mostly in high security prisons in the US (Morgan, 2002). A few studies in the UK have focused on the emergence of certain ‘problem behaviours’ such as violence (Sim, 1994) and suicide and self harm

(Liebling, 1999), but there is little up to date research on how prisoner behaviour has changed and is continuing to change in line with new prison policies and procedures, and transformations within society generally (Wacquant, 2002). Most importantly, given increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment, there is little new research on the effects of imprisonment on prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance (Petersilia, 2003; Liebling and Maruna, 2005).

Of course, the failure of prison to reform prisoners has been recognized throughout the history of imprisonment (Rothman, 1980). It is generally accepted that prisoners reoffend because “shortly after release the ex-inmate forgets a great deal of what life was like on the inside and once again begins to take for granted the privileges around which life in the institution was organized” (Goffman, 1961: 70). Moreover, ‘prisonization’ (Clemmer, 1940) - the degree to which prisoners are ‘invaded’ by the experience of imprisonment at a deep psychological level - has a deleterious effect on their future behaviour. The routine nature of everyday life in prison inculcates a sense of irresponsibility such that many prisoners continue to treat life as a party and are unable, or unwilling, to form lasting attachments and commitments to friends and/or marriage partners after release (Shover, 1996). Furthermore, imprisonment results in specific structural impediments which obstruct prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance. For example, the experience of enforced separation and lengthy spells of inactivity affect post release outcomes such as family relationships, education, employment, housing, and physical and mental health (Richards and Jones, 2004). As such, prisoners who may be legitimately motivated to give up crime, in order to succeed must transcend the ‘penal harm’ (Clear, 1994) caused them psychologically, and overcome a set of problems specific to their status as an ex-prisoner.

A rather different approach to reform in prison suggests that imprisonment is not the problem *per se*. Rather than assume that ‘nothing works’ in prison (Martinson, 1974), it is how prisons are managed and run which negates their capacity to bring about a reduction in rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment. In the UK, in the light of evaluation research to identify ‘what does work’ in prison, it has been suggested that, depending on whether there are procedures in place to “identify those at risk, provide advice at the point of sentence,

and follow through with effective and sustained support... a prison sentence can be an opportunity to improve or can actually worsen those factors that are either known to cause or are heavily associated with the likelihood of re-offending” (SEU, 2002: 38). For instance, imprisonment can encourage offenders to re-evaluate their lives, take stock of current circumstances and reflect on the consequences of continuing to commit crime (Hood and Sparks, 1970). It can also provide services and programmes designed to rehabilitate offenders such as cognitive-behavioural ‘treatment’ programmes which aim to address various risk factors linked to reoffending (Hollin, 1992);

Prisoners first, individuals second

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to review the current research literature on offender rehabilitation and treatment, except to say that evaluations of prison-based cognitive treatment programmes have produced mixed results (Clarke *et al.*, 2004). However, the following general observation can be made. In focusing on the harmful effects of prison environments as a whole, or on specific administrative ‘resettlement contexts’ within them, both approaches described above fail to take account of the reflexive nature of everyday life in prison - how prisoners react to prison, not in uniform and collective ways necessarily, but as individuals (Matthews, 1999). For instance, individual responses to imprisonment might include aggression, withdrawal and depression; but also passivity, cooperation, even contentment. In order to understand individual prisoner responses, it is necessary to understand the impact of different prison environments on them. This requires an awareness of “the uniqueness and variability of response to the same setting or about differential impacts of settings on the same person” (Toch, 1992: 3); as well as the extent to which prisoners share meanings and concerns based on collective experiences prior to imprisonment which cut across their individual perceptions and responses (*ibid*).

Depending on age, gender, race, length of sentence, the number of times they have been to prison, the circumstances of their lives prior to imprisonment, their experiences after prison, and their psychological profile and ability to cope, different prisoners respond to

different prison environments in different ways (Liebling, 1999). Yet, because the essential nature of imprisonment is to uphold “impenetrable barriers in the way of introducing within the prison, accounts of the prisoner’s identity and prospects which derive from his or her life outside” (Roberts, 1994: 232), individuality in prisons tends to be rigorously controlled and suppressed. The general approach of treating prisoners, not as subjects - “as bad and as dangerous and as irresponsible as they may be, and as good, and reliable and responsible as they might be” (Pryor, 2001: 1) - but as objects, whose individuality is subservient to the larger needs of the prison, is not conducive to understanding prisoners as authentic beings; each one of whom experiences, interprets and reacts to prison differently, and is perfectly able to reflect on their past lives, as well as their present and future behaviour (Duguid, 2000: 57). As such, imprisonment fails to address the personal and social characteristics associated with the onset of criminal behaviour, and which ultimately affect the prospects of prisoners giving up crime after release.

Reconceptualising crime, criminality and place

The need to bridge personal and objective explanations of crime and criminality has been identified “as the most urgent task confronting a social science that wishes to be politically relevant in the new millennium” (Pitts, 2003: 118). Of course, it is not the aim of this thesis to attempt to bridge this gap. As noted previously, explanations of crime and criminality are embedded social scientific concepts concerning the relationship between human agency and social structure which are highly contested and subject to fundamental disagreements and debate. Instead, by referring to some of the arguments deployed in these debates, it is intended to indicate broadly why the relationality between people and place helps to explain the geographical concentration of prisoners, and why it is an important factor in prisoner reintegration and the process of criminal desistance. So far, various theoretical approaches to crime, criminality and place have been presented which tend to conceptualise space and place either as a neutral container of social relations, or an active milieu comprised of underlying structures which influence people to behave in certain ways.

Referring directly to this dichotomy within criminological spatial analysis, Bottoms and Wiles (1992: 16) have observed that:

explanations of where offences occur, or where offenders live, can all too easily assume that place or design acts as a deterministic and monocausal variable... or that it is simply a sorting mechanism which brings together in one place those individuals who possess criminogenic attributes (generally of a genetic or psychological kind).

I want to suggest that what is lacking in these criminological conceptualizations of space and place is an understanding of the lived experience of people; how the meaning of place, rather than being demographically defined, or socially constructed, is individually and subjectively formed. This requires a phenomenological frame of reference - one that does not assume there is a spatial reality external to human experience. Since the 1970s, within human geography and social science generally, there has been a growing acceptance that people and place cannot be studied independently; that people and places derive their identities from each other (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). This idea is embedded in a social scientific framework of existentialist and/or phenomenological philosophies which, rather than consider subjective experience and social context, structure and agency separately, attempts to draw them together. (for example, see Berger and Luckman, 1979; Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1990; Layder, 1981; Lefebvre, 1991).

Structuration theory

In particular, 'structuration theory' (Giddens, 1976; 1984; 1990) has been applied widely within the field of criminology; for example in relation to crime and place (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992), social order in prisons (Sparks *et al.*, 1996), and criminal desistance (Farrall and Bowling, 1999). Briefly, structuration theory suggests that social structure is not autonomous; it is maintained and changed by what people do. Therefore, place influences and, in turn, is influenced by individual human action. In order to embrace the complications inherent in the interplay between individuals and place, it is necessary to allow each perspective to bear upon the other. In so doing, it is revealed how "structures are

constituted through action” and “action is constituted structurally” (Giddens, 1976: 161). ‘Knowledgeable’ human agency is gained through the ability of individuals to ‘rationalise’ the situations in which they find themselves, and to ‘monitor reflexively’ what happens to them in those situations. The ‘practical consciousness’ which arises from this process is built around “a sense of continuity and order in events” (Giddens, 1991: 243). While this provides ‘ontological security’ - “confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be” (Giddens, 1984: 375) - individual human agency is never completely voluntary. The possibility of choice and change is bounded by routine, convention and repetitive practice; as well as the unintended consequences of routine, convention and repetitive practice.

As wide ranging as this theory is, and although it takes space and place seriously, it gives no indication of how different places mean different things to different people, or under what circumstances the social structure of places may be shared collectively. Structuration theory ignores the extent to which different individuals are able to resist structural forces according to the different positions they occupy in relation to them (Bauman, 1989 in Farrall and Bowling, 1999). In particular, it fails to recognise that “social structures, such as economic and social institutions, value and cultural systems have a relative autonomy from the situated activity which they in part govern” (Layder, 1981: 132). Furthermore, in assuming that the relationship between people and place can be reduced to rational cognitive processes, a tacit awareness of social practice, it ignores the extent to which people may become emotionally attached to the different places they inhabit (Seamon, 1979). For instance, how places in which people are born, grow up, live for long periods of time, or are forced to spend long periods of time against their will, can trigger feelings of desire, excitement, drudgery or boredom. Therefore, in reducing social relations to “an almost cybernetic-like ‘monitoring’ of conduct” (Lash and Urry, 1994: 44), structuration theory disregards “the emotional or feeling side of our nature [which] goes hand in hand with our reflective, intelligent and calculating side” (Layder, 2004: 12).

'Self identity' and 'place identity' - the meaning of space and place

Over the past 30 years, the importance of space and place for social, economic, political and cultural life has been acknowledged within the social sciences generally, and the fields of sociology and cultural studies in particular. Space and place is important for the simple reason that “everyone occupies a space of individuation (a body, a room, a home, a shaping community, a nation), and how we individuate ourselves shapes identity” (Harvey, 1990: 302). In contrast to rationalistic approaches which suggest that the self is self-monitoring and self-mastering (Giddens, 1991), human geographers and environmental psychologists have suggested that, because place is inextricably bound to personal experience, there is always an “affective bond between people and place” (Tuan, 1974: 4), such that place profoundly shapes human experience and being in the world. Therefore, ‘place identity’ - “the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places” (Oktaý, 2002: 264) - is an elemental constituent of ‘self identity’ (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983).

To develop this point a little further, it has been suggested that different places contain unique ‘local structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1973) which impact on how human beings constitute their sense of self, their self worth and self identity, and distinguish them from people in other places. For instance, people experience an emotional attachment to places they know well because “to be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place” (Relph, 1976: 49). Alternatively, to be outside a place is to experience a division between ourselves and the world: “an attitude which is socially convenient and acceptable - an uncritically accepted stereotype, an intellectual of aesthetic fashion than can be adopted without real involvement” (*ibid.*: 82). Furthermore, it is possible to experience dissatisfaction with place or ‘drudgery of place’, the feeling of being trapped in a place from which it is impossible to escape (*ibid.*). As these different meanings become fixed, different emotional reactions arise - love, fear, anxiety, desire, indifference (Tuan, 1979). Yet because the meaning of place is never static, the social and physical structure of places, and therefore people’s attachment to them, is always fluid (Proshansky *et al.*, 1983).

To give a few examples: The home is a meaningful place because “people are produced there and endowed with the values and capacities which will determine most of the quality of their social life” (Stretton, 1976: 183). The design of our homes - ie. detached house, high rise flat etc., where they are situated, whether we are owner occupiers or tenants, and the possessions we keep there - all influence how we feel towards them. Although homes are usually private and offer security, they can become constraining and threatening places, where domestic abuse and violence is an everyday occurrence (Duncan, 1996). The street is a meaningful place because it is a public space in which we present ourselves to others through fashion and performance (Berman, 1983). But it is also an unpredictable place, where it is possible to encounter uncertainty and danger at every turn, where “‘street life’ is a symbol of urban provocation and arousal, provocation that comes in large part from experiences of the unexpected” (Sennett, 1990: 152). It has been suggested that the street is particularly significant for lower class children and adolescents, because it is where many of them do most of their growing up (Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). Compared to wealthy children who are more likely to treat the parental home as a place of leisure, a place to stay in, watch television and play computer games (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992), often denied space at home and the means to consume, many lower class children consider the street as perhaps the only autonomous space they can play and socialise free from the restrictions of parental control (Corrigan, 1979). The neighbourhood is a meaningful place because local communities are comprised of close knit social relationships which can provide people with mutual identification, a common identity, camaraderie and support (Young and Willmott, 1962). However, neighbourhoods can also be constraining places, where individuality can be suppressed by the pressure to conform to a sense of community and a common local identity (Young, 1990a). Finally, for the obvious reason that it is small, bounded, unique and extraordinary (Sparks *et al.*, 1996), the prison is a meaningful place. It is of and in itself “a powerful social context that can have destructive, even criminogenic consequences on the persons confined there (Haney, 2005: 84).

Everyday life in space and place

Social scientists have attempted to extricate the various meanings that space and place have for people by dividing geographic locations into different, but dialectically related, elements. Crucially, the subjective meaning of living in a particular place is considered to be distinct from the way places are conceived and represented objectively. On the one hand, cities are real, material and empirically measurable; and on the other they are mental, imagined and the foci of affective meaning. For example, cities have been described as being both 'hard' and 'soft': 'hard' because they are socially constructed by rational urban planning processes; and 'soft' because they are moulded by individuals who - engaged in a "continual creative play of urban living" - occupy different roles and identities within them (Raban, 1974: 10). Cities may be distinguished by architecture, stratified by class, and regulated by bureaucracy, but they are made meaningful by the way they are perceived, through "illusion, myth, aspiration [and] nightmare" (*ibid*). Moreover, cities are defined and depicted at macro-levels – for example, in demographic statistics and as digital images on geographical information and satellite scanning systems; but most activities that take place within them occur at micro-levels, during the course of everyday life. Lefebvre (1991) has suggested that space and place is composed of three spatial elements: 'conceived space', which is objective and empirical and represented by models, images, maps and coordinates; 'lived space', which is subjective and imagined and distinguished by the emotional attachment people have to place; and 'perceived space', which is comprised of the mundane and commonsense actions and reactions of people during the course of everyday life. These different levels interact so that real and objective elements combine with imagined and subjective meanings which in turn combine with trivial and commonplace activity (*ibid*).

In this conceptualisation of space and place, rather than consider structure and agency to be balanced by an innate capacity of people to 'rationalise' or 'monitor reflexively' (Giddens, 1976), structure and agency is marked and driven by emotional impulse, for example by "feelings, attitudes, stored memories - good and bad - and so on, which feeds into our behavior, sometimes deliberately and sometimes, unintentionally" (Layder, 2004: 11). It is

in 'lived space', particularly through desire, that people are able to break free from the routine practice of everyday life, determine their own lives, and resist oppression (Lefebvre, 1991). As a rule, everyday life is conceptualised in extremely pejorative terms. It is more than merely mundane and routine; it is endlessly repetitive, and composed of "gestures of labour and leisure, mechanical movements both human and properly mechanic, hours, days, weeks, months, years, linear and cyclical repetitions, natural and rational time" (Lefebvre, 1984: 18). Yet within everyday life, desire is ever-present, and takes many forms. Desire can have a purpose: "a love, a being, or a work"; or it can be "discharged explosively, with no definite object, in violent and destructive or self-destructive ways" (Lefebvre, 1991: 394). Even the most mundane event reverberates with social and psychic desire; such that "without [desire], everydayness would become hopelessly uniform" (Lefebvre, 2003: 86).

A related way of conceptualising structure and agency is to reveal how everyday human practice creates space and place, and not the other way round - as is the norm in most modern urban planning and administrative criminology. How 'real life' is experienced and expressed at micro levels, for example on the street, by people as they go about their routine everyday activities. Although power and authority flow from the top down, people are not passive in the way they relate to the places they inhabit. Indeed, a defining characteristic of everyday life is resistance. Everyday life might be "framed within a grid of socio-economic restraints", but it is comprised of "tactics, creations and initiatives" (de Certeau, 1984: ix) which are specifically designed to "manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them" (*ibid*: xiv). For example, pedestrians move about the city – talking, walking, dwelling. But these are not automatic actions. City dwellers occupy the streets "with the forests of their desires and goals" (*ibid*: xxi). Politicians and urban planners employ strategies to define what spaces and places are, but "the less powerful may wilfully deviate by remaking their spaces through hit-and-run tactics of spatial occupation" (Dear and Flusty, 2002: 303). Therefore, human agency is not conditioned by social structure. People intervene in their individual and collective destinies everyday by engaging in reiterative social and cultural practice in different spatial locations (de Certeau, 1984).

A narrative approach to crime, criminality and place

These are abstract concepts. The (post)modern world, comprised of instantaneous communications technology, the global economy, new class cultures, and ever changing life situations has engendered a reciprocal relationship between the mind of the individual and society (Beck, 1992). It is far from certain how the relationship plays out. To some social commentators, the relationship is one-sided. An extreme view is that the all consuming power of global multinational and communicational networks has levelled individuality and caused all sense of human agency to disappear, so that we no longer experience emotions like desire, or indeed “every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self to do the feeling” (Jameson, 1984: 64). For others, (post)modernity exhibits both progressive and regressive features. While it “can lead to a totally fragmented, disjointed life, subject to the whims of fashion and the subtle indoctrinations of advertising and popular culture”, it also provides opportunities “to play with one’s identity and to change one’s life dramatically” (Kellner, 1992: 173:74). Perhaps what is most certain in these ontological debates is that nothing is certain. Given that “we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms, and these may have the effect of locating us socially in multiple positions” (Hall, 1991: 57), there is no off the peg methodological approach to studying the relationality between people and place. As such:

Nothing in human geography can be taken for granted, with uniform, ‘common-sense’ notions of what we mean by even basic terms like ‘people’ and ‘place’ actually dissolving in the face of vigorous debates about the types of relationships that exist between society and space, social structure and human agency or nature and culture (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001: 234).

Nevertheless, the so called ‘spatial turn’ in social scientific theoretical analysis, in particular the attempt to unravel the meaning places have for people, and how local communities perceive and behave in places, has put human experience, emotion and value at the heart of spatial investigation. It is suggested that this theoretical framework is relevant to an examination of criminal behaviour and place; in particular why it is that offenders are geographically concentrated, and what this means for prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance. But which research methodologies are the most useful to interpret

the complex relations between prisoners and place? In order to incorporate both the specificity of particular places, their structural characteristics and function; as well as the voice of individual human agents, the “largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence” (Relph, 1976: 43), human geographers have used a combination of different research methodologies including statistical records, cartographical analysis, in-depth interviewing, participant observation and intensive phenomenological description. To reach a fuller understanding of the ‘local structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1973) that can give rise to criminal behaviour it is necessary to assess both the physical and social characteristics of places, as well as the emotional and imagined attributes of the people who live there. Referring to the geography of crime directly, the human geographer Davie Ley (2002: 69, emphasis in the original) has written that:

... its preoccupation with the map and spatial distributions, subsequent analysis, commonly using correlation and factor analysis, always overidentifies local variables at the expense of overarching ones. The demonstrable map correlation between the incidence of crime and the distribution of group X is used to make the inferential transition from r-value to causal reasoning with distressing ease. But if group X ‘causes’ crime here, why is that they do not ‘cause’ crime in other locations? Why is that the same urban neighbourhoods now occupied by group X also tended to be high crime areas a generation ago, when they were occupied by group Y? Clearly statistical or cartographic analysis alone is not sufficient to provide an understanding of the social action behind the map of crime, though it may well be a useful first step... What is lacking is a sense of history, or at least of biography, and a sense also of the tiers of social context ranging from the innermost and immediate linkages of family and peer group to the outermost but no less pervasive realms of ideology and *Weltanschauung*, the global outlook and dominant ideas of the period.

A key word here is biography. Biographical, narrative or story telling research is a method of excavating the ways individuals develop their sense of self; how they arrive at an understanding of who they are and their place in the world. Narrative research involves gathering in-depth descriptive accounts of specific experiences of specific individuals in specific situations and places (von Eckartsberg, 1998). Based on the philosophical traditions of existentialism and phenomenology, it has been used by human geographers to interpret human experience and consciousness in relation to specific environmental situations (Seamon, 1979). Informed by the idea that space and place is an integral part of

personal and social consciousness, it has also been used by criminologists to analyse criminal behaviour within both a structural and agentic frame of reference. One which links social processes - de-industrialisation, capitalism, social class, popular culture, spatial fragmentation, electronic communications, global consumerism; to subjective experiences - personal motivation, decision making, power, and personal and social identity (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992). Just as human geographers and social scientists have foregrounded practical consciousness (Giddens, 1984), or the essential meaning and value of space and place for human existence (Tuan, 1974), phenomenological criminologists have foregrounded the experiential dimension of criminal behaviour (Katz, 1988). For example: how it is related to calculated human interaction (Giddens, 1984), which has both intended and unintended consequences for the development of criminal lifestyles in different places (Bottoms and Wiles, 1992); how it is fuelled by 'cruelty, madness, violence, the unpredictable' (Lefebvre, 1984), and therefore is "as much about emotions – hatred, anger, frustration, excitement and love - as it is about poverty, possessing and wealth" (Presdee, 2000: 4); or alternatively how it is an expressive act of resistance, rebelliousness and defiance, a creative 'guileful ruse' intended to subvert the conformity and practice of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984: 37), a "stylish counterpunch to the belly of authority" (Ferrell, 1996: 195).

Most of this work has focused specifically on exploring the causes of the onset of offending. To date, there have been few attempts to apply phenomenological interpretation to reoffending and/or criminal desistance. Criminal behaviour has been analysed in relation to life course experiences of criminals - "the gritty particularities of everyday existence" (Ferrell *et al.*, 2004: 2) - but, for the most part, the lives of prisoners, their experiences, emotions, interpretations, choices, decisions, and self narratives, have not informed analyses of criminal desistance². Perhaps a major reason for the lack of attention given to space, place and human consciousness in criminal desistance research is the difficulty of applying broad concepts such as identity, culture, geographic 'distanciation' and hyper-consumerism to an area of social policy concerned with the purely instrumental matter of reducing levels of crime. In particular, 'administrative criminology' has been suspicious of theories that focus on subjective factors associated with offending. Inclined to steer clear of

scientific uncertainty, it has concentrated instead on manipulating criminogenic environments for the purely practical reason of preventing crime in specific locations (Clarke and Cornish, 1985). Moreover, because the causes of crime traditionally are thought to lie within the individual, at a level beyond awareness or control, or else outside in the structural details of the social world, criminology has remained relatively uninterested in the life course experiences of offenders (Burnett, 2004). The tendency to treat prisoners as criminals first and authentic beings second (Duguid, 2000), has meant that prison policy makers and practitioners have remained relatively uninterested in how prisoners themselves account for their propensity to reoffend after release (Burnett, 2004).

In an attempt to distinguish between psychological, social, economic, cultural and geographic factors, and understand how structural differences interact with personal differences to increase the probability of reoffending and re-imprisonment (Moffit, 1997), the thesis has therefore adopted an interpretative approach based on existential phenomenological research. By exploring place in terms of prisoners' consciousness of it, it aims to reach a practical understanding of the meanings and interpretations prisoners attach to the places they inhabit, and the implication of this for prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance. Given the abstractness and complexity of investigating the relationality between prisoners and place, the study has focused explicitly on three distinct phases of offending, each of which has a significant spatial element: the onset of offending, imprisonment and prisoner reintegration after prison. By adopting a longitudinal framework which encompasses pre-prison, in-prison and post prison experiences and circumstances (Visher and Travis, 2003), the thesis aims to explore the major factors associated with criminal desistance such as age, family life, social disadvantage, and the 'harm' of imprisonment; while also exploring the ways in which more generally crime, criminality and place are mutually constituted. By seeking personal accounts of offending, re-offending and re-imprisonment over the life course, it aims to organise the subjective meanings of crime, criminality and place into a form which has a beginning, middle and end. In other words, a narrative structure.

Conclusion

Recent evidence has shown that prison populations in both the US and UK are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods. Sociological explanations for the geographical distribution of crime and criminality suggest that the social and economic structure of particular places influences patterns of cultural socialisation, which, in turn, generate criminal behaviour. Alternatively, psychological explanations conceive of criminal behaviour within an autonomous and/or a micro-situational frame of reference which suggests that offenders are predisposed to act criminally irrespective of geographical location. In broad terms, these divergent ontological perspectives privilege either individual agency (a psychological perspective), or social structure (a sociological perspective). Both these criminological traditions ignore the importance of place as an integral part of individual experience and everyday social life. In particular, they fail to account for how re-offending, re-imprisonment or criminal desistance is affected by the experiences, meanings and attitudes prisoners have towards the places they inhabit.

Human geographers and social scientists have conceptualised the relationality between people and place in terms of everyday human experience. They suggest that place and space is not rigid and strictly quantifiable; it changes according to the ways human beings, both individually and collectively, relate to it during the course of everyday life. In keeping with this theoretical approach, criminologists have suggested that crime is a result of the way offenders relate to place, as much as it is a product of psychological disposition, or social disadvantage. By building up a composite picture of the ways prisoners relate to the places they inhabit, the thesis explores the extent to which reoffending and/or criminal desistance is affected by factors which are place specific. The following chapter describes the research methodology that has been employed to analyse the relationality between prisoners and place.

Notes

¹ Aside from its application within criminology, the significance of neighbourhoods for the behaviour of residents is prominent in both urban research and urban policy generally. In terms of academic work, community studies have sought to investigate the economic and social characteristics of disadvantaged areas and their place within society (for example, Forrest and Kearns, 1999), as well as the impact on life-chances and opportunities of living in one area rather than another (for example, Buck, 2001). In terms of policy, the Labour Government has explicitly set out to ensure that within 10-20 years no one in the UK should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live (SEU, 2001). To this end, various area-based programmes have been implemented such as Education and Health Action Zones and SureStart.

² Notable exceptions include the work of Shover (1996) and Maruna (2001); although these studies have focused primarily on internal life course transformations of criminal identity in a way which disassociates them from place based factors.

Chapter Two

Methodological framework and research design

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework and research design used to examine the relationality between prisoners and place. In order to investigate whether prisoners from the metropolitan area of Greater London are drawn from specific urban neighbourhoods and to explore the impact of residential location and imprisonment on reoffending and/or criminal desistance, a case study format has been adopted which includes both a quantitative and qualitative element. The geographical distribution of prisoners throughout Greater London has been mapped using the ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS), and analysed using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access database systems, and Statistical Products and Service Solutions (SPSS). The qualitative element of the research has employed a narrative phenomenological approach. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to record the experiences, attitudes and motivations of a sample of prisoners within a longitudinal framework encompassing pre-prison, in-prison, and post-prison circumstances and experiences.

The chapter begins with a brief explanation of the value of the case study format and the relevance of using quantitative spatial analysis combined with qualitative methodological approaches. It then describes the specific methods of data collection and spatial analysis employed to carry out the quantitative spatial analysis of prisoner residence. This is followed by a description of the interviewing format and techniques employed to carry out the qualitative study. Throughout the chapter observations of a reflexive nature are made regarding the research programme in general.

Generalisations and methodological theory building

As explained in the previous chapter, criminological researchers have investigated the relationship between crime, criminality and place by focusing on crime and the neighbourhood as the subject of enquiry. Using quantitative spatial analysis and victims surveys, they have mapped the spatial distribution of criminal offences across urban space and focused on the environmental situations in which crime occurs. Most situational crime prevention analysis falls in to this category (see Clarke, 1992). Alternatively, using a combination of qualitative research methodologies such as in depth interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observation researchers have assessed the impact of neighbourhood factors on aggregate levels of crime and criminality. Community studies of the social causes of crime in marginalised urban neighbourhoods fall in to this category (see Shaw and McKay, 1942; Wilson, 1987; Sampson *et al.*, 2002). In the first approach, place is considered to be abstract and geometric; a neutral container of human actions and relations. In the second, place is comprised of deep underlying structures which produce various neighbourhood effects, for example on unemployment and health outcomes, as well as crime. Both methodologies focus on the attributes of particular places within a specified time frame in order to make broad generalisations about patterns of crime and criminality. The research methodology adopted to address the central research questions presented in this thesis is intended to supplement these approaches. By investigating the relationship between crime, criminality and place over the life course, it aims to show how prisoners perceive and experience the places they inhabit; the extent to which their relationship to space and place changes over time; and the impact this has on re-offending and/or criminal desistance.

The use and relevance of case studies

Criminological research is a political process that draws on subject matter and methods from a broad range of disciplines in order to further a discourse about human behaviour,

crime and its regulation (Garland, 2002). The research methodology employed for this study is firmly embedded within this tradition, drawing as it does on the disciplines of urban sociology, psychology and human geography; as well as both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. Rather than focus on one particular place at one particular time, it explores with a sample of prisoners how their relationship to the different places they inhabit during their lives changes; and the effect this has, if any, on their offending behaviour. Overall, the aim is to assess the way prisoners, as rational and creative beings, experience and make sense of the world in which they live. To carry out the analysis, a case study design has been adopted. 'Case studies' are broadly defined and encompass a family of different research methods. Hammersley (1992: 184) defines the term 'case' as follows:

What I mean by the term case... is the phenomenon (located in space/time) about which data are collected and/or analysed, and that corresponds to the type of phenomena to which the main claims of a study relate. Examples of cases can range from micro to macro, all the way from an individual person through a particular event, social situation, organisation or institution, to a national society or international social system.

Although no research method is excluded, case studies are commonly associated with qualitative research methodologies. They are used most frequently to compile life stories, narratives and biographies of individuals and social groups: what has been referred to as "the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events - such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries" (Yin, 1989: 14). In concentrating on a specific instance or situation, case studies are commonly used to identify broader relationships and interactive patterns of social organisation which change and develop over time. In this study, the case selected was a sample of prisoners from the metropolitan area of Greater London. In order to establish its relevance as a case - to verify that the subjective phenomena observed has an objective reality - the research methodology included a quantitative account of the residential distribution of prisoners who live within the Greater London area.

Linking quantitative and qualitative research methodologies

Quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are often considered to be incompatible. Quantitative methodologies tend to be associated with a 'positive' scientific tradition, which suggests that the social world can only be explained and predicted according to laws and rational logics. Qualitative methodologies, on the other hand, tend to be associated with an 'interpretive' tradition, which suggests that social reality cannot be studied independently of human experience. As such, it is necessary to uncover the various understandings and meanings the social world has for people. Miles and Huberman (1994: 1) suggest that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is characterised by the use of numbers rather than words; and Hammersley (1992: 163) has characterised the distinction in terms of precise and imprecise data.

Yet these, and most other social researchers tend to agree that when appropriately applied to the specific research problem in hand, "both of these paradigms complement each other, rather than compete" (Black, 1993: 3). Of course, the idea of combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is not new. As described in Chapter One, Victorian social reformers such as William Mayhew used quantitative data to map urban poverty and crime in London and then used qualitative research and observation to describe it in vivid and often shocking detail. The Chicago sociologists also employed a range of research methodologies including statistical spatial analysis, in-depth interviewing and ethnography to provide a multi-faceted description of social marginalisation and crime in Chicago. And more recently, human geographers such as David Ley have explored the social, economic, political, historical, cultural as well as personal dimensions of urban life by employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Ley, 1985). Miles and Huberman (1994: 41) provide the following rationale for linking qualitative and quantitative data. First, it enables researchers to confirm and compare data via the process of triangulation; in other words, it is possible to compare and contrast different sources of information (Denzin, 1989). Second, it aids analysis by providing more in depth detail. For example, qualitative accounts can be used to 'personalise' abstract statistical detail. Third, it suggests new ways

of thinking and theory building. And fourth, the use of different research methods can improve the design and analysis of a research study.

Although the quantitative and qualitative elements of this study were not intended to be continuously interactive throughout the research process, separately they each served a specific purpose which related to the overall aim of the research, as well as the discussion and findings derived from it. Most importantly, the quantitative account of prisoners' residential distribution in Greater London was intended to increase the internal and external 'generalisability' of the research design as a whole (Maxwell, 1996). As described in the next chapter, the study reveals that prisoners are drawn from wards within Greater London which are characterised by high rates of social and economic deprivation. 'Internally', this confirms that the meanings and subjective interpretations expressed by the prisoners during the qualitative component of the research are related to a shared experience of living in deprived urban areas. As Weber (1978: 10) has asserted: combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in this way ensures that "the process which is claimed to be typical is shown to be adequately grasped on the level of meaning and at the same time the interpretation is to some degree causally adequate".

'Externally', the qualitative case study of prisoners from London is too small to be considered representative of the UK prison population as a whole. Furthermore, whether evidence that the prison population within Greater London is drawn from socially deprived areas is replicated in other metropolitan areas throughout the UK, for example in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the North East of England, is a matter for further research. As emphasised throughout the study, all places are different. Nevertheless, given that prisoners are a socially excluded group generally within the UK (SEU, 2002), and that most come from metropolitan areas (Howard, 1994), it is suggested that the experiences, attitudes and values described by the interview participants may be typical of an understanding of the link between place of residence, social deprivation and prison that is shared by prisoners in other parts of the UK.

The phenomenological tradition within qualitative research

The central concern of the research was to uncover social and environmental processes linked to reoffending and/or criminal desistance, and the degree to which these are specifically related to the places inhabited by prisoners during the life course. As this necessitated a research agenda which facilitated the study of people and place together and to uncover relationships between them (Cloke *et al.* 1991), a qualitative approach was adopted which grounded the research within “the strategic significance of context, and of the particular, in the development of our understandings and explanations of the social world” (Mason, 2002: 1). Qualitative research draws on a wide range of social theories which have developed within the interpretative sociological tradition including symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. Each of these social theories reveals how the social world is experienced, interpreted and understood by people, and how as conscious and sentient beings people derive symbolic meaning from the places they inhabit.

One of the major strengths of qualitative data is that it focuses on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, so that we have a strong handle on what ‘real life’ is like” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10). By bringing to bear a range of concepts and research methods, qualitative research is suited to “locating the meanings people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them” (*ibid*). In particular, the phenomenological research tradition has been used to explore the interconnectivity between the self and the world. As a theory of knowledge, phenomenology suggests that phenomena in the real world only come into existence as and when they are experienced by human beings. People do not exist apart from the real world; the two are indivisible and people are intimately and intentionally immersed within it (Moran, 2000). Therefore, the major aim of phenomenological analysis is to discover the essential relationship between people and their environment as revealed through sensory and mental as well as emotional, intuitive and visceral attachments.

It is suggested throughout the thesis that an important dimension of being in the world is the experience and understanding of place. Relph (1976: 43) has written: “The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence”. Given that people are immersed in place and experience it continuously during the course of everyday life, phenomenology has informed much geographic and environmental research into the relationality between people and place (for example, see Seamon, 1979; Tuan, 1974; Casey, 1998). In keeping with this tradition, phenomenological research, in particular biographical, life history methods were considered the most appropriate to facilitate an investigation of the ways in which prisoners relate to the places they inhabit.

However, while phenomenological research offers a method of exploring people and place together, it has been criticised for being unscientific, lacking rigour, and providing merely anecdotal evidence to explain complex social phenomena. For instance, a feature of much qualitative research is that it has no guiding hypothesis. Because social processes are “too complex, too relative, too elusive, or too exotic to be approached with explicit conceptual frames or standard instruments” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 17), key research questions within phenomenological research tend to emerge gradually as the study unfolds. Furthermore, sometimes the claims made by qualitative researchers are considered to be beyond judgement (Seale, 1999). Because the social world is real only because individuals experience it as real, “there is no unambiguous social reality out there to be accounted for, so there is little need to evolve methodological canons to help explicate its laws (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 2). The abstractness of the approach has provoked some practitioners and policy makers to view qualitative research with a high degree of scepticism, and to question its overall validity and relevance (Hakim, 1987). Phenomenologists counter such criticisms by arguing that interpretive research provides experiential detail of social life which is frequently hidden in quantitative statistical analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). For example, in terms of social policy it:

provides knowledge of the perspectives and behaviour of actors who are the target for policy and practice. In this way it may allow practitioners to understand those actors in a deeper way than they currently do: to recognise their distinctive

intentions and motives, and see the logic of their perspectives on the world, including their views about practitioners (Hammersley, 1995: 135-6).

Nevertheless, it is accepted by most phenomenologists that qualitative research which attempts to explore subjectivity - thoughts, feelings and emotions - is inherently messy. Therefore, it is important to persuade policy makers and practitioners that qualitative research methodology is coherent and its findings are valid and reliable. Mason (2002: 7-8) suggests that qualitative research design should adhere to the following principles. It should be systematically, rigorously and strategically conducted. It should be accountable for its quality and claims. The role of the researcher in the research process should be made explicit. It should produce explanations which are generalizable, rather than mere descriptions which are particular. It should not set itself up as being in opposition to quantitative research. And it should be conducted with regard to its political context. The research design adopted to investigate the relationality between prisoners and place was intended to meet each of these challenges so that it could be tested and replicated elsewhere (Hakim, 2000).

Interviewing offenders

In order to facilitate an investigation of how different individuals exposed to the same environment experience it, interpret it, and react to it differently (Caspi and Moffit, 1995), the research methodology adopted a narrative phenomenological approach. This was intended to allow each interview participant the opportunity to discuss what was important to them, and attach their own interpretations, meanings and relevance to the decisions they have made. Research of this kind with offenders is rare. However, two previous studies which have adopted a narrative approach to researching offenders - Cohen and Taylor (1972) on the effects of long-term imprisonment, and Maruna (2001) on criminal desistance - informed my thinking and ideas when developing the qualitative design of the study.

The interview procedure was composed of three distinct sections. The first part of the interview explored pre-prison experiences, the second part experiences of imprisonment,

and the third part experiences of release and reintegration. Throughout each interview a conscious attempt was made to relate the experiences of the participants to each stage of the journey along a pathway between the community and prison. This is because desistance from crime takes place over the life course, and is bound up with multiple processes which occur at different times and which interact (Baskin and Sommers, 1998). Although each participant was allowed to choose subjects and issues for discussion, the narrative arc of each interview guided the life stories so that during the analysis stage it was possible to identify underlying commonalities and patterns between them. Obviously, given their shared experience of crime and imprisonment, the narratives commonly referred to factors associated with crime and reoffending such as family life, unemployment, peer pressure, poverty, drugs and violence. However, as useful as these references were for contextualising the research, more important was the way the participants chose to describe the experiences and events in their lives, the meanings they attached to them, and how these meanings changed over time.

The primary concern of the research was to investigate whether the participants considered personal experiences and social events in their lives to be causes of their criminal behaviour, and also constraining influences which hampered their efforts to give up crime. Of course, in asking participants to divulge personal and intimate details about themselves it was entirely possible I would receive a fictional and idealised account, as well as a censored version of their life stories. However, of equal importance to the experiences and events described in narrative research are the underlying meanings interviewees routinely attach to those experiences and events. In particular, the underlying meanings offenders attach to standard risk factors commonly linked to (re)offending such as unemployment, poor parenting, drug use, peer pressure, social exclusion and lack of opportunity need to be interpreted in order to account for the potential of memory bias; for instance “how offenders feel when they rationalize their behaviour with a whole gamut of techniques of neutralization” (Gadd and Farrall, 2004: 148). Nevertheless, it was also necessary, as far as possible, to ensure that the descriptions and interpretations the participants gave me were trustworthy and reliable. The research design therefore included specific measures to help

readers judge for themselves whether the interview data is trustworthy or not. These are described below.

Research Methodology

Initial preparation

In order to carry out the research, it was necessary to first of all obtain permission from Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS). This involved submitting a standard application form to the London Area Psychologist which included a full description of the aims of the research and the methodology. In particular it included: details of the central research questions; a literature review; an account of its relevance to current initiatives; details of the type of access and resources required; evidence that the overall programme adhered to ethical guidelines; a draft consent form for interviewees; and a draft interview schedule (see Appendix A(1)). Throughout the application, particular emphasis was placed on the potential benefits of the research to the work of HMPS, for example the implications for current policy initiatives such as 'Intermittent Custody'¹, 'Custody Plus'²; as well as 'What Works' and 'Resettlement Pathfinder'³ research agendas. In addition, the submission included an account of my professional credentials as a researcher, a curriculum vitae, and details of previously published research.

While it is recognised that HMPS must ensure academic research is relevant and appropriate to the aims of HMPS as a whole, and is also carried out in a responsible manner, this was an onerous and time consuming application procedure. Most significantly, it delayed the commencement of the research considerably, as it took the best part of a year for my application to be processed and permission to be granted. Once I had received written confirmation from HMPS headquarters that I could commence the project, the next stage of the application procedure necessitated that I request permission from different 'gatekeepers' within HMPS, each of whom had the power to deny access to particular data sets (Duke, 2002). As observed by other prison researchers, negotiating access and

maintaining the goodwill of HMPS and the staff and officials who work within it is an on-going process essential for the successful completion of prison research (Cohen and Taylor, 1972). Overall, gaining access to prisons and prison data can be extremely problematic (Jupp, 1996); although the fact that throughout my professional career I have worked in prisons, and completed research within the field of criminal justice generally, no doubt aided my application. It is suggested that academic students bear in mind the strict requirements of HMPS before planning to carry out research in prisons.

The quantitative study – the residential location of prisoners from Greater London

In order to obtain address data to map the residential location of prisoners from Greater London, permission was obtained from the Department of Research Development and Statistics (RDS) within the Home Office. Gaining access to Home Office and HMPS data is conditional on procedures to ensure that all information relating to prisoners is kept confidential. Permission to proceed was dependent on continued negotiation with the Estate Planning Unit (EPU), Directorate of Security within the Prison Service, and the Department of Criminal Justice Analysis within the Home Office. Address information relating to named individual prisoners is officially protected and therefore access to it is conditional on assurance that the anonymity of individual prisoners will be maintained. Therefore, throughout the data collection exercise individual prisoners were identified by their official prison number, rather than by name.

The address data was contained within two separate data sets. Address information relating to both remand and sentenced prisoners is contained in an Inmate Information System (IIS) database of prisoner records administered by RDS. The addresses of each of the 6,800 plus prisoners held in London prisons logged onto IIS from October 1993 were recorded; along with details of gender, age, ethnic origin, current offence, length of sentence, and number of previous prison sentences. Information was gathered from all prisons within Greater London including the adult male establishments: HMP Brixton, HMP Wandsworth, HMP Belmarsh, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Pentonville, HMP Latchmere House; Feltham

Young Offenders Institution (YOI); and the female establishment HMP Holloway. In addition, addresses were accessed relating to a further 7,814 prisoners with home addresses within Greater London but who were held in prisons outside the Greater London area. This information was obtained from EPU on 5 February, 2004. Address information is held by EPU to monitor, *inter alia* the average distance prisoners are held from their homes, and to compute the distance friends and relatives must travel to make prison visits. This data set included address information only. Therefore it was not possible to provide a profile of personal and offence details of the London prison population as a whole.

The address information used in the final sample was analysed using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Access database systems and SPSS, and was visually represented using the ArcView Geographical Information System (GIS). Information relating to the social characteristics of the wards in which prisoners lived was obtained from 2001 census data sets, based on 2001 Census Area Statistics (CAS) wards⁴. In order to show whether areas of offender residence conform to areas of social deprivation, numerical data on the residential distribution of prisoners was correlated with 2001 census data according to various levels of deprivation including socio-economic classification, occupation, health, educational qualifications, and housing tenure.

The quantitative data - issues of validity and reliability

On commencing the data gathering exercise, it soon became apparent that the procedures adopted by HMPS to record prisoner address information raised important issues of validity and reliability for the research. Prison officers collect address information from prisoners during the reception stage of a prison sentence, normally in the first few days after they are received into prison. Prisoners are asked to provide six different addresses: a home address; a reception address; a discharge address; a next of kin address; a curfew address; and another address - usually the address of the prisoner's probation officer. Address information is relayed verbally by prisoners and recorded by hand. It is then submitted to RDS at HMPS headquarters where it is logged onto IIS. Prisoners are under no compulsion

to provide an address. Although in order to receive bail remand prisoners are required to provide a home address, because they do not want their homes searched for fear the police will find further evidence against them, or their immediate family to know they have been arrested, it is common for offenders to give false addresses⁵. Furthermore, because prisoners who are homeless are eligible for a higher discharge grant than prisoners who have a home to go to, it is common for prisoners to declare themselves to be of 'no fixed abode'. As a consequence, the number of prisoners who are homeless may be overestimated (SEU, 2002).

Validity and reliability of the data is compromised further because there is no uniform procedure for collecting prisoner address information. Different prisons and different prison officer's record address information in different ways. For example, HMP Pentonville record postcode information for less than half the prisoners they receive (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2005a). In terms of individual prisoner records, it was found that in only a very few cases had all six of the prisoner address fields been completed; and in most of the records, only a few of the fields had been completed. If, as was frequently the case, no 'home' address had been recorded it was therefore not possible to tell which of the recorded addresses - 'reception address', 'next of kin address', 'discharge address' etc., - were the correct home addresses. Furthermore, information was not recorded accurately and/or consistently by prison officers, either because the information provided by prisoners was incomplete, contradictory, out of date, or deliberately erroneous; or because prison officers misheard, or misspelled the names of streets and/or towns. Most of the addresses that had been recorded were incomplete. For example, many of the addresses collected from RDS included a road name and a postal district, but no postcode. In addition, the postcodes contained in the dataset obtained from EPU contained four address fields: home address, reception address, discharge address and next of kin address. These addresses included postcode information only, many of which were incomplete.

In order to address concepts of validity and reliability at the outset of a programme of research (Creswell, 1994), the methodology adopted the following two procedures for establishing the validity and reliability of prisoner address information. A simple audit trail

was devised which registered the number of times the same address was recorded in each of the different fields. The address recorded the most times was logged as the prisoner's home address. If one address only was recorded - as a home address, reception address, next of kin address or discharge address, this was recorded as the home address. In order to 'pin point' each address recorded on to a map of Greater London using ArcView GIS, it was decided to include only the addresses which included full postcode information. Once all the addresses had been logged, postcodes that were incomplete but could be cross referenced against street names were investigated using the Royal Mail's postcode/address finder database. This improved the accuracy of the address information recorded, and increased the number of valid full postcodes imputed into ArcView GIS.

Of course, a major consequence of deciding to use full postcodes only was that the sample of addresses included in the data analysis was significantly reduced in size. The final sample used to quantify the residential distribution of prisoners in Greater London was based on 5,139 prisoner addresses. This represents 35 per cent of the total population of 14,614 prisoners who were recorded on IIS as having an address in Greater London. The full sample breaks down as follows:

Table 2.1 Addresses held on IIS - prisoners from Greater London

Total number of prisoners with an address in Greater London	14,614
Total number of prisoners with street name only recorded	1,194
Total number of prisoners with no address recorded	3,585
Total number of prisoners recorded as being of no fixed abode	382
Total number of prisoners recorded as being non UK residents	179
Total number of prisoners with a postcode recorded	9,183
Total number of prisoners with a full postcode recorded	5,139

As a postscript to this section it should be explained that the lack of standardised procedures to collect prisoner address information is not unique to HMPS. Generally, data on offenders is not kept to the same degree of accuracy, and is not as accessible, as data on

crime, or victims of crime. For instance, the Police National Computer contains postcode information on crime location, but does not contain address information that can be extracted in usable form. This is also true of the Offenders Index, which contains all court disposals relating to standard list offences since 1963 in England and Wales, but does not contain geographical information about where offences were committed, or who committed them (Home Office, 2002b). In addition, area probation services and youth offending teams do not collect address information uniformly and in a standardised format. Although a new system of offender information, the Offender Assessment System (OASys)⁶, is being introduced by both HMPS and the National Probation Service which contains information on the social and economic backgrounds of offenders including accommodation details (Home Office, 2002c), it remains to be seen in what format address information will be collected, how it will be used, or in what form it will be made accessible, if at all, for use in academic research.

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

Basically, GIS relates data to places. It has been described as consisting of “a powerful set of tools for collecting, sorting, retrieving at will, transforming, and displaying spatial data from the real world for a particular set of purposes” (Burrough and McDonnell, 1997: 11). The graphical component of GIS - the map, is kept separately from the mathematical component of the system - the data (Martin, 1996). The mapping exercise in this study involved turning a data set of prisoner postcodes into a graphic illustration of where prisoners live within the metropolitan area of Greater London. This is an example of digital vector mapping, the aim of which is to symbolically represent attribute data (the individual addresses of prisoners) in relation to features (the wards and postcode areas of Greater London). Symbolic representations generated by GIS differ from iconic representations - which are scaled down representations of ‘the real thing’ - in that they have the facility to “preserve the unique attributes of places and particular time periods, while retaining the power to generalize about events that occur in different places and times” (Longley, 2004:

109). In this case, postcode information was correlated with 2001 census data relating to the social characteristics of the CAS ward areas which contained prisoner postcodes.

GIS is widely used. As a means of presenting data graphically, it increasingly guides the operations of government departments and agencies including the police, local authorities and other practitioners involved in crime control (Weir and Bangs, 2007). It is also used by private business, for example to link data about individuals with demographic and census information, and so target new customers and potential markets (Clarke, 1999). A primary attribute of GIS is that it provides a simplified version of the world. This is both a strength and a weakness of the system. GIS provides quick and easy answers to problems of a spatial and temporal nature in an easily recognisable map form. Yet, because there are many ways in which the data tools contained within GIS can be utilised, individuals and organisations are able to mould the system to their particular needs in such a way that complexities of social life are reduced, or eliminated. Therefore, human choice concerning what to put in and what to leave out, and how the resultant data set is manipulated, can lead to meanings and explanations that satisfy an innate preference for “a world of black and white, of good guys and bad guys, to the real world of shades of grey” (Longley *et al.*, 2001). For instance, in terms of crime, GIS is used mainly for descriptive analysis of crime patterns, and to a much lesser extent for explaining the causes of a crime problem, or to evaluate the impact of an intervention (Weir and Bangs, 2007). Therefore, people should be trained to use GIS more comprehensively, so that they avoid using it as a means of forcing complex issues into overly simplistic categories and boundaries (Clarke, 1999).

The use of GIS to correlate the spatial distribution of prisoners with indices of social deprivation also raises some important issues of validity and reliability. First, because maps produced by GIS cannot be more accurate, or contain more detail than the source data that produced them (Martin, 1996), it is necessary to include information on how the data was gathered, manipulated and presented; and to identify gaps, errors and omissions contained within it (Laurini and Thompson, 1992). As explained above, there were important inaccuracies and inconsistencies contained within the postcode data used to map the spatial distribution of prisoners throughout Greater London. Second, GIS produces simplified

visual representations of spatial identities based on aggregate characteristics. Unless GIS practitioners elicit the cooperation of willing participants, for reasons of data protection, most GIS applications are constrained by the need to aggregate data and preserve confidentiality (Longley, 2004). Nevertheless, spatial identities produced by GIS are frequently considered accurate enough to warrant drawing conclusions and taking effective action - “a form of instrumentalism that is proliferating in many spheres of GIS use whether the object is a parcel of land, terrain for military action, or a neighbourhood of like consumers” (Pickles, 2002: 240).

As made clear in the previous chapter, there is no simple cause and effect relationship between social deprivation and criminal culture. Indeed, a major criticism of the spatial analysis carried out at the Chicago School of Sociology is that it is an ‘ecological fallacy’ to assume there is a direct correlation between the characteristics of an area and the characteristics of individuals or groups who live in that area. Places do not have coherent identities which everyone experiences in the same way. For example, postcode areas, boroughs and wards are not natural areas; they are arbitrarily imposed. They are also large enough, and frequently diverse enough, to include neighbourhoods which are very different in character. Furthermore, different neighbourhoods are composed of complicated interconnections that operate at different spatial scales from the local to the global. Massey (1998: 124) has written that local culture is “not a closed system of social relations but a particular articulation of contacts and influences drawn from a variety of places scattered, according to power relations, fashion, and habit across many different parts of the globe”. As such, the complexity of life in a highly mobile and differentiated city like London means that criminal activity and culture is just as likely to result from ‘a being together of strangers’ (Young, 1990b: 237), as it is to form in close knit local communities. Therefore, in order to avoid drawing erroneous conclusions that can arise from aggregation-based systems and socioeconomic data (Martin, 1996); and to preserve descriptions of places which are not only scientifically constructed but also perceived and imagined by human beings (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991), it is important to keep different conceptualisations of space and place in mind when ‘reading’ GIS representations of spatial data.

The qualitative study – semi-structured interviews

The qualitative element of the study was comprised of semi-structured interviews conducted with 30 male prisoners (both sentenced and un-sentenced) in three local prisons in London: HMP Pentonville in the north of the city; and HMP Wandsworth and HMP Brixton in the south of the city. These prisons were chosen because they are situated in areas of the inner city where the spatial analysis showed there to be large numbers of prisoner addresses. In order to gain access to them, it was necessary to apply in writing to the Governor of each prison (see Appendix A (2)). This involved providing an outline of the research, as well as precise details of the time taken and resources required to carry out the interviews. It was also dependent on gaining the on going cooperation of a range of prison staff including administrative staff, prison psychologists, and prison officers charged with security.

The target of 30 prisoners was chosen to ensure the sample was as representative as possible given the resource constraints and timescale. Owing to the small sample size, it was decided to restrict the study to male prisoners. Including women prisoners in the sample would have raised different issues and concerns regarding crime and place which it was not possible to address within the timescale. Males generally commit more crime of a more serious nature far more persistently than do females (Graham and Bowling, 1995). At present, women prisoners comprise less than six per cent of the total prison population (Home Office, 2005a). Because there are relatively few female prisoners compared to male prisoners, they are usually held long distances from their homes, frequently in remote areas of the country (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997). Furthermore, because the only female prison in London, HMP Holloway, draws its population from the whole of the south of England, it does not function in the same way as local male prisons in London, each of which serves a specific local catchment area. Given these characteristics of the female prison population, a separate study is warranted.

The sample was selected according to area of residence (within the Greater London area), age range (17-50), and the number of prison sentences served (at least two over a period of

six years). Nearly all of the places in which participants lived fell within the catchment areas of the three local prisons in which they were interviewed. Twelve participants came from the borough of Lambeth in south London, seven from Dagenham and Woodford in east London, and the remainder from various other areas of Greater London including Tottenham, Hackney, Enfield, Ealing and Camden Town. The age range was set to include prisoners who had served repeated sentences of imprisonment, and experienced key life events closely linked to criminal desistance such as moving out of the parental home, getting a job, getting married, and having children (Laub and Sampson, 2001). Prison statistics reveal that first time prisoners are 23 per cent less likely to be re-convicted, and 13 per cent less likely to be re-imprisoned, than prisoners with one or two previous convictions (Home Office, 2003). Therefore, in order to ensure a cycle of offending/prison/re-imprisonment, and a close connection between life inside and outside of prison, had been established, the sample frame was restricted to prisoners who had served at least two previous prison sentences. The sample did not target so called 'persistent offenders', defined as having 11 or more previous convictions (Home Office, 2004a). Although extremely relevant to the study, persistent offenders represent only three per cent of all known offenders in the UK (Graham and Bowling, 1995), and, owing to the low level acquisitive nature of most of the crimes they commit, only one third of persistent offenders receive a custodial sentence (Home Office, 2004a). Nevertheless, over two thirds of the participants had been convicted five times or more. As such, overall the sample included prisoners who had established a clear cycle in their lives of offending, reoffending and re-imprisonment. (A full classification of the participants is presented in Table 2.2.)

All interviewees were self-selecting and gave their consent to be interviewed. They were encouraged to take part in the interviews having learned about the aims of the research from leaflets and posters distributed in each of the prisons (See Appendix B (1)). As it was standard practice for the Governor of the prison to delegate responsibility for the project to the prison psychology department, psychology staff also referred interviewees who they thought met the interview criteria and might be interested in taking part. Throughout the period I arranged and carried out the interviews, it was necessary to adhere to daily prison routines and regulations such as meal and locking up times. I was also entirely dependent

on the cooperation and good will of the staff concerned. Although it was intended initially that the interviews would be shared equally between the three prisons, owing to different administrative procedures and levels of support and cooperation received in each of the prisons, 17 interviews were carried out in HMP Brixton, 11 in HMP Pentonville, and two in HMP Wandsworth.

Table 2.2 **Classification of interview participants**

Category	Number	
Age:	21-25	9
	26-30	7
	31-35	6
	36-40	5
	41-45	2
	46-50	1
Ethnicity:	Black British	14
	White British	8
	Irish	1
	Afro-Caribbean	1
	Black African	3
	Black Asian	3
Age first convicted:	5-10	1
	11—15	12
	16-20	12
	21-25	4
	26-30	1
Total no. of convictions	1-5	8
	5 and over	8
	6-10	10
	11-15	3
	Over 15	1
No of prison sentences	2-5	16
	6-10	9
	11-15	2
	16-20	1
	21-25	1
	Over 25	1

None of the participants received any financial benefit for agreeing to be interviewed, and it was explained to them that the research would not have any bearing on their criminal cases, or personal circumstances. It is normally assumed that prisoners rarely refuse requests to be interviewed, because taking time out with prison researchers offers them a diversion from everyday prison routine (Burnett, 2004: 156). However, collecting the names of 30 prisoners prepared to be interviewed was a slow process. Given that I was not operating in an official capacity, and I was entirely reliant on the goodwill of prison staff to distribute posters and leaflets, the process of requesting interviews tended to be more ad hoc than systematic. Interviewees normally expressed an opinion on why they had agreed to be interviewed. While a few thought it presented them with an opportunity to do something different and it 'got them off the landings' for a while, most said they welcomed the opportunity to talk about their lives and hopes and expectations for the future. To a degree, this suggests a selection bias in the sample frame. It may be construed that interviewees were chosen as 'model' prisoners by prison psychology staff, or had reached a stage in their lives when they had begun to question their motives for offending and contemplate criminal desistance. Interestingly, many of the participants explained that as young offenders they would not have consented to be interviewed. They said that at that stage in their lives they had been uncooperative with prison staff and would not have disclosed information about themselves to anyone they did not have to. This bias in the sample frame should be taken into account when reading the interview transcriptions. It also raises questions about the possibility of collecting valid and reliable samples of young offenders in future prison research.

The interview procedure

Interviews were arranged by administrators and psychologists within the psychology departments of each of the prisons. The names and prison numbers of potential interviewees were collected and sent to me by post or email. I would then contact the prisoners directly. A letter of introduction was sent to all participants on Middlesex University headed notepaper. This contained a summary of the research proposal, its

purpose, content, and intended mode(s) of distribution (see Appendix A (3)). In particular, the letter stressed that the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants would be maintained. As it was a core task to record the attitudes and feelings of interviewees, and to encourage them to divulge personal and sometimes sensitive information to me, the letter also contained details of my personal and professional background including my previous work as a researcher, my research interests as a student at Middlesex University, and my past work as a campaigner for penal reform. In practical terms, this was intended to assure each interviewee that my interests were purely research based, and I was not employed by HMPS. More generally, it conformed to the perspective within qualitative research that “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (Oakley, 1981). After registering their interest, and on learning more about the research, no participant declined to take part. One participant failed to turn up for the interview because he said he had failed to receive his medication from the prison doctor that day. I also terminated another interview early because I felt that the participant’s mental health at the time was not able to cope with a two hour discussion.

Once the interviews were arranged, I liaised with prison staff to arrange a suitable time and a room to meet with the participants. Interviews were conducted in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible, one to one in a spare room on prison landings or an empty classroom or training room. To give participants time to feel comfortable with me and ensure discussions were not too onerous, interviews were scheduled to last no longer than two hours. Normally two interviews were conducted in one day. The first interview took place after prisoners were unlocked from the cells in the morning. The second interview took place after lunch and was completed before prisoners returned to the cells for their evening meal. Before the interviews commenced, each participant was read a brief description of the research project. It was explained to them that their complete anonymity was assured and that pseudonyms would be inserted in the final report to ensure their non-identification. It was also emphasized that participation in the research was dependent on their on-going cooperation, that they were free to decline to answer any questions they did

not like, and they could stop the interview at any point. Finally, a short summary of the research and a full interview transcription were offered to participants if they wished to receive them. Two participants requested full transcriptions of their interviews. Finally, before the interviews commenced each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B (2)) that they were fully aware of the purposes of the research and that they were willing to participate in it.

To begin the interview, basic information about each individual was recorded on to a short questionnaire (see Appendix B (3)). This included: area(s) of residence, age, gender, ethnic origin, number of previous convictions, periods of probation supervision, number of previous prison sentences, and details of current offence. The interview proper then followed a schedule (see Appendix B (4)) designed to explore pre-prison, in-prison and post-prison experiences. The schedule was structured to allow participants the opportunity to tell their own stories in their own way. To keep conversations flowing, and ensure the narratives did not depart too far from the central research questions, prompts were employed throughout the course of each interview. However, while it was necessary to ensure that each story was told in a consistent fashion, every effort was made to conduct the interviews so that they were enjoyable and as much like a chat as possible. The overall approach was designed to allow participants the freedom to steer the conversations themselves and to bring in tangential matters which, for them, were meaningful and had a bearing on the main subject (Hakim, 2000).

It was normal for interviews to start hesitantly, with each participant providing monosyllabic answers and being somewhat reluctant to express themselves. However, as the interviews progressed and it became apparent I was interested in finding out about them as individuals - about their opinions and attitudes, and not only about their criminal histories - they tended to relax and become more fluent and expansive in the stories they told. Although, in a few cases, the interviews only began to get really interesting just as they had to end. Undoubtedly, the relaxed tone of the interviews was helped by the fact that I am not employed by HMPS or within the criminal justice system generally. Furthermore, knowing London well - in particular the area of Brixton where I lived for a number of years

during the 1980s - I was able to respond directly to the information they offered me. By relating anecdotes of my own - for example that I had probably squeezed onto the same buses as them outside Brixton Underground Station (nobody queues for buses in Brixton!); or frequented the same restaurants, pubs and clubs - most of the interviewees slowly began to respond in kind and recall the places they had lived. Without wishing to give the impression that I befriended the interview participants, my background in prison reform, as well as our mutual experience of having done some of the same things in the same areas at the same time, enabled me to establish a level of rapport with them in the short time available.

All interviews were tape recorded. After the interview, participants were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a follow-up study that might take place one or two years later. This was to monitor any changes in their lives that had occurred since the original interviews, and to discuss whether they had changed their minds about any of the subjects discussed. It was hoped that up to 10 individuals would agree to participate in the follow-up study. In the event, all 30 participants agreed to take part. At present, owing to time and resource constraints, it is not intended to complete the follow-up study as a component of this thesis. After the interviews had taken place, each participant received a thank you letter from me expressing my gratitude for the personal and sometimes confidential information they had provided to me (see Appendix A (4)).

The qualitative data - issues of validity and reliability

To a large extent, research which employs in-depth interviews as a means of recording information is reliant on the subject's willingness and ability to articulate their situation and remember salient information. It is also important for interviewers to curb an inclination to believe "that authentic accounts of what 'things are really like' will be given in moments of emotional intimacy where souls are bared and pretence is stripped away" (Seale, 1998: 209). Because it is extremely difficult to definitively measure the validity of attitudinal research of this kind (Procter, 1993), the following procedures were followed to address

issues of validity and reliability in a consistent manner. First and foremost, it was necessary to take account of ethical issues associated with research conducted with marginalized and relatively powerless groups of people (Punch, 1986). In order to avoid characterizing marginal groups in ways that increase their stigmatization and legitimate social control over them (Witkin, 2000), and to extend to them the same “rights which are given to everyday citizens to know about their participation in social research and thereby choose whether or not to participate” (Jupp, 1996: 54), the research methodology was deliberately designed to conform to ethical guidelines as set out by the British Society of Criminology (see Appendix B (5)). As described above, most importantly, participants were recruited to the project through a process of informed consent, which emphasised to them that their involvement in the research was entirely voluntary.

All interviews were transcribed in full from cassette tapes, then coded and compared for cross-case similarities and differences. Given that, as a rule, narrative research does not follow an ordered sequence which lends itself to quantification, it was necessary to adopt an ‘interpretive’ reading of the interview data (Mason, 2002). This was intended to draw conclusions from the data through indexing and categorisation which became more explicit and ‘grounded’ as the analysis progressed (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Each section of each interview was divided into separate concepts and then grouped together into categories. These were then cross referenced to highlight common narrative events and experiences, and developed analytically to investigate the various attitudes and meanings expressed. In this way, the individual life course trajectories of the participants were presented chronologically and contrasted and compared to reveal consistencies and equivalences of meaning between them. As far as possible, throughout the process it was ensured that interpretations were not derived from the data inappropriately. Measures were taken to ground the findings and conclusions in such a way as to make room for alternative and opposing perspectives. Most importantly, ‘systematic comparisons’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) were made between the concepts and categories contained within the interview data and the theoretical approaches to crime, criminality and place presented in Chapter One. In particular, the narrative life histories were content analysed to explore how structure and

agency in the places inhabited by the participants relates to reoffending and/or criminal desistance.

An important stage of the research analysis has been the process of writing up the findings. This has involved contextualising the narrative life stories according to different criminological perspectives on the relationship between crime, criminality and place. At the same time, the research has been written up to allow the participants to speak for themselves. Black (1998: 292) has observed that:

endless textual deconstruction... [can] result in a kind of intellectual vertigo, where the level of analysis is abstracted to such a degree that the social world with which we are familiar... seems to disappear into a tangle of obfuscating jargon, pathos and uncertainty as to how to write anything at all about social life.

Aware of the difficulty of accurately representing the truth of the relations between people and place (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001), some phenomenological researchers have developed criteria to help readers decide for themselves about the reliability and validity of the data presented. For instance, Polkinghorne (1983: 46) has suggested that the quality of phenomenological research is best judged according to the following criteria. First, it should be vivid in terms of the level of detail it contains and how honestly it appears to be expressed. Second, it should be believable in terms of the extent to which it resonates with the readers own life experiences. Third, it should be rich in terms of whether the reader can relate to it both intellectually and emotionally. And fourth, it should be elegant in terms of how descriptive and evocative it is to read.

In keeping with this design, the life stories of the interviewees have been presented as objectively and factually as possible, and have been subjected to contextual analysis. In addition, by assessing the various attitudes and opinions expressed by the participants, a perception has been made about whether the experiences and events described are real or imaginary. However, because “truth is also always personal and subjective” (Denzin, 1997: 265-266), the life stories have also been presented in such a way that maintains the chronological narrative development of their lives. Although it is possible to draw

conclusions from the content analysis of linguistic material, such as by counting the frequency of particular words and phrases (Slater, 1998), a quantitative account of the number of times a word or theme is mentioned in a text for example, is not necessarily indicative of intended meaning (Fairclough, 1992). The extent to which the participants used the personal and social circumstances of their lives after release to justify, excuse, or 'neutralise' persistent criminal behaviour (Sykes and Matza, 1957) can only be assessed with accuracy by investigating whether the problems they said they faced were personal fabrications or real social facts. This would necessitate a longitudinal research framework which includes a detailed social scientific understanding of the everyday lives of individual prisoners before and after release. The only real certainty is that the participants told me their life stories in their own language, unaware and probably unconcerned about the contextual analysis that informs the study of space, place and everyday life - for example the dichotomy of structure and agency, the impact of space/time compression, the 'spaces of postmodernity' etc. As such, I have attempted to describe the relationality between prisoners and place using the interview data as simply, realistically and evocatively as possible. In relating what the participants told me to the literature on crime, criminality, place and criminal desistance, it is up to the reader to make a judgement on the validity and reliability of the conclusions that I have drawn.

Conclusion

It is often assumed that space and place is either straightforwardly empirical, or it is made real only by the way that in everyday life people relate to it (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Instead of separating statistical and cartographic representations of space and place from human activities, experiences and interpretations of and within it, the research methodology used to explore the relationship between prisoners and place was specifically designed to bring these different spatial levels of meaning together. Therefore, both a quantitative and a qualitative methodological approach has been adopted. The quantitative element of the research was designed to confirm that the spatial distribution of prisoners throughout Greater London is not random, but conforms to spatial patterns of social deprivation. The

qualitative element of the research explores what this means in terms of reoffending and/or criminal desistance.

The relationality between people and place is meaningful in two fundamental respects. It comprises social activities and relations which are structurally produced, and it generates a sense of emotional attachment and belonging. Both of these aspects of space and place are an essential part of everyday life. The concern of the research to uncover meaning at the level of active consciousness contrasts with other theoretical perspectives which suggest that subjectivity is conditioned by structures that lie deep beneath the surface of social reality, or that it is socially constructed and therefore has no essential reality (Jameson, 1984). It is acknowledged that phenomenological research which attempts to explore abstract concepts such as consciousness, selfhood and identity has a tendency to be vague and unfocused. Therefore, by assessing crime, criminality and place chronologically in relation to the transition offenders make between the community and prison, it is intended to direct and focus upon specific experiences and events, and the meanings prisoners attach to these, as they develop and change throughout the life course. This systematic narrative structure guides the investigation of structure and agency and place in relation to reoffending and/or criminal desistance. It also informs the specific policy proposals presented in Chapter Seven.

Notes

¹ 'Intermittent Custody' is a sanction which allows offenders serving short sentences to spend part of the sentence they receive out of prison in the community under Probation Service supervision where, for example, they can remain in work or seek employment. It was introduced in the 2003 Criminal Justice Act and has been piloted as a sentencing option since 2004.

² 'Custody Plus' is short sentence introduced in the 2003 Criminal Justice Act designed to replace existing sentences of less than 12 months. It involves a short period in custody plus a longer period under Probation Service supervision in the community.

³ 'What Works' and 'Resettlement Pathfinder' research agendas are designed to ensure that interventions with offenders are based on empirical evidence of success. Based on meta-analyses of previous interventions to reduce reoffending (for example see Lipsey, 1992; Losel, 1995), prison and probation programmes are now accredited to ensure that all work with offenders is focused on individual factors directly linked to reoffending. Pathfinders are evaluation studies of specific programmes within offender rehabilitation and reintegration practice for short-term prisoners.

⁴ Census Area Statistics (CAS) wards are statistical wards used for 2001 Census outputs. They are identical to 2003 statistical wards, which were introduced to minimize the statistical impact of frequent electoral ward boundary changes, except that 18 of the smaller wards containing fewer than 100 residents have been merged into other wards. There are a total of 7969 CAS wards in England and 881 in Wales.

⁵ Information obtained via email correspondence with a Detective Inspector with the Metropolitan Police Service.

⁶ The Offender Assessment System (OASys) has been introduced to provide a standard system for assessing how likely an offender is to reoffend and be reconvicted. It entails an IT based system by which information may be exchanged between prison and probation services. It includes an assessment of offending history, offence related factors such as personality and social characteristics, and cognitive behavioural problems.

Chapter Three

Where do prisoners live? – A spatial analysis of the home addresses of prisoners from the metropolitan area of Greater London

Introduction

It has been reported that “before they ever come into contact with the prison system, most prisoners have a history of social exclusion” (SEU, 2002: 18). This chapter assesses whether the social exclusion of prisoners is related to place of residence. Using Greater London as a case study, it examines whether prisoners are drawn from specific urban areas which conform to areas of social deprivation. The chapter begins by describing the social characteristics of prisoners in England and Wales, and setting out the problematic that social disadvantage, imprisonment and reoffending appear to be place specific. It then briefly outlines the historic urban development of Greater London, and how this has affected patterns of class and ethnic segregation in the contemporary city. This description serves as a setting to analyse whether the home addresses of prisoners conform to geographical patterns of social deprivation, and the extent to which they are concentrated in specific neighbourhoods within the city. Finally it draws some conclusions on whether prisoners are spatially excluded, as well as socially excluded, within London society.

Prisoners in England and Wales – a socially excluded group

In the ten years between 1992 and 2002, the prison population in England and Wales increased by 24,386; an increase of 55 per cent (Home Office, 2003). On 3 November 2006, the prison population reached 79,829, the highest ever recorded figure (NOMS,

2006). England and Wales currently has the highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe at 148 per 100,000 of the population (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2007). And in terms of future trends - depending on the impact of new sentencing provisions introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 - it is forecast that the prison population could increase to as high as 106,550 by 2013 (Home Office, 2005b).

Where are these prisoners coming from? As noted in Chapter One, prisoners in England and Wales are socially and economically disadvantaged (SEU, 2002). White collar prisoners from wealthy backgrounds are something of a rarity and are usually accommodated in a small number of low security open prisons. The majority of crimes that are detected and prosecuted - the so called 'crimes of the poor' (Hudson, 1993) - reflect the social background of most prisoners which is disproportionately working class. This is not to suggest that relatively well off people do not commit crime at the same rate as poor people. The fact that the prison population in the UK is overwhelmingly working class may have as much to do with the way the criminal justice system targets and prosecutes certain crimes while ignoring others. For example, owing to differences in the complexity of the investigations involved, as well as different perceptions of seriousness and harm caused, street crime, property crime and car crime commonly receive far more police attention than tax evasion or corporate fraud (Clarke, 1990). Moreover, sentencers are more likely to imprison working class offenders than middle class offenders who have committed the same offence(s) (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997).

Whatever the reasons for the disparity in the social composition of the prison population, previous prisoner surveys reveal that the lives of the overwhelming majority of prisoners in England and Wales are characterised by social disadvantage and inequality (Morgan, 2002). For example, just under half of male prisoners have been employed in unskilled or partly skilled occupations, compared with 18 per cent of the general population (Walmsley *et al*, 1992). Nearly 70 per cent of prisoners are unemployed prior to imprisonment (SEU, 2002). In terms of education, 65 per cent have a reading ability that is at, or below, the level expected of an average 11 year old (Home Office, 2001a). And just less than a half of all male prisoners have been excluded from school (Singleton *et al*, 1998). Prisoners also

suffer from a range of family problems which distinguish them from the general population. For example, 43 per cent of prisoners come from a family background in which a family member has been convicted of a criminal offence (Dodd and Hunter, 1992). And just under a third of prisoners have been taken into care as a child (SEU, 2002). Nearly half have run away from home (Singleton *et al.*, 1998), and over 30 per cent are homeless prior to imprisonment (SEU, 2002). In addition, nearly a half of all prisoners have a history of serious drug abuse involving heroin, or crack cocaine addiction (Ramsay, 2003). They also suffer much poorer mental health than the general population, with over 70 per cent suffering from two or more mental disorders (Singleton *et al.*, 1998).

However, while it is well documented that prisoners in England and Wales have a history of educational and health disadvantage, and poor prospects in the labour market, the extent to which the social disadvantage they experience is place specific has not been quantified. This is surprising given that inequality between neighbourhoods is a central concern of the present Labour Government's Social Exclusion Unit. Moreover, a major objective of the 2001 National Strategy Action Plan for neighbourhood renewal is that "within ten to twenty to years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live" (SEU, 2001). Yet, although a range of government funded area based initiatives have been launched to tackle neighbourhood disadvantage and crime, to date there has been no research on the link between the aerial distribution of social disadvantage, imprisonment and reoffending. In particular, the report on the social exclusion of prisoners (SEU, 2002) - the central recommendations of which have been included in the Government's Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan (Home Office, 2004b), which is to be delivered by new National and Regional Management Services, and jointly managed by HMPS and the National Probation Service - did not investigate the extent to which there is a connection between social exclusion, neighbourhood disadvantage, imprisonment and reoffending in specific parts of the country.

Uneven development, inequality and racial segregation within Greater London

London is one of the most diverse cities in the world. It contains concentrations of high and low income households, and it is also spatially divided in terms of housing tenure, economic activity, unemployment, health, crime, ethnic origin, and religion (GLA, 2002). As in other 'global cities', the history of urban governance and economic restructuring in London has affected, and continues to affect, its demographic characteristics, in particular the spatial distribution of the population. What is unique about the history of London however is the degree to which its population has been divided consistently by social class. As London grew rapidly as a consequence of industrial expansion throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, while many of the wealthier classes migrated to the expanding suburbs, the casual working classes congregated in areas within walking distance of places of work, especially poor housing districts within the East End area of the inner city (Buck and Fainstein, 1992).

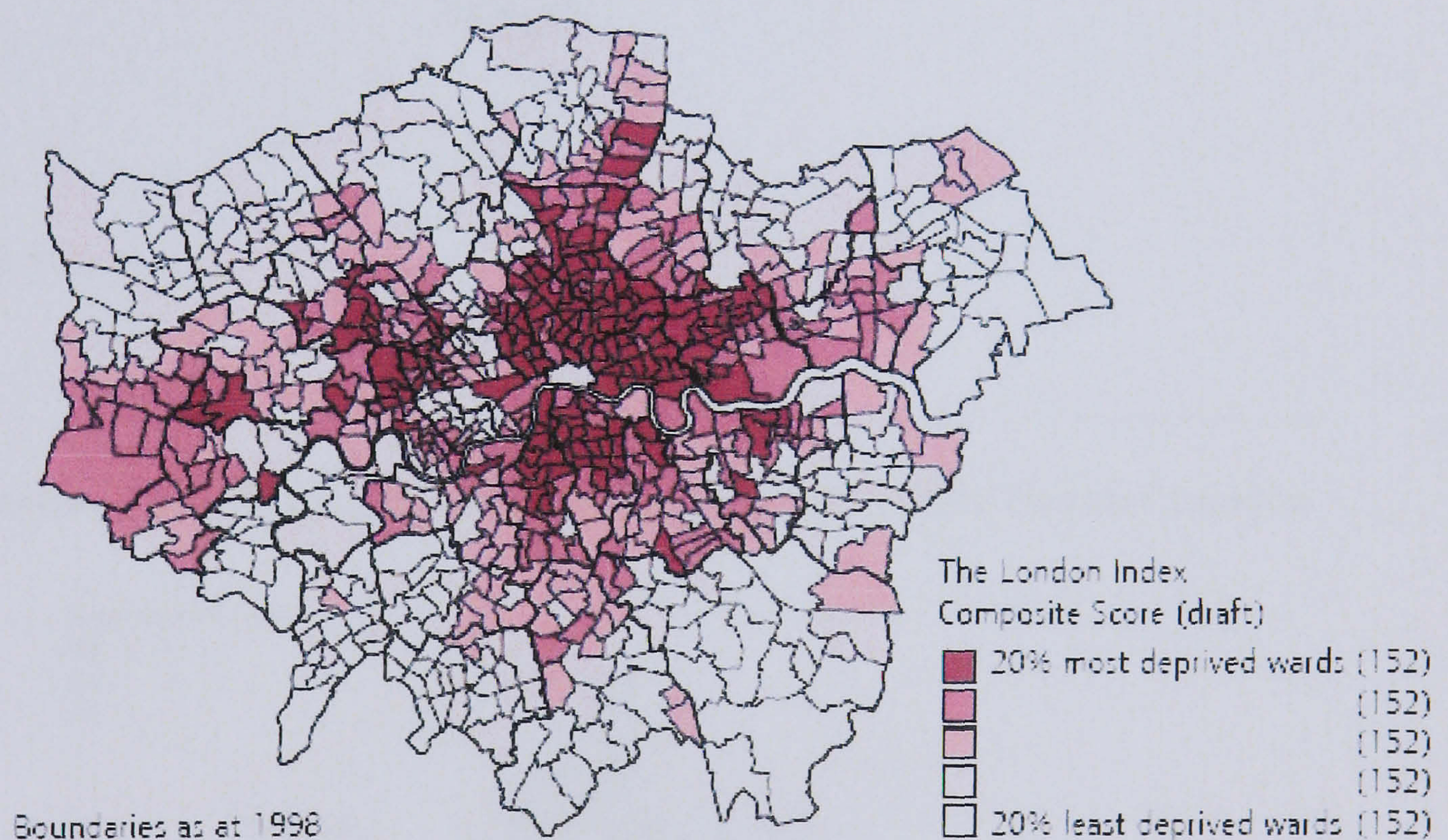
Throughout the twentieth century, the spatial separation of the social classes intensified as suburban manufacturing grew. Skilled workers able to take advantage of new work opportunities left inner London for towns circling the 'green belt', leaving behind a residue of poorly skilled and unemployed labourers. Later in the century, particular in the years between 1950 and 1970, inner London was increasingly populated by people from the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean and the Far East. Slum clearance and the replacement of old Victorian built housing stock with new council estates and high rise flats broke up traditional working class communities within the inner city. Over time these were increasingly populated by immigrant populations who remained in the older sections of the inner city where they had originally settled (Smith, 1987). The result is that today the population of Greater London is highly differentiated, with inner London having a consistently higher concentration of disadvantage than outer London.

Figure 3.1 shows that according to a combination of indicators including exclusion from the labour force, dependency, education, health, housing, crime and the environment, levels

of deprivation are far higher in central London than in Greater London as a whole. In particular, wards which run in a roughly north to south direction through the central and north eastern parts of the city including large parts of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Haringey and Enfield to the north of the river; and Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich to the south, suffer the highest levels of deprivation. In addition, there are small clusters of wards further out to the west of the city, within the areas of Ealing, Hounslow and Brent, which also suffer high levels of deprivation.

Figure 3.1

Quintile distribution of London wards on the draft London Index

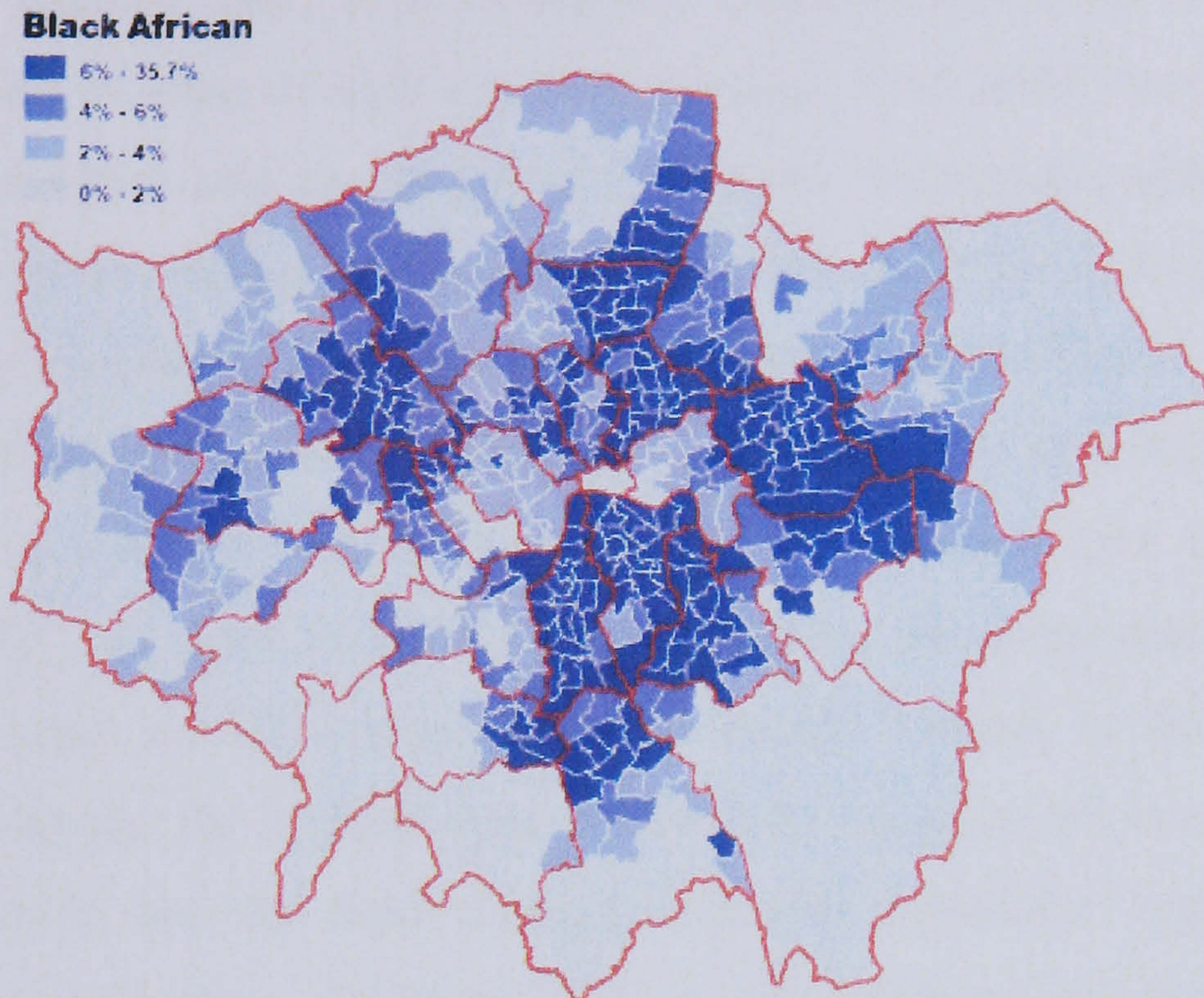


source Greater London Authority

Given its history of immigration, the London population is similarly spatially divided according to race, with the majority of white Londoners living in the more affluent suburbs surrounding the inner city, and most ethnic communities living in the deprived inner city wards. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show the spatial distribution of black African and black Caribbean people within Greater London.

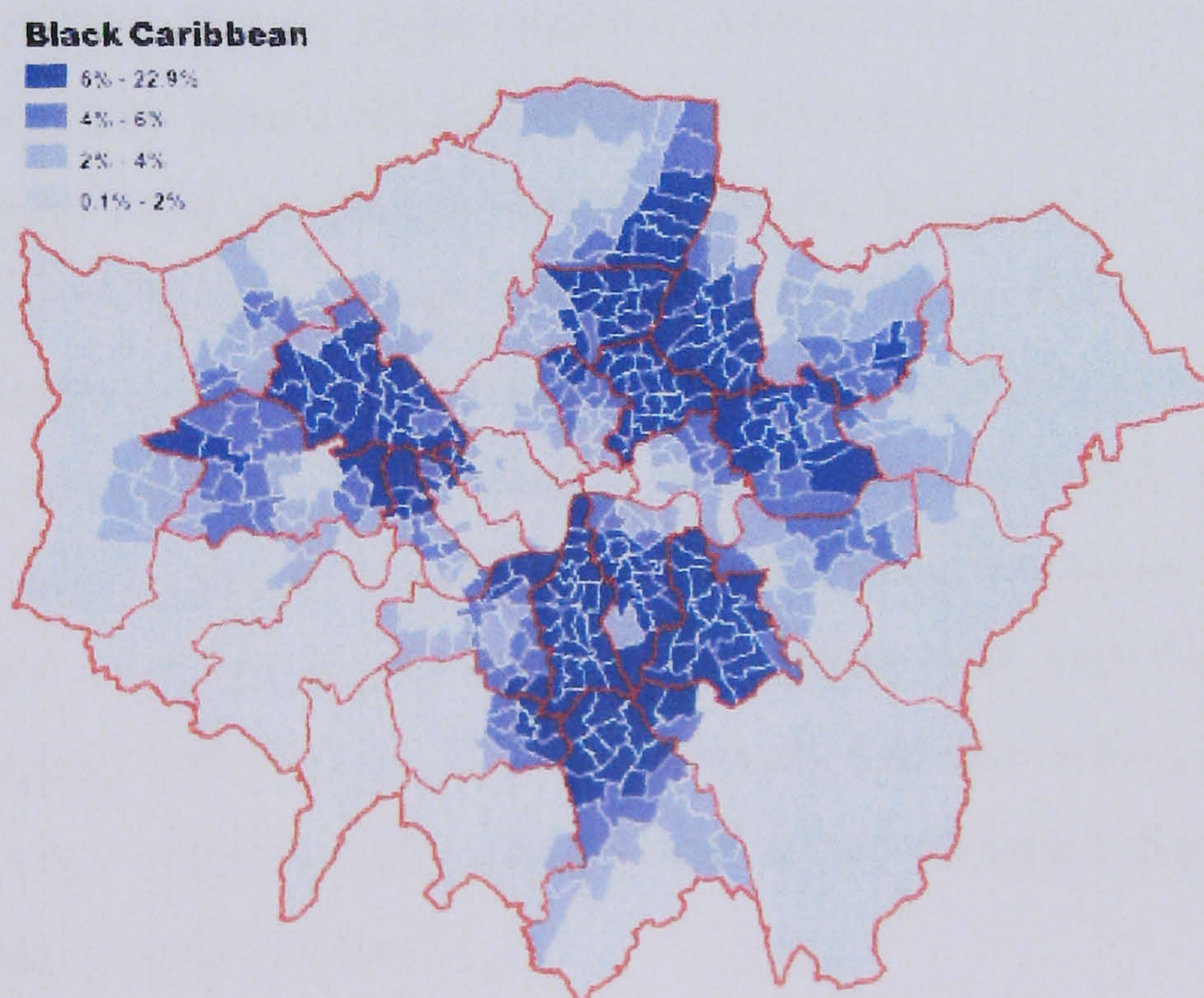
Figures 3.2 and 3.3

3.2 Residential distribution of black African people within Greater London



Source: Greater London Authority

3.3 Residential distribution of black Caribbean people within Greater London



Source: Greater London Authority

The residential distribution of prisoners in Greater London and its conformity to areas of crime and social deprivation

As explained in Chapter One, it is commonly assumed that areas of high crime and criminality conform to areas of high social deprivation. Ever since the Chicago School of Sociology divided cities into zones, patterns of urban residential segregation have been analysed in relation to corresponding patterns of crime and criminality; particularly with regard to how both public and private urban property markets influence the differentiation of urban space (Bottoms and Wiles, 2002). It is also commonly assumed that areas of high crime conform to areas in which the majority of offenders live (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1991). In terms of the former assumption, the correlation between areas of high crime and areas of social deprivation in Greater London is borne out by recent evidence. For example, the highest rates of domestic burglary are concentrated in inner London areas which are the most socially deprived, especially Lambeth, Southwark, Hackney and Tower Hamlets. However, there is also evidence of high rates of domestic burglary across London as a whole including in outlying areas which are relatively sparsely populated compared to inner London, such as in the borough of Hillingdon in the west of Greater London (GLA, 2002).

When we compare these figures to the statistical presentation of prisoner postcodes, at first sight it appears that the residential distribution of prisoners throughout Greater London is quite diffuse. Figure 3.4 shows that prisoners are drawn from all wards in Greater London, with the exception of clusters of wards towards the periphery of the city, in particular the far south west, south east, and north west. However, the map also shows that the majority of prisoners are drawn from inner London, particularly from within an area that runs roughly north to south through the city centre, bounded by the wards of Northumberland Park in the north, New Cross in the east, Ferndale in the west, and South Norwood in the south. A comparison with Figures 3.1 - 3.3, reveals that this area conforms to the area within inner London which contains the highest levels of social deprivation and ethnic segregation within Greater London.

There are a total of one hundred wards within this area (16 per cent of the total number of wards in Greater London). These wards contain the addresses of 1695 prisoners (33 per cent of the total sample). In comparison, only a very few prisoners appear to reside in suburban areas further out towards the periphery of the city. Overall, a statistical analysis of the addresses of prisoners from Greater London shows the following pattern of distribution:

- Prisoners are drawn from the area of Greater London as a whole at a rate of 204 per 100,000 of the population. This compares to an imprisonment rate for England and Wales of 148 per 100,000 of the population (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2007).
- The majority of prisoners are located in a relatively small number of wards. Of the 633 wards in Greater London, 90 per cent have produced 16 or fewer prisoners; compared to 10 per cent of wards which have produced 17 or more prisoners.
- The addresses of 1,459 prisoners (28.4 per cent of the sample) are in just 66 (10.43 per cent) of the 633 wards. The total population of these wards is 834,543. This equates to a mean imprisonment rate for these wards of 497 per 100,000 of the population of Greater London.
- The addresses of 3,328 (just under two thirds) of the sample are in 214 (33.81 per cent) of wards. The total population of these wards is 2,624,725. This equates to a mean imprisonment rate for these wards of 361 per 100,000 of the population of Greater London.
- The remaining third of the sample of prisoners is drawn from the remaining 419 wards. This means that 1,811 prisoners (35 per cent of the prison population from London) come from wards with a mean imprisonment rate of 113 per 100,000. Of these 419 wards, 189 (30 per cent of all wards in Greater London) contain just 308 prisoners. This equates to a mean imprisonment rate for these wards of just 46 per

100,000. No prisoners at all were recorded as coming from a total of 36 wards in Greater London.

- Of the 66 wards most represented, 11 are in the borough of Lambeth; eight in Lewisham; seven in Newham, seven in Southwark; five each in Croydon, Hackney, Haringey; three in Ealing; two in Camden, and one each in Greenwich, Waltham Forest, Brent, Barking and Dagenham, Wandsworth, Bexley, Islington, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Enfield.

Figure 3.4

Number of prisoners per ward in Greater London



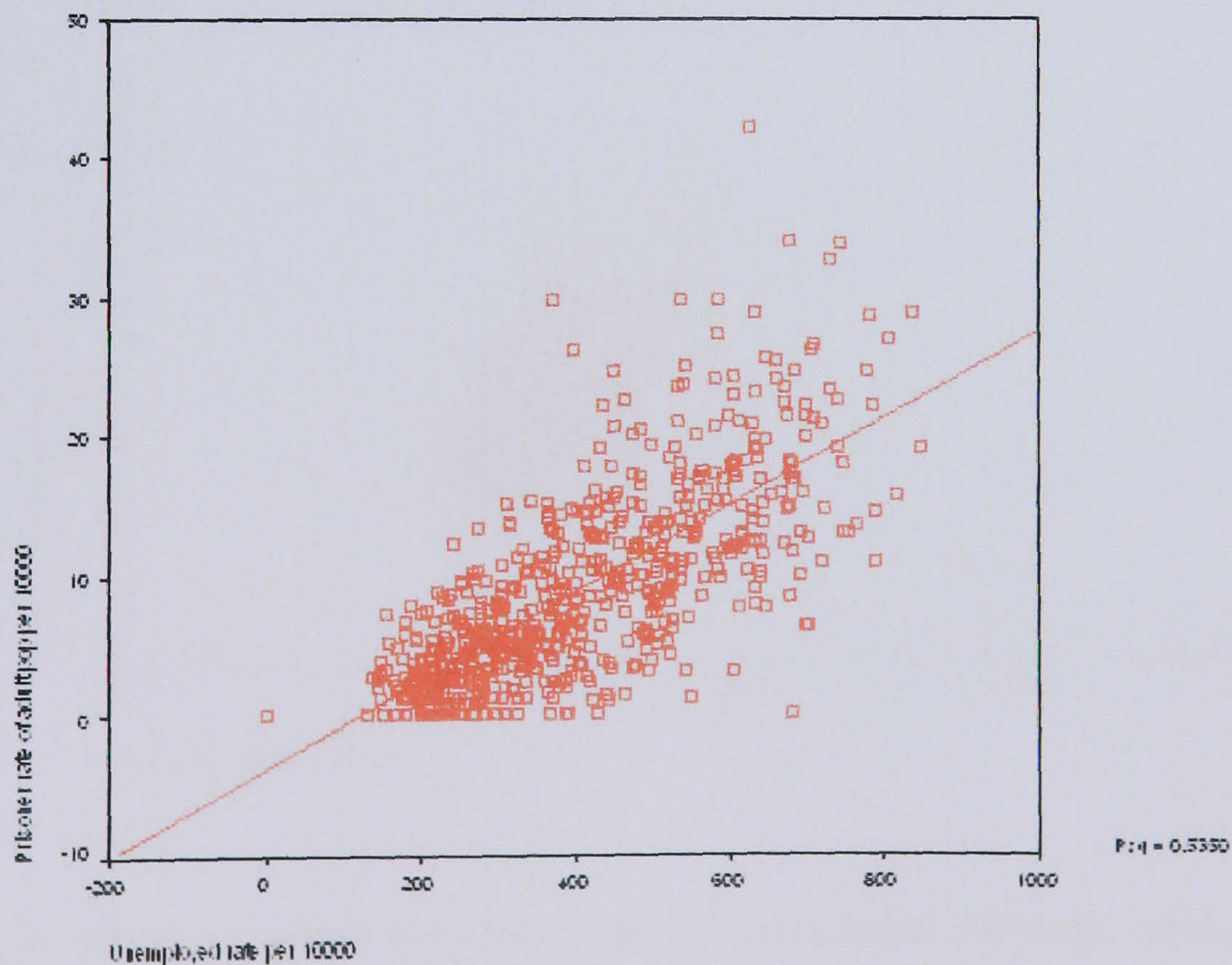
A comparison of patterns of social deprivation (Figure 3.1) with prisoner residence (Figure 3.4) in Greater London reveals an apparent correlation between the two. This relationship is supported by statistical analysis using SPSS. However, before assessing this information, it is important to bear in mind that single social characteristics measured by the census of

population are not direct measures of poverty, multiple deprivation, or criminality. And, as explained more fully later in the chapter, while area based measures reveal pockets of deprivation do exist in urban areas (GLA, 2002), “disadvantaged people also live elsewhere and could be excluded in large numbers if interventions were planned purely on the basis of a local, census based, deprivation score” (Sloggett and Joshi, 1994: 1474). That said, using the Pearson coefficient test, the imprisonment rate for each ward, when correlated with data on social deprivation obtained from the 2001 census, shows that for the following indicators of deprivation there is a strong positive correlation significant at the 0.01 level. Scatter plots for each of these correlations are presented in Figure 3.5 below.

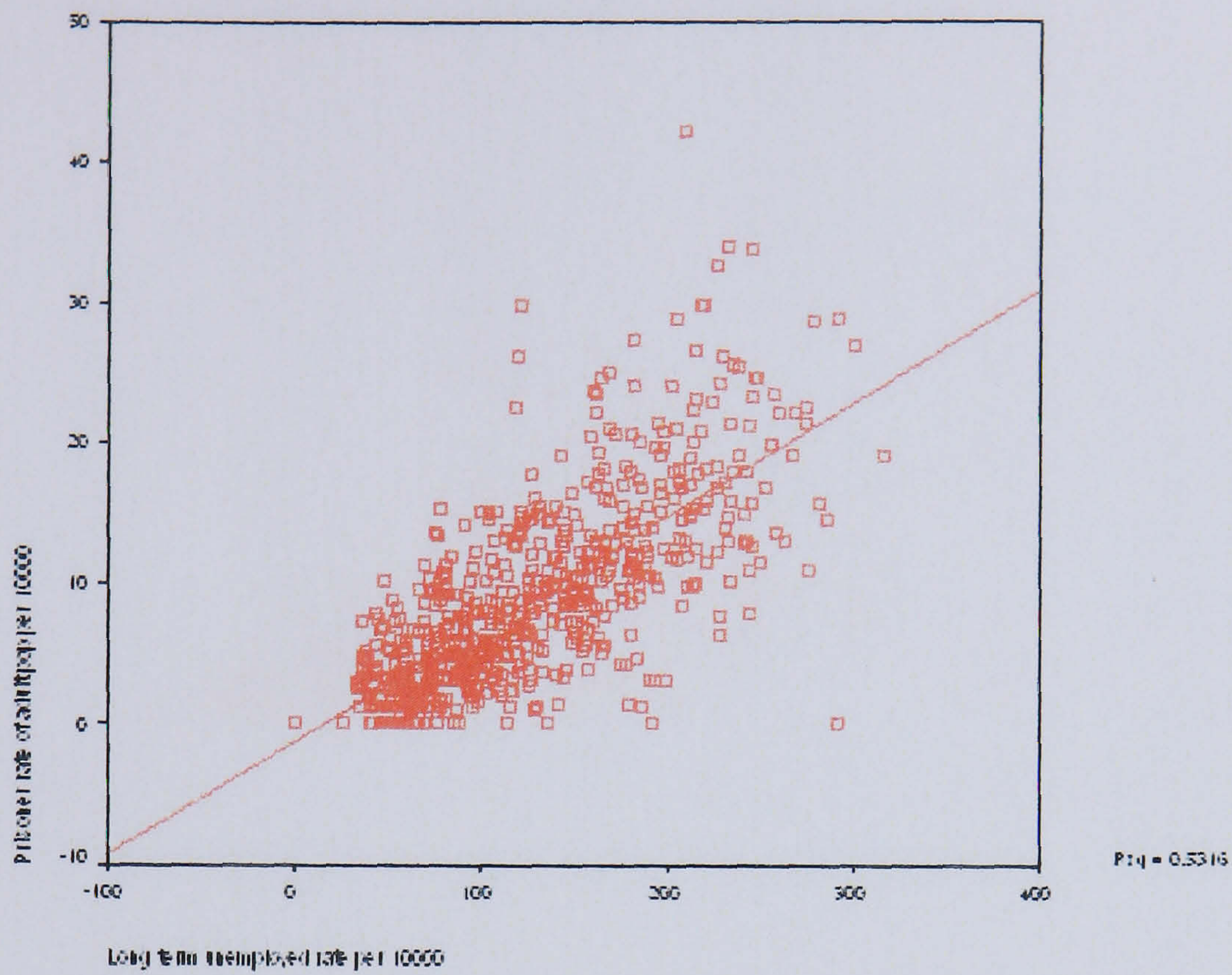
Figure 3.5 Correlation of offender residence and deprivation indices

In terms of lack of income and exclusion from the labour market, unemployment registered a positive correlation of 0.731, long term unemployment a positive correlation of 0.729, and the population who have never worked a positive correlation of 0.570.

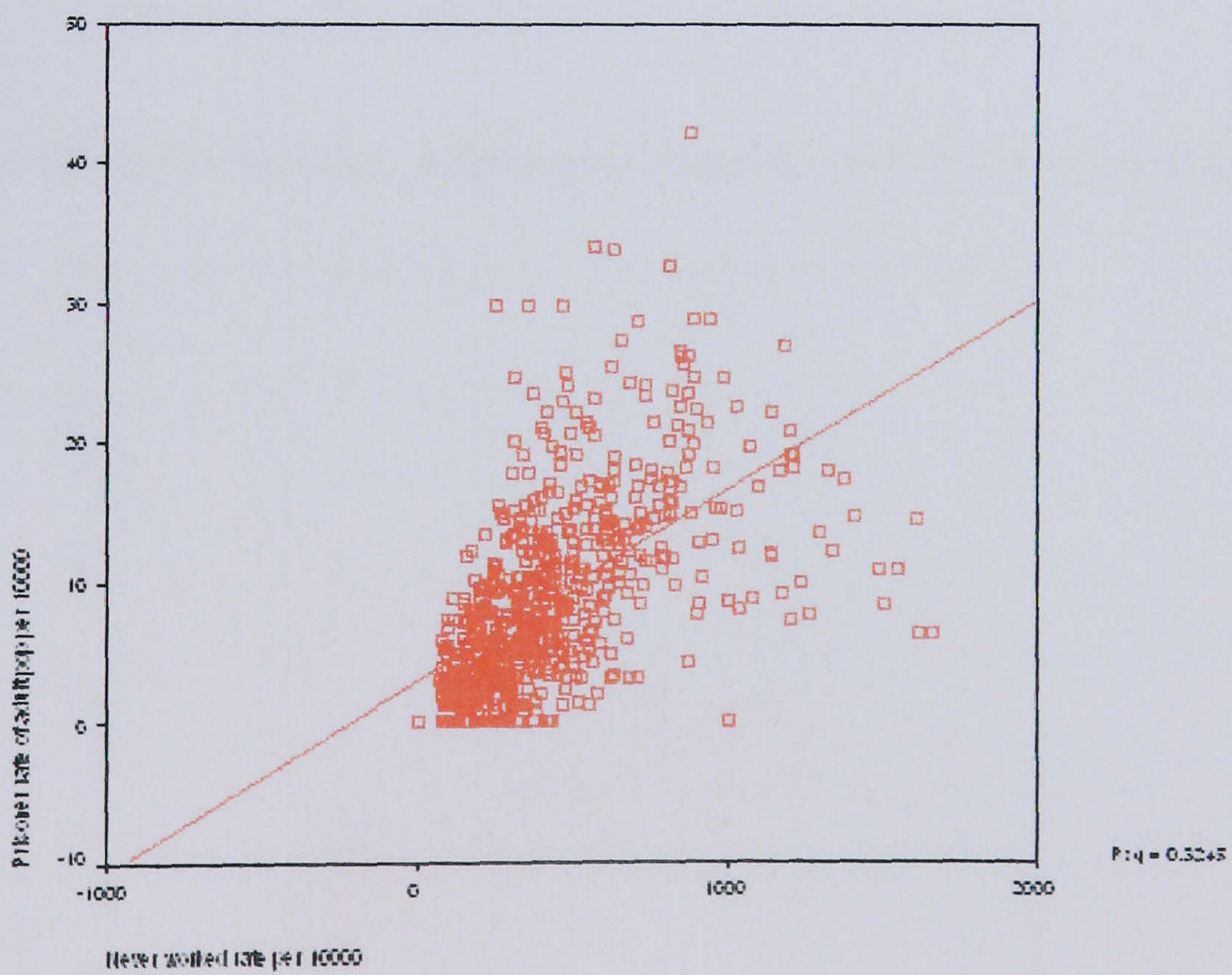
Unemployment



Long-term unemployment

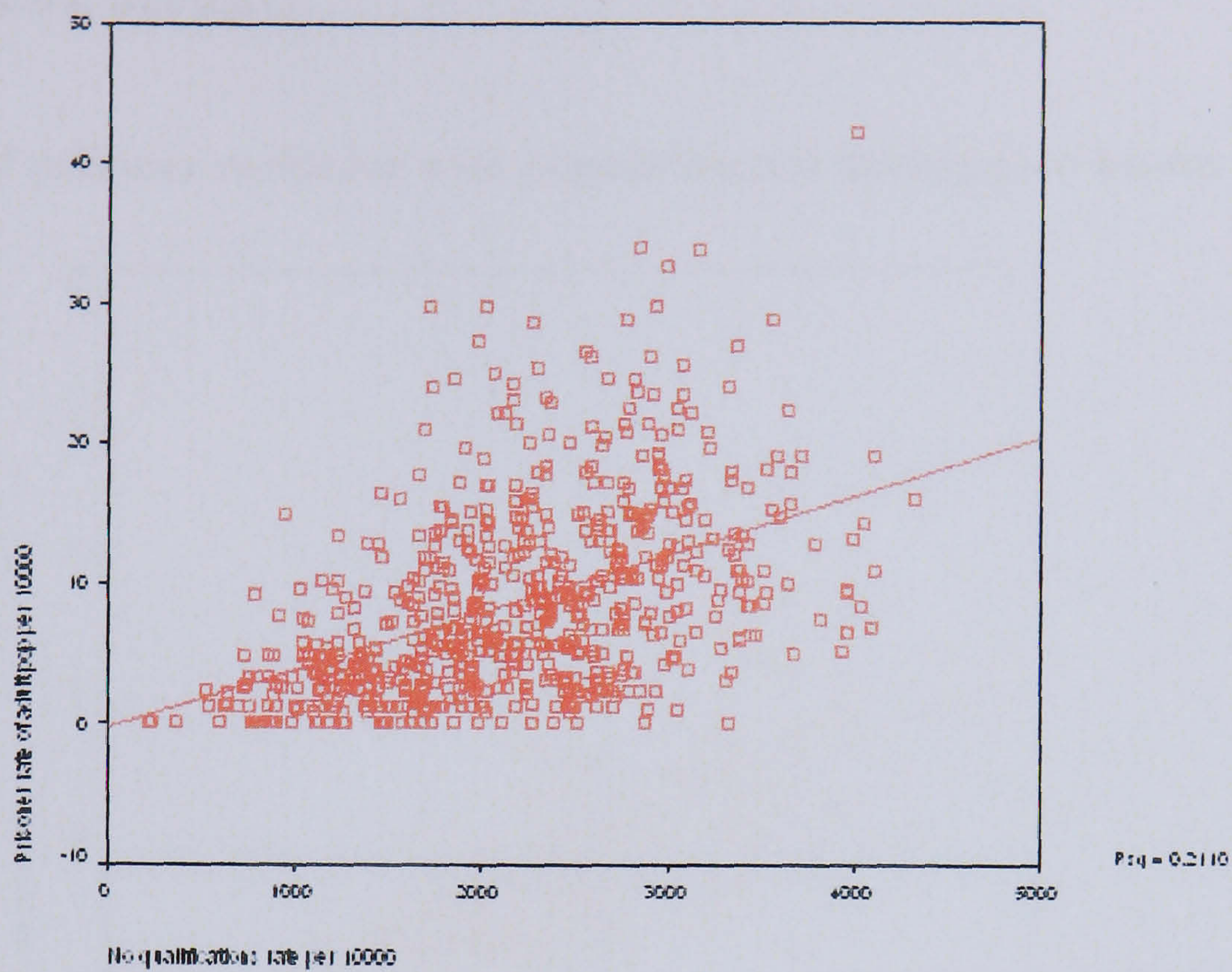


Population never worked



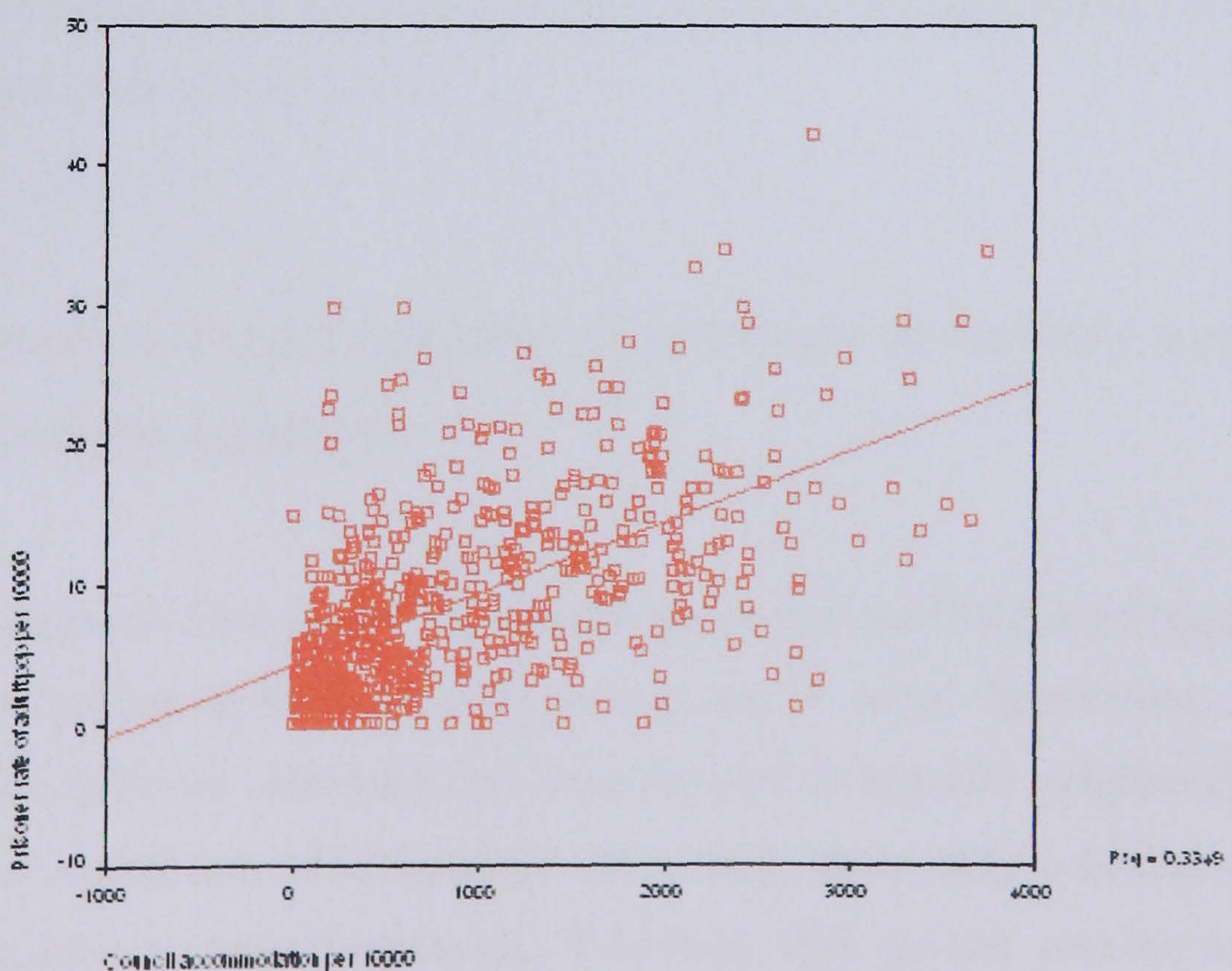
Furthermore, in terms of education, the level of correlation between prisoners and the population with no qualifications was 0.459.

Correlation of offender residence with population with no qualifications



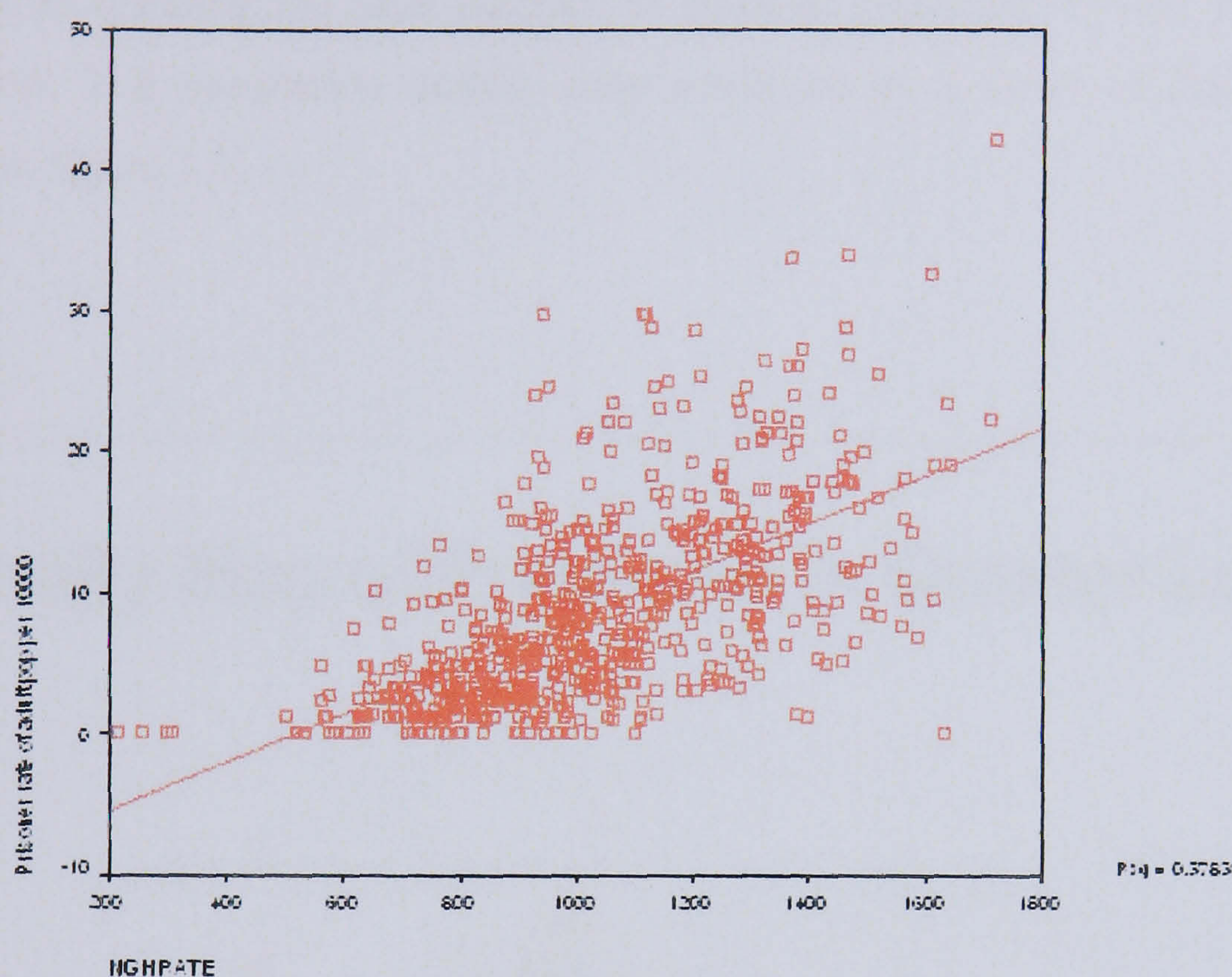
In terms of housing, the correlation with the population in council accommodation was 0.579.

Correlation of offender residence with population in council accommodation



And in terms of health, the level of correlation with the population categorised as not having good health was 0.615.

Correlation of prisoner residence with population not having good health



The extent to which these correlations are also indicative of correlations between the geographical distribution of prisoner residences, areas of high social deprivation, and offence locations, is discussed below.

The neighbourhood concentration of prisoners in Greater London – are prisoners spatially excluded?

Although it is apparent from Figure 3.4 that the residential distribution of prisoners by ward within Greater London conforms closely to patterns of social deprivation, this does not indicate whether prisoner addresses are concentrated in specific neighbourhoods within wards. Because wards are administrative units, they show only artificial transitions of population densities at their boundaries. Therefore, they do not provide an analysis of

population distribution according to smaller geographic units such as within enumeration districts or housing estates for example. In order to assess whether prisoners are concentrated in a small number of neighbourhoods, as has been found to be the case in the US (Lynch and Sabol, 2001), the population density of prisoners within Greater London was estimated by dividing the total number of prisoner postcodes by the surface area of Greater London. The population density map produced as a result of this procedure is shown below in figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6

Density Map of Prisoners in Greater London



In keeping with the residential distribution of prisoners by ward, the map shows that prisoners in Greater London are distributed quite diffusely, with most areas registering the presence of at least a small number of addresses. Although there are a small number of

areas within the inner city and to the west of the city that show disproportionate numbers of prisoners, there is also a significant proportion of prisoners who are spread out over what is quite a large part of the inner and central area of the city. On plotting the areas that show disproportionate concentrations of prisoner addresses onto ordinance survey maps it was found they were comprised of small housing estates, or parts of housing estates, within the following districts: Stockwell, Tulse Hill, Clapham, Canning Town, Camberwell, Camden Town, Finsbury Park, and Tottenham in the central area of the city; and Kilburn to the west of the city. This finding is consistent with previous research which has found that offenders in the UK are not spread out over large metropolitan areas, but tend to be clustered in a small number of urban neighbourhoods (Baldwin and Bottoms, 1976).

In relation to the theories of crime and place presented in Chapter One, it is far from certain whether disproportionate numbers of prisoners found in these areas is a reflection of, for example, random “underlying distributions of constitutional factors” (Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985), or a consequence of physical or social characteristics such as the operation of the housing market (Bottoms and Wiles, 1997). In order to establish the reasons for concentrations of prisoners in particular neighbourhoods, detailed local knowledge is required to interpret the data. This has not been possible within the remit of the thesis. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the data in comparison to concentrations of prisoners found in the US. Although it is apparent from Figure 3.6 that prisoners originate from some parts of Greater London in greater numbers than others, the geographical concentration of prisoners is not as dense, or as clearly defined, as that found by researchers in US cities. This needs accounting for. As described in Chapter One, urban neighbourhoods in the US are spatially marginalised and clearly segmented by social class, income and race. No such boundaries or divisions exist at the neighbourhood level within Greater London. Because urban regeneration and gentrification has resulted in levels of geographical differentiation being much more varied than in US cities, Greater London contains neighbourhoods which are home to both socially deprived and wealthy people, as well as people of different ethnic origin (Logan *et al.*, 1992). Moreover, because spatial segregation is not sanctioned along race lines by urban planning practices (Davis, 1990), or policed and controlled by penal law (Wacquant, 2001) as it is in parts of the US, the

connection between place of residence and imprisonment in Greater London is not as clearly defined at the neighbourhood level.

Prisoners in London are socially excluded, but they are not necessarily spatially excluded in small isolated communities. This is confirmed by assessing the evidence for social exclusion and spatial exclusion generally in Greater London. The analysis of the link between imprisonment and social deprivation presented above was carried out using various indicators of social deprivation including unemployment, housing, health, etc. Indicators such as these are commonly used to measure social exclusion. Briefly, the term social exclusion differs from related terms such as social deprivation, poverty or marginalisation in that it assumes social, economic and political factors affect the ability of certain communities to participate fully in society (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001). Therefore, social exclusion is thought to be a condition which happens to people who would like to participate in society but, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to do so (Burchardt *et al.*, 1999). Most importantly, it adopts a multi-dimensional frame of reference which includes non-spatial factors such as gender and class; but also factors such as employment and housing, which *inter alia* are affected by where people live (Buck, 2001).

Although the evidence presented above suggests that prisoners in Greater London are drawn from wards which are the most socially deprived, the specific streets or housing estates in which they live are not necessarily characterised by all of the key indicators of social exclusion. Small areas of London can be quite heterogeneous in terms of age and ethnicity, as well as unemployment and housing. They may also be subject to rapid economic and social change, thereby making connections between spatial and social exclusion difficult to identify (Folwell, 1999). For example, an analysis of unemployment and benefit receipt data shows that at least one major index of social deprivation - unemployment, is consistently high throughout the whole of the inner city (GLA, 2002). Furthermore, in terms of spatial exclusion specifically, while distance and physical isolation may be a factor in high levels of social deprivation on housing estates in the UK where peripherality and poor transport links have marginalised urban communities (Campbell, 1993), this is not such a problem in Greater London where movement in and

around the capital, particularly in central and inner areas, is relatively easy (Church, *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, the close correlation between offender residence and offence locations discovered in other cities in the UK (for example, see Wiles and Costello, 2000 on Sheffield), appears not to be as evident in Greater London.

To sum up, Greater London does not contain distinct homogenous neighbourhoods characterised by concentrations of spatial exclusion. Rather it is a city that contains a mosaic of neighbourhoods which are continually subject to urban development and change (Robson *et al.*, 2000). Although crime and imprisonment is closely linked to social deprivation and/or social exclusion (SEU, 2002), in terms of spatial exclusion, London is a city in which the criminal and law abiding, as well as the rich and poor, live cheek-by-jowl. As described by Young (2002: 475), it is a city in which “the lines blur: gentrification occurs in the inner city; deviance occurs in the suburbs”.

Conclusion

The spatial analysis presented in this chapter shows that there is a strong correlation between imprisonment, place of residence, and social deprivation. Data on the residential distribution of prisoner addresses in Greater London reveals that the majority of prisoners reside in wards within the inner city which have the highest rates of social deprivation. In comparison, a large number of wards within outer London contain very few prisoners. The data also shows that the pattern of prisoner residence within areas of social deprivation is quite diffuse. Although there appear to be small concentrations of prisoner addresses at the neighbourhood level, particularly within inner city areas, it has not been possible to examine the reasons for these within the remit of the thesis. However, patterns of social and spatial exclusion indicate that the spatial distribution of prisoners throughout Greater London is unlikely to be as concentrated at the neighbourhood level as it is in the US. Of course, not all prisoners in London come from socially deprived areas of the city and large numbers of people who do come from socially deprived areas do not commit crime or go to prison. Nevertheless, the relationship between imprisonment, social deprivation and place

of residence in Greater London is sufficiently strong to suggest that it may be a significant influence on the development and continuation of persistent criminal careers. The ways in which this relationship develops and changes over the life course of persistent criminals, and in so doing affects reoffending and/or criminal desistance, is explored in the following three chapters.

Chapter Four

From family life, to street life, to prison - Pre-prison circumstances, experiences and understandings

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the circumstances, experiences and understandings of the interview participants up until the point they experienced their first prison sentence. The chapter begins by describing the personal and social circumstances of the participants. Typical of the UK prison population as a whole, it reveals that most of them share an experience of social disadvantage, and were the victims of family abuse or neglect as children (Walmsley *et al.*, 1992). Furthermore, many of the participants grew up in areas where violence and crime were common occurrences. Then, by tracing the development of their criminal careers throughout childhood and into adolescence, the chapter reveals how, at a young age, crime was embraced by many of the participants first of all as a form of play, and then later on, during adolescence, as a way of life. The way the participants related to the places they had grown up changed as they sought to alleviate the boredom and frustration of their lives at home and at school. Initially, feelings of attachment to the streets and open spaces they played in as children were strong. Collective attitudes and perceptions which link crime to play enabled them to assert themselves, and achieve status amongst a close circle of friends and acquaintances. However, as they grew older, the adoption of persistent criminality as both a source of income and a life style choice necessitated they loosen attachments to their home areas and become 'social nomads' (Foucault, 1977). Throughout the chapter, the decision of the participants to choose crime as a way of life is assessed within a developmental, as well as a social and environmental context. In this way, it is intended to show how high imprisonment rates in specific areas are attributable to the meanings and understandings offenders develop about themselves, and the active and purposeful decisions they make in relation to the places in which they live.

Criminogenic backgrounds

Once gender and age have been accounted for, it is usual in criminological theory to explain criminal behaviour in relation to various deficiencies either of a psychological, or a social kind. For example, criminal behaviour is thought to develop as a result of low self-control, or a lack of control within the family or at school. Furthermore, it is common in theories of delinquent development to suggest that the early onset of offending is usually a precursor to persistent criminality in later life, the causes of which can be discerned by the presence of various 'risk factors', most of which are located within individuals or the family. *Inter alia*, individual factors include the presence of hyperactivity, impulsivity and low intelligence; while family factors include a lack of parental supervision, and criminal siblings and/or parents (Farrington and West, 1993).

The research programme was not designed to identify specific individual personality traits linked to criminal behaviour (Eysenck, 1970). Any information of a psychological nature was provided voluntarily by the participants during the course of the interviews. For example, some participants admitted to being arrogant, greedy, impatient, anti-authoritarian, and enjoying violence. However, while they readily admitted that these personality traits characterised them as individuals, they did not think they predisposed them to commit crime. Instead, all the participants explained the onset of their criminal behaviour in relation to the social context of their lives; although, in a similar vein, most did not think any single factor in their personal histories explained their propensity to commit crime. Whereas some thought that economic disadvantage and/or an unstable family background explained, and in some cases excused or justified their criminal activity (Sykes and Matza, 1957), most recalled how criminal behaviour developed gradually, a synthesis of individual, family and neighbourhood factors. Nevertheless, in describing their early lives in the places they grew up, they recalled experiences and events which are commonly linked to the development of criminal potential. These are described below.

The family home

Farrington (2002) has identified criminal and antisocial parents; large family size; poor parental supervision and discipline; abuse, both physical and sexual; and parental conflict as the most important early life predictors of criminal behaviour. In some of these respects, and in a few cases all of them, unstable family experiences characterised the early lives of most of the participants. For instance, many of the participants came from large families. On average, each participant had four siblings and had grown up in cramped, overcrowded conditions in mostly public sector housing accommodation. Nearly all the participants shared a bedroom with their brothers and/or sisters, and a few had spent long periods of their childhood sleeping in makeshift conditions, for example on the living room sofa, or at the homes of friends or relations. For the most part therefore, home was not a private place, a place in which they had their own space and could be by themselves. Instead, as one participant recalled, it was a place in which you were always on show, “like living in a goldfish bowl”. Another participant remembered that “in my house the front door was always open, and people would just come and go all day long”.

A small number of participants had also grown up in overtly criminal families in which the influence of individual family members on them had been direct and insistent (Hobbs, 1995). Because crime was openly discussed in the family home, they became aware of the criminal activities of older family members, who recruited them at an early age, for example, to sell drugs or keep lookout during raids on shops or burglaries. One participant described how as a young child he had been inculcated into a life of serious drug dealing and armed robbery by his older brothers:

It was through my older brothers yeh. ‘Cause they had to do crime to survive. ‘Cause they weren’t settled at foster care and what not. And they were rebelling, you get me. And they had to fend for their selves. I was the youngest one and my brothers took care of me. My brothers are like my dad to me, you get me... Yeh my brothers are like hard core, you get me, hard core. Big amounts of drugs coming in, guns getting moved from Manchester to London. That’s what I watched going on around me as a child (Black, British 21 year old).

In other cases, although criminal behaviour was not actively encouraged within the family home, neither was it whole heartedly disapproved of. One participant explained that, while his mother did not condone or excuse his criminal activities, she was prepared to accept them for the financial support they provided her and the family.

Another thing that's attractive to a lot of criminal's mothers is that no matter how much they try to stop them, it starts to get attractive when they realise they're struggling to pay the bills. And you come in the front door, 'Ah mum, there you go mum, no worries'. 'Where did you get this from?' 'Does it really matter?' 'No it doesn't, I'll pay the bills with it' (laughs). You know what I mean? (Black, British 28 year old).

Abuse

In keeping with research which has found that children who are physically abused, or have suffered serious neglect, tend to become offenders later in life (Malinosky-Rummell and Hansen, 1993), just under half the participants said they had been the victim of some form of physical or sexual abuse as children. For most, abuse was habitual and routine, meted out as a matter of course by alcoholic or drug influenced parents, or violent older brothers. In some cases abuse was random, an everyday occurrence; in others it was systematic, ritualistic and disguised as family discipline (Duncan, 1996). Either way, the outcome was the same. The participants described how they suffered regular beatings which frequently resulted in serious injury. For example, they had been “hammered every day”, “beaten to a pulp”, and “in and out of hospital with broken arms and that”. One participant described how behind closed doors, violent abuse was sanctioned in the family home as a means of instilling discipline. Along with his brothers he was regularly locked in the house all day and made to do homework his father personally had set for them. If they failed to achieve the standards expected:

My father used to make me and my brothers kneel down in a row and place family albums, like big albums... and me and my brothers used to hold two albums on each arm and he'd go out for at least an hour or so. And by the time he comes back, if

we'd dropped any of the albums, he'd beat us up. It sent him crazy (Black, British 21 year old).

Undoubtedly, abusive family relationships affected the participants greatly. Research has found that child abuse is most prevalent in poor and socially deprived neighbourhoods, a consequence partly of long work hours, and financial hardship reducing the capacity of parents to supervise their children (Straus *et al.*, 1980). These factors together are thought to influence the development of various problem behaviours associated with crime such as failing at school and running away from home (Graham and Bowling, 1995). For example, one participant explained that, because his father was “a crack addict and was very violent” and his mother had “rent arrears problems and things like that”, he had problems confronting authority at school.

If I tried to concentrate on something it would go out the window, because I wouldn't have the mind or the time to concentrate. And then I would be sitting there thinking about how's my mum, or what's going on, or things like that. And you know, because I was trying to be so close to her, and she was sharing a lot of things with me, and it was kind of hurtful. So if someone said the slightest thing to me at school, I would flip, go off the handle, and I would be just unstable really (Black, British 29 year old).

Experience of the care system

Some of the participants who had been physically abused put up with beatings until they reached an age they were able to fend for themselves and fight back. For example, one participant explained that once he was no longer afraid of his parents, “then the tables turned and that's when they definitely had enough”. In a few cases when this happened, the family member responsible for the abuse left home. In most cases however, the participants themselves escaped the abuse by sleeping rough or in night shelters, living with friends or relations, or putting themselves in to care at a children's home, or with foster parents. Just under a third of the participants had spent time in a children's home or foster care as a result of disrupted family life. Although relationships with their parents had broken down irreparably and therefore it had been necessary to leave the family home, in most cases the

living arrangements they made, or had made for them, within the care system were equally, if not more, erratic than those they had left behind. Frequently, a major reason for this was the inappropriateness of the families and/or the places they had been sent to. A black participant, who with his sister had been placed into foster care with a white family in a predominately white town outside of London, described the problems this caused:

I don't think the woman really understood what pressures she was bringing on herself. The father of the family worked long hours. He worked in London and he commuted every day. So basically she had two kids and I don't think she was really prepared for what that entailed. And she just didn't handle it very well. She had an anger management problem, and she just took it out on me and my sister. Maybe it was a lack of support and other people's judgements. I remember her getting names called in the street and for a white person that's like new. For a black person it's different. She was being racially abused in the street and I think that was probably a shock for her (Black, British 31 year old).

Another participant from Ladbroke Grove, north west London, who at the age of 15 was placed in a children's home in Streatham, south west London, described how this had brought him into contact with rival criminal gangs.

This is going into a dangerous area, but I'll explain some stuff to you. Going there first of all was alright. They wanted to get to know me. They wanted to know who I was. But I didn't know what was behind that, and when I found out I was actually in danger being up there, it was kind of dealt with every day as it came. They tried to get me to nick stuff, go out there and rob things for them. And I was like 'What, I ain't doing that for you lot'. And soon as the morning comes whoosh I was gone... I told my social worker I didn't want to live up there no more. And I got into a big fight. And I also started stabbing guys up there, you know while they was sleeping in the dormitories and stuff like that. So I had to come out. Otherwise I would be doing life, put it that way. So from there I stayed in hotels all over the place (Black, British 31 year old).

Don't blame the parents

Not all the participants came from homes which were criminogenic, abusive or unstable. Indeed, given the personal and social circumstances of their lives, many thought their parents had been supportive, and had done the best they could to bring them up properly.

For example, nearly half the participants described their parents as being “loving”, “decent people”, “law-abiding and hard working”, “strict but fair”, towards them during childhood. Indeed, one participant thought his father’s role within the family home had been exemplary.

My dad is the type of man, he can't read or write, he can read a little bit, but he's not good at spelling and things like that. And he's a contract cleaner, which is a person that cleans carpets and toilets... He's done nothing but work his whole life and never asked for nothing back. He hasn't got any friends he goes out drinking with. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't even... probably has the same pair of slippers for the next ten years. I can't fault him in any way. I've never known anyone like it. He just does everything for the family (White, British 23 year old).

Moreover, in several cases the participants explained that their parents had done the best they could to steer them away from crime. For example, one participant said his parents had been “upset” and another “disgusted” when they found out they had been arrested for the first time. While some parents responded with violence or indifference to their crimes, others attempted to intervene in their lives and confront the problems they thought had influenced their children to become criminals. For example, they attempted to find them employment, sent them to new schools, to stay with relatives, or moved the family to different parts of London away from children they thought were a bad influence on them. On being asked directly whether he thought his family background was a factor in the onset of his criminal behaviour one participant explained:

My parents certainly didn't agree with me when I first got into trouble with the police when I was about 14. All hell broke loose in the house. I remember my mum coming down to the police station. There was a bit of a riot down there because, you know, no son of hers gets into trouble with the police and things like that. So my parents and my family did not have any influence on the fact that I started to offend, simply because they done all that they could to try and prevent it, and didn't influence me in any way by way of example (Black, British 40 year old).

Interestingly, many of the participants who had grown up in single parent families said they understood the hardships their parents faced, and the sacrifices they had made to support them. Research has shown that, due to reduced economic circumstances and a lack of parental supervision, single parent families double the likelihood that children will develop

offending behaviours in later life (Kolvin *et al*, 1988). Just under half the participants had been brought up by a single parent. While some participants said that losing a parent had made them depressed, others were relieved violent and abusive family relationships had come to an end. However, most realised the pressures their parents faced having to support the family financially on their own.

It was hard for my mum bringing up all of us 'cause we was all boys. But she done her best and she did do good. But it was just me. I wasn't listening. I'd get beat from my older brother but my mum would just tell me off. She wouldn't beat me. The love was always there for me. I ran away from home for a few days and said fuck it. And then I'd go back. And yeh, my mum always loved me (Asian 26 year old).

In particular, the need for their parents to work long, anti social hours in poorly paid jobs was mentioned by most of the participants from single parent families. The role of divorce and separation, combined with economic hardship, to weaken family relationships and so free up family members to adopt criminal lifestyles is often ignored in accounts of offending which consider family and parenting separately from social context (Box, 1987). Some participants described the effect on family life of their parents having to work long unsocial hours in order to support and provide for them as they were growing up (Currie, 1997). For example, one participant explained that he rarely saw his mother after the break-up of her marriage:

I hardly ever saw my mum, and if I did it was to make her a cup of tea. Because she was always working, secretarial jobs during the day and cleaning jobs at night and stuff like that. But she's a strong woman. My mum was just looking out for herself and her children. 'Cause if you've been in a relationship and you've just split up, you don't get over that person straight away. So my mum was going through a form of depression as well because like, you know, she didn't have that person to lie down next to at night with, and someone to confer with and, you know, that had all gone out the window. So now she was doing it all herself (Black, British 31 year old).

Another participant explained that, because his mother worked everyday, at an early age he had had to assume responsibility for looking after his younger brother and generally to adopt the role of a surrogate father within the family home.

My mum was living by herself and it was like a hectic time. She'd be going to work and I'd have to look after my little brother because I've got a little brother, so I had to be man of the house. So maybe I had to grow up faster than the average nine year old and ten year old because obviously when my mum goes out I've got to watch over my little brother and settle things in the house that have to get done before my mum comes back (Black, African 23 year old).

Local criminogenic environments

As noted in Chapter One, it is commonplace in investigations of crime and social context to find that poverty during childhood and adolescence impacts significantly on family life, health and well-being, as well as different forms of criminal behaviour (Taylor, 1999). Nearly all the participants said the places in which they had grown up were poor and socially deprived. For example, they were places where there “was nothing to do” and there were “no jobs and no training programmes or support”. One participant offered the following description of the area in which he lived:

It was one of those areas where the local authority would house people with issues I guess, who had problems of one type or another. They couldn't afford to accommodate themselves, so they would get cheap council housing and there would be other issues relating to mental health, poor education, unemployment and stuff like this. It had all the sorts of problems that you get in any council estate (Black, British 40 year old).

More emotively, most participants also described the places in which they had grown up, for example, as “filthy”, “a shit hole”, “a dive”, “poor and racist”, “full of druggies, muggings and crime”. A few thought that growing up in an environment which was socially deprived, and in which a local criminal culture flourished, had from an early age conditioned them to behave criminally. A participant from the Brixton area explained

There was no such thing as a good education, or social services weren't going to do anything for me, or job seekers allowance where I lived. I was a young black kid. They would have carted me off and put me in some home. So in a raw sense I never

had a mind set that I have to work, that I have to earn an honest buck, or be law abiding (Black, British 49 year old).

Criminal behaviour is commonly associated with poor education and a lack of employment. For example, it has been found that three quarters of boys who are excluded from school are offenders (Graham and Bowling, 1995). Most of the participants had a history of poor educational achievement. Nearly three quarters had obtained no qualifications at school, and nearly a third had been expelled for fighting or being disruptive in class. In keeping with an educational ethos which accords little worth to academic achievement within many working class families and communities (Willis, 1977), most participants also displayed a distinct lack of academic ambition in terms of both their past experiences and future prospects.

The onset of criminal behaviour is also commonly associated with a lack of employment and a regular income (Tarling, 1982). However, although unemployment, interspersed with periods of sporadic employment in a variety of unskilled and partially skilled occupations, characterised the lives of nearly all the participants, because nearly half of them had been convicted of a first offence before the age of 16, unemployment must be discounted as a direct cause of their early criminal behaviour. The impact of unemployment on their motivation to offend as they got older was also not proven. More important was a general lack of commitment to the jobs on offer, which most participants, for example, considered to be “dull”, “boring” and “poorly paid”. Therefore, they had a dismissive and cynical attitude towards employment generally, which supported the belief that social and material success could only be achieved through criminal means (Box, 1987).

It is often argued that criminal behaviour is accepted as normal behaviour by many people who live in socially deprived neighbourhoods. For example, Foster (1990) has observed that once criminal behaviour is recognised as part of everyday life in close-knit urban communities it is naturally transmitted from one generation to the next. In addition, Parker (1974) has revealed how low income neighbourhoods can become “condoning communities” in which the value of legitimate forms of employment is negated and a shared hatred of authority is the norm. Certainly many participants described how, as they

got older, they became aware of the criminal activity of people around them. For example, one participant described how in his neighbourhood “everyone was doing something on the side, you know like getting by with stolen gear or selling drugs, or going out thieving or something like that”. Another recalled that “the people I grew up with were the first people I saw with guns, doing armed robberies and doing like syndicate crime”. And another described how a deeply ingrained and cohesive criminal culture within his local community had resulted in criminal activity becoming deeply embedded as an alternative way of life which offered security, belonging and support.

I just stayed within my own community and got involved with what was going on, the way everyone else was surviving, where like the police were them and we were us, and society was them and we were us, and as far as we were concerned we were quite organised within our social, you know, unit kind of thing. So obviously that was a mind set where we thought we were on top of the world. We can take care of ourselves (Black, British 49 year old).

It is of note that many of the black participants referred to their home areas as ‘the hood’, or ‘the ghetto’, an environment they implicitly understood to offer few prospects for social advancement, unless by criminal means. Here criminal behaviour was embraced as being at odds with normal standards of living and fuelled by a strong sense of resentment towards wider society. It was also highly organised, an alternative economy, “organized according to different principles, in response to a unique set of structural and strategic constraints” (Wacquant, 1997: 346), which offered rewards far beyond those likely to be gained through legitimate employment. One participant explained:

There’s two different people in like life in the UK, because there’s like the well off people and then there’s people from the hood and the ghetto who are never like going to like leave the ghetto... They might work, work all their life, but they’re never going to leave the ghetto because either they’ve got bills to pay, or some sort of problem. So that’s why I feel - and a lot of people who I know probably say the same thing right, they might explain it differently, but it’s the best way I can explain it to you Nick yeh - that I feel society made me like this. Oh, people offer drugs to me to sell and bigger people would offer you drugs and it’s a fucking tempting thing, get me, especially when you don’t have no sort of income (Black, African 23 year old).

Crime as play

To some criminologists the idea that criminal behaviour is culturally transmitted between people in close knit urban communities is supported by the fact that “most delinquent conduct occurs in groups; the group nature of delinquent behavior is one of its most consistently documented features” (Warr, 2002: 3). According to Thornberry and Krohn (1977), the effect of peer group influence on criminal behaviour is greater than that of parental supervision and discipline. However, counter to this, it is suggested that because ‘birds of a feather flock together’; individuals who have a prior disposition to commit crime simply seek out similarly minded friends within the community (Glueck and Glueck, 1950). For example, recently Gordon (2002: 194) has argued that “social class and the influence of peer groups... pale in comparison to family factors”. Having outlined in broad terms the personal and social characteristics of the interview participants, the next section explores the extent to which criminal behaviour stems from social interaction (Blumer, 1969) in specific places.

All the participants described how at an early age they made the transition from the family home to the street and became acquainted with large groups of friends from the local area. Having grown up in cramped, overcrowded houses and flats, the street provided a place to play. The open spaces within and around their local neighbourhoods were where the action was; where they could talk and share their feelings in a way they never could at home (Corrigan, 1979). They evoked memories of first finding their way in the world, developing the competence and confidence to express themselves, and mark themselves out as different from their parents (James, 1993). Once they reached an age that their parents were no longer able to restrict their movements, a clear line of demarcation opened up between life inside and outside the family home. Some participants described this as a wilful act of disobedience, a deliberate decision to transgress family discipline.

I wanted to be like my mates. I always wanted to go home late, you know, things like that. But I always got in trouble. I always got in trouble. My mum would say to me, ‘don’t come in late’ and I’d go and repeat the same thing over and over and over

and over again... My mum was always... to really be honest, I used to hate going home (Black, British 27 year old).

Potential friends were everywhere - next door, in flats above and below them, at school, in local playgrounds, and the estates across the road. They remembered streets and backyards, car parks and gardens, playing fields and stairwells in which they congregated and became 'one of the crowd' (Goffman, 1969). A shared attachment to their home areas engendered trust and respect which bound friendships together. Like children everywhere, they felt a close attachment to friends who shared similar biographies and interests as themselves. The appeal of associating selectively with friends who share social characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class was made more meaningful when particular life experiences, as well as personal characteristics such as aggression, humour, similar interests in clothing or music, were also shared.

My friends, they're like proper friends regardless you know. I've realised that we must have just liked each other from the beginning, before we started thieving. They lived close, they went to the same school, I know them and I can trust them 100 per cent. We got together because of the tragedies in our families. When we was sitting down and having a cry together and that was when we realised this is the crowd here (Black, British 33 year old).

In recounting the stories of their early lives, many participants felt a nostalgic yearning for the 'good times' they had growing up. Although they tended to describe their home areas in derogatory terms, compared to their present situation in prison, they were places they had felt comfortable and at ease with themselves. They were also places they associated with freedom and excitement; for example where they had "a good time", "fun and high jinks". Having initially spent their time exploring, playing football, riding bikes and skateboarding, in time they moved on to more youthful activities such as drinking, taking drugs, having sex (Parker *et al.*, 1998); and also fighting, shop lifting, and vandalism. Engaging in high risk behaviour provided stimulation and cemented friendships. In this sense, many participants did not consider that what they had got up to as children should strictly be classified as crime. Instead, it was a normal childhood activity engaged in groups for pleasure and excitement. For example, different participants passed it off as "more like high

jinks than crime”, “just what we did”, “a fun thing to do”, “just getting up to naughty things”, “not going out to commit crime, going out to mess about”.

‘More like high jinks than crime’ - the normalisation of childhood criminal behaviour

It has been suggested by criminologists interested in the phenomenology of crime - the meaning it generates for offenders and the way it is experienced emotionally - that much youthful anti-social activity is motivated by a ‘delight in being deviant’; “a special attraction to excitement, trouble, tests of autonomy, and proofs of toughness, as well as an apparently romantic tendency to abandon life to fate” (Katz, 1988: 117). The idea of crime as play, or as ‘carnival’ (Presdee, 2000) suggests that high adrenalin teenage acts are motivated primarily by a need to party and have fun (Jacobs and Wright, 1999). Moreover, such behaviours are especially attractive to groups of young people who do not have access to more legitimate forms of leisure activity. For example, criminal activities such as vandalism, violence, car theft and shop lifting are thought to be forms of “youth expression and exerting control in neighbourhoods where, more often than not, traditional avenues of youthful stimulation and endeavour have long since evaporated” (Hayward, 2002: 82). One participant described a typical day out with his friends.

We just lived our life for that day. See how far we could go. There was a group of us that used to live on the same road. And we used to hang around, do what we want, when we want. There were about 13 of us, maybe more. Hanging out, drinking, smoking, going round causing trouble, throwing things at people’s doors, damaging people’s cars and all that stuff. You damage someone’s car and people come out of the house and start chasing you down the road and it was just a laugh, just for fun, the buzz of someone chasing you. It’s just like another drug. They used to try and find out where we was living and that. They used to drive round following us, but we used to disappear, go and jump over people’s gardens, go through the church yard, disappear (White, British 22 year old).

Another participant described how as children he and his friends asserted power and authority (Campbell, 1993) over his home area through vandalism and terrorising local residents.

There was quite a few of us at one time, about 30, 40 kids all just milling about. Neighbours would come out, complain and we'd just terrorise 'em... We used to go out and cane the shops you know. There used to be a big group of us, and it used to be called Moss Road, and we used to tear granny out of it. I mean like vandals, stair wells, terrorise people that was walking past. We'd go down the local shops, a whole group of us, just walk in there and just ruck up. You know, just take anything, and there was nothing they could have done. You know they tried locking us in the shop, but we just picked up bins and threw them through the window and just walked out. So just take liberties with them (White, British 33 year old).

The blurring of crime and play in the minds of the participants - the shared belief that crime is a matter of fact, everyday life experience common to all children and, as such, needs no explanation - can usefully be compared to the perspective in much recent 'neighbourhood effects' research that, through a process of 'collective socialisation' (Crane, 1991), behavioural norms are spread naturally between people in close knit urban communities. In social situations where crime is endorsed and accepted as normal and inevitable, criminal behaviour is experienced unconsciously during childhood through social interaction and passed on as a deeply internalised attitude, or a habit (Bourdieu, 1977). As with other forms of behaviour, rather than being learned, and therefore a product of conscious rational decision making, criminal behaviour is a thoughtless disposition, "placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit" (*ibid*: 94) When participants were asked why they had started to commit crime at such an early age, a common response was that they had never thought about it before, or they did not have a reason to explain it. For example, it was "just a way of life", "just what we did", just "normal kids, up to fighting and burgling sheds, things like that". Referring to the standard repertoire of causes for the onset of criminal behaviour, several participants stressed they had not been forced in to crime by external pressures or circumstances; it was simply a way of being. One participant explained:

There was a group of us nicking clothes, shop lifting. It was like... people say its peer pressure. It's not peer pressure, its adolescent innit. I personally will say no one forced me into whatever I done yeh. I'm... when I was doing it, I didn't, I didn't feel like, I didn't feel the urm... how can I put this one... I didn't feel no regrets or hurt that I'm hurting someone. Do you understand what I'm saying? (Black, African 43 year old).

Neither did most of the participants think that their early crimes had been motivated by a lack of money. While some said they started to steal because their parents could not afford to buy them, for example, “chopper bikes, trainers, things that I wanted and my mum couldn’t give me”; others said their families had always provided for them and that “within reason, they bought me pretty much what I asked for”. Initially, what they were stealing was not as important as the act of stealing itself. For example, one participant admitted to stealing “mostly silly things, like sweets and toys”, another to stealing video games and DVDs he already owned, and another to burgling garden sheds for “bikes and lawnmowers”; all things that had no real value, and could not be sold on. Another participant described how as a child crime was committed on a whim, a normal everyday childhood prank, “a spur of the moment thing”.

Like we’d be walking along and say, ‘look Nick, come on, let’s have it’, done. It was a spur of the moment kind of thing. Don’t forget I was only 14. I weren’t involved in any major big things then... We’d go canoeing, we used to go to Shadwell Basin and do canoeing, sailing, all them kind of things, and we were just like a little gang. And if we’d go out and see something we’d nick it, but we weren’t concentrating then on like wake up, one o’ clock, ‘OK come on, we’re going to work now’, bang. It weren’t that kind of scenario. It was just, if we see it, we take it, if it ain’t bolted down, it’s gone (White, British 33 year old).

Another participant described the fun he and his friends had trying to outwit store detectives in his local branch of Woolworths.

I never really looked at why. I think it was just to have things and having a laugh. It started that way. You could say it was like a little fun thing as well. ‘Cause I wasn’t really thinking how I was feeling at the time, ‘cause I was young you understand. It was just, go in there and see if we can outwit the security guards and that (laughs), or the undercover that were in there, the store managers, the store undercover people. So it was... that’s what it was kinda like (Black, British 31 year old).

The importance of being violent

Throughout this time, for many participants the highest risk, and also the most significant youthful activity, was violence. While most of the activities participants engaged in were

communal, taking risks and living life as a challenge was also an important part of the process by which they found out about themselves as individuals. By confronting fear and danger, they tested themselves in the presence of others. An important way of proving to others they were important was by participating in 'character contests' (Goffman, 1967). One participant explained that this mostly involved fighting face to face, to find out "who's bigger and best out of the lot of us. That's the way it used to go. I'm hard. Come and try it and see how far it goes". Winning fights and injuring opponents showed others in the group they could handle themselves physically and demonstrated 'true masculinity' (Connell, 1995). However, as well as being a rite of passage to social acceptance and authority, violence was a social activity which could also be highly stimulating and exciting. One participant explained:

It was something I enjoyed, do you know what I mean? When I look back at it, sometimes it makes me laugh - not laughing at people laying there beaten up, or me laying there beaten up, or anything like that - but I thought it was a laugh when I was doing it so...It was just so much excitement in fighting. It was like a big thing from where I was from being able to fight, because everyone had to (White, British 22 year old).

As well as one to one, fighting was staged in groups, or gangs. Most of the participants described how as children they had joined gangs and fought with children from other areas and schools throughout London. Perhaps for the reason that race and gangs are closely associated in much teenage black culture (Lucas, 1998), it was more common for black participants to speak of gangs in terms of specific identities and territories or 'turfs'. However, although the gangs they belonged to all had names - 'The Bloods', 'The 28s', 'The Untouchables', 'The Brixton Boys', etc. - in comparison to the highly organised structure of gangs in the US (Sanchez Jankowski, 2003), gang membership was mostly age limited, small scale, and carried out for fun and excitement rather than dominance and control over drug markets in rival areas. Indeed, for some participants, experiencing the feeling of violent hedonistic stimulation appeared to be more important than the need to exert power and dominance over other areas. One participant described how he used to enjoy fighting the most when the odds were stacked against him.

We used to go like 30 of us. Sometimes the whole school against 15 of us, and the whole school would come out and we would get battered... It's like you know football hooligans, the same sort of buzz innit. We were young as well, so you know, we used to go out with knives, go out with bars and that (Asian 26 year old).

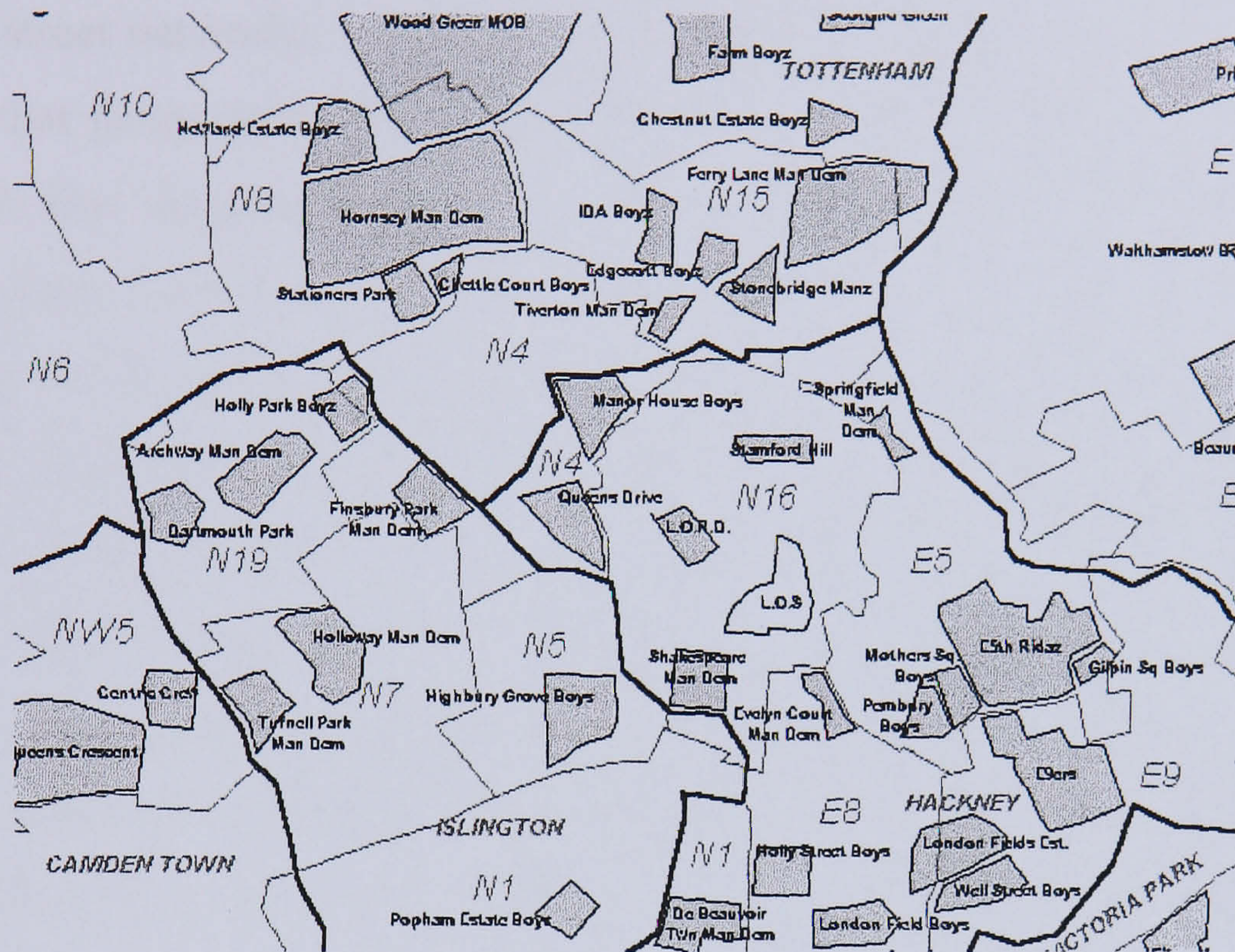
At the same time, being in a gang was an important source of status and prestige for many of the participants. Most importantly, it engendered a sense of pride and loyalty to the area in which they lived. Accordingly, it was important to uphold its reputation. However, it was also important to be aware of other gang territories when navigating public space. All the participants were conscious generally of the fact that “one person’s home ground is another person’s hostile environment” (Bauman, 2001: 89). Therefore, it was often necessary to travel in groups, and to be naturally suspicious of people they did not know. One participant described how the area of Brixton in which he had grown up was clearly marked out, bounded and defended, according to who ‘owned’ specific territories within it:

Brixton's not just Brixton, there's territories. Brixton, going up north, we still owned Streatham, and Streatham even had its own gang that were overthrown by the Brixton Boys. Once Brixton arrives in Streatham, Streatham do not argue, they very much step aside. You know, sometimes you can ask someone from Streatham, 'where you from?', and they'll say 'Brixton' and they hardly ever come to Brixton. They live in Streatham, work in Streatham, girlfriend in Streatham, but they consider themselves Brixton Boys. You know what I mean? You go to Camberwell, which is where Brixton stops, because after Camberwell is Peckham and they're two separate gangs. We're friends, but there is rivalry with Peckham (Black British 28 year old).

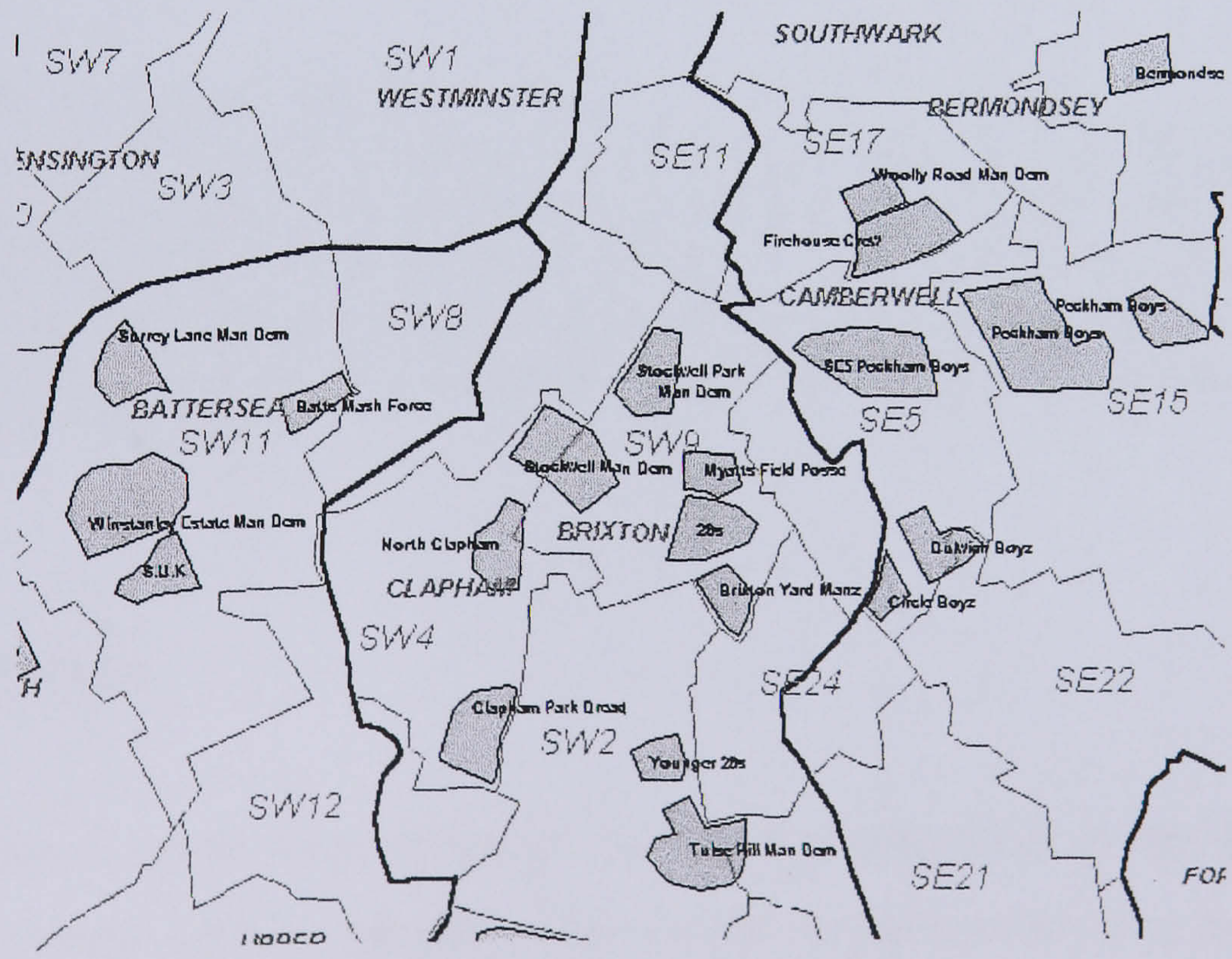
Research carried out recently has revealed the extent to which Greater London has become spatially divided into a mosaic of different gang areas, especially within inner city areas. Although not as stereotypically defined or strictly controlled as gang ‘territories’ in the US, Figure 4.1 reveals the presence of clearly defined areas associated with specific gangs which operate within inner city areas of London, north and south of the river.

Figure 4.1 Gang areas in Central London

North of the river



South of the river



Source: <http://www.piczo.com/gangsinlondon>¹

The map is based on an ongoing study of spatial youth group activity and patterns of drug dealing involving interviews with gang members, teachers, youth workers, local residents, local journalists and the police. It reveals how different gangs, mostly of different ethnic background, associate with and are known to operate within various locales such as housing estates, parks, street networks, car parks and shopping complexes. Information gathered to date suggests that gangs have grown significantly in London since the research began in 2003. Research also suggests that gang activity is increasing in all cities throughout the UK, and that gangs today are more likely to be involved in organised criminal activity, especially drug dealing and to carry weapons and guns (Bennett and Holloway, 2004). This was borne out by many of the participants who described how gang activity and violence had escalated in recent years, and that criminal gangs increasingly had begun to ‘control’ specific areas of the inner city. For instance, they explained that they needed to be constantly alert to the dangers of violence between different parts of London, and some said they knew gang members personally who had been killed or had received life sentences for murder. In particular, gang rivalry between Hackney in east London and Tottenham in north London had intensified into ‘a war’ in recent years in which murder and reprisal attacks had become commonplace. A participant from Hackney explained:

This Hackney and Tottenham thing is a big, big, big thing. If you're from south London, if you're from west London, if you're from north London, no matter where you're from, whether you're involved in it, you know about it. That's how big it is. Over the years I've lost about 10, 13 friends, shot in the head, shot all over the place. You hear what I'm saying, and I could say the same about the Tottenham side as well. They've lost a lot of friends on route as well, and it's still going on (Black, British 21 year old).

Crime as lifestyle

How does crime escalate from trying to outwit store detectives in the local branch of Woolworths to street robbery, burglary, armed robbery and murder? For most participants crime started as an occasional activity, but soon intensified into a career, ‘a way of life’. The total number of convictions participants had received ranged from two to 76, with just

under three quarters having received over five convictions. While this is indicative of a serious criminal lifestyle, which persists despite the threat or the experience of actual punishment, it does not accurately reflect the intensity with which the participants admitted to having committed crime throughout their lives. Except for one participant, who claimed to have only been involved in street fighting, all the participants had committed a large number of different offences before they had reached the age of 21. The most common crimes were theft, usually from shops; taking and driving away; burglary, both domestic and commercial; various violent crimes such as assault and street robbery; drug dealing; fraud; and armed robbery. Two participants were serving life sentences for murder, another had been convicted of manslaughter, and another of attempted rape. In almost every case, crime began at an early age with shop lifting, vandalism and fighting, and then escalated in seriousness to include more organised forms of criminal activity such as street robbery, drug dealing, burglary and armed robbery on a regular, almost daily, basis.

Life course persistent criminals

A range of possible explanations, spanning both psychological and sociological approaches to crime, have been put forward to explain why criminal behaviour increases in seriousness, and is maintained into adulthood by a small number of adolescents who go on to become life-course persistent criminals. These include deep seated individual risk factors such as a deficit in neuropsychological functioning associated with hyperactivity and impulsiveness (Caspi and Moffit, 1995); the negative impact of criminal justice sanctions such as repeated spells of imprisonment (Loeber and Farrington, 1998); on going involvement in delinquent peer groups including criminal gangs (Thornberry and Krohn, 1977); a failure to assume adult roles and responsibilities, exacerbated by drug addiction (Graham and Bowling, 1995); and continued exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage and poverty (Sampson *et al.*, 2002). As with the causes of crime generally, it is common to present explanations of life course persistent criminality independently, although it is also stressed that individual and environmental factors interact (Moffit, 1993).

As we have seen, most participants described how their criminal behaviour developed at an early age as a normal childhood activity, committed mostly on a whim for fun and excitement in the company of friends. In discussing more serious criminal activity however, they were more inclined to describe crime as a behavior which gave them a sense of purpose in life, or defined them as individuals. For example, one participant described how crime became a ritual for him, “like work... like nine to twelve or whatever”. Participants gave a number of reasons for the escalation in their criminal activity. For some it stemmed directly from “the pressure of drugs”. Most of the participants were regular drug users. A third claimed to be recreational drug users, while over a half described their use of class A drugs such as crack cocaine or heroin as problematic. In most cases, because criminal activities preceded their drug use, drugs as a unitary factor cannot be considered a direct cause of their early criminal behaviour. However, as the seriousness of their drug taking grew, crime expanded to include acquisitive crimes such as street robbery and burglary in order to fund increasingly expensive habits. As such, unlike most life course limited offenders, drug use and criminal behaviour became an inseparable part of their everyday lives (Zamble and Quinsey, 1997).

My older brother, the one older than me, I think yeh, I wanted to be like him, 'cause he was involved in gangs and all that. But I suppose when you're young you do them things, and I wanted to be like him you know. But he grew out of it. He settled down and got a restaurant, his wife and kids. He only done it for a little bit you know when he was young. But I just went all the way in (laughs). Fucked up and got into drugs really. That's what fucked me up. None of my brothers got into drugs (Asian 26 year old).

Other participants thought that the escalation in their criminal activities was a consequence of specific childhood experiences; in particular being placed in a children's home, or with foster parents. Considering himself to be the victim of a deprived childhood, and not having had the support and guidance of a stable family background, one participant thought that he had been condemned to a life of crime from an early age.

When I was growing up I never really had anyone to show me the right way, you know the way that I've gone. This is my excuse, I've done things the best I know how, and it's not the right way, but when you're growing up and no one is telling

you it's right and wrong, you have your own perceptions of something, do you see what I'm saying? And my perception is that me committing crime back then, I had to do it to survive. I was out on the streets when I was 14, in and out of children's homes, and so I never had anyone to really love me, or show me the way, to say this is the right way, don't do it like this, do it like that (White, British 33 year old).

Another participant described how his criminal activities became more serious during the time he had spent in a children's home. For example, how he and his friends assumed the behavioural characteristics they thought were expected of them as problem children (Becker, 1963) by breaking out of the home at night and committing street robberies.

Sometimes with children - I know this now right - you attach a label to them, or a stigma to them and they will tend to act up to it. And so we were the bad kids from the children's home. We must of done something bad 'cause we were in a children's home. It couldn't be anybody else's fault but ours could it. It couldn't be circumstances that put us there, or somebody else like irresponsible adults. So obviously you're bad, you go to a children's home. So at certain times we'd go out and we'd know that we were from the children's home, and it was just like how people would treat you. I suppose sometimes you call a dog a dog enough, it's going to bark innit (Black, British 31 year old).

Psychological deficit, drugs, an unstable family background, poor parenting, on going peer influence, and being labelled a deviant are all commonly employed to explain stability of offending over the life course (Smith, 2002). However, the most consistent explanation given by participants for increasing the amount and seriousness of the crime they committed was that it was a pre-meditated and purposeful lifestyle choice. Having enjoyed the thrill and excitement of crime as a childhood prank, they wanted to up the ante, feed their greed, keep the party going. They did not commit crime to survive, because they felt trapped, or because their lives were blighted by an unhappy childhood, poverty or poor parenting. Indeed, some of them did not even feel the need to justify the escalation in their criminal behaviour with a reason at all.

I got into crime because I wanted to get into crime. I'm of the opinion that if you're ever talking to someone and they say, 'Oh, it's because of and but', everything after the because of and but is bollocks (Black, British 40 year old).

Many participants described how crime became an integral part of who they were, and what they wanted to do and achieve in life. Whereas initially, stealing from shops provided them with toys, sweets and video games; as they grew older they developed more adult and expensive tastes for cars, clothes and drugs for example. And crime, they began to realise, was a means to an end; a means of achieving social and material success. Living in neighbourhoods where crime was accepted by many of the people around them, there was no shortage of contacts with which to form criminal gangs, sell drugs or establish arrangements for 'fencing' stolen goods. As such, they soon became embedded in organised adult criminal networks, which engaged in crime primarily because it provided an alternative source of income (Hagan, 1993). One participant described the moment he first recognised crime was more than just fun; that it could be profitable as well:

I started off with silly things, sweet shops, newsagents and chemists. And I think chemists funny enough... you'd go through the labour stage and the baby was actually born in chemists, because the money was slightly bigger. And even if you didn't get money, you got the pharmaceuticals off the shelf that you thought were worth nothing, and you were getting silly offers for them... We were stealing Anadin and people were showing an interest in buying Anadin at half the price off the shelf. And they started questioning you, 'Can you get this? Can you get that?' And you don't know what they're talking about. You've never seen it, but you're going to start investigating into it now, because you've been offered a bit of money (Black, British 28 year old).

As the participants began to make considerable amounts of money through crime, legitimate employment became an irrelevance to them. Although a few had never worked, and insisted they had no intention of doing so in the future, most participants had worked for short periods of time in a variety of manual and/or service sector occupations. In keeping with research which has found that offenders commit twice as much crime when unemployed as in work (Farrington *et al.*, 1986), participants said they had reduced or suspended criminal activities during periods they were employed, while at the same time maintaining contacts with criminal friends and associates. Despite professing a liking for the security of a weekly wage, there were two major reasons participants returned to crime. First, a predilection for leisure activities such as drug taking and 'raving' meant they were unable to conform to employer expectations that they be punctual and perform to reliable

and consistent standards; and second, given that most had no formal qualifications, only repetitive and poorly paid jobs were available to them. Therefore, crime provided far more money than they could realistically expect to make in legitimate forms of employment, which they tended to view as boring and monotonous.

Even when I was doing a job, I was going every day and all that right, doing it because of my mum and that. I wanted to give it a go and see what it was like. But I was never happy get me. Even when my mum said I was going to be much, much happier I was never happy, because the money that I was getting paid was not sufficient enough. Because I could make like exactly the same thing in an hour or something on the streets (Black, African 23 year old).

On being asked why he had returned to crime after working in an estate agent for over a year, another participant replied:

Urm... partly money, and partly just to survive and just live life. The money I was getting wasn't enough to live out in the community. Like I was a young person. I wanted clothes. I wanted to eat good. I wanted to drink. I wanted to smoke weed. I really wanted to impress girls. I wanted a car. There were loads of things I wanted.

NF: Did you get all those things?

Yes I did (laughs) (Black, British 31 year old).

'What you need' - crime and consumption

It is sometimes assumed that 'the reflexive project of the self' (Giddens, 1991) is a prerogative of the wealthy. Whereas relatively poor people are defined by the subject positions they occupy, relatively affluent people have the means to choose lifestyles, and emulate a range of subject positions within society, which structure and change their individual identities (Kellner, 1992). However, Giddens (1991: 6) has written that continuously revised biographical narrative development does not only apply to people in positions of power:

'Lifestyle' refers also to decisions taken and courses of action followed under conditions of severe material constraint; such lifestyle patterns may sometimes also involve the more or less deliberate rejection of more widely diffused forms of behaviour and consumption.

The testimonies of the participants reveal this to be only partly true. While they deliberately constructed a new lifestyle for themselves through crime, in doing so they embraced, rather than rejected, mainstream popular consumer culture. Recalling early criminal experiences they revealed how their lives were foregrounded by a desire to alleviate the background effects of family instability and economic disadvantage on their sense of well being. Aware of their social deprivation relative to others, they rejected their social situation, and attempted to break free from, what has been referred to as, "the degradation of locality" (Bauman, 2001: 38). Based on the presumption that within popular culture what you buy increasingly is an expression of who you are (Lasch, 1980), they attempted to change their lives dramatically by demonstrating an uninhibited capacity to enjoy the pleasures of contemporary consumerism (Young, 2002). From streets and parks they gravitated to new social spaces - pubs, clubs and raves - where they passed themselves off to others as young people of taste and sophistication.

At one place I got 14 grand cash, you know what I mean? Fourteen grand for an hour's work, two hours work. I went Egypt. Cor mate, I was living it large, living it large. There used to be about at least ten of us, ten mates. We all had our nice cars, our nice clothes, our gold, our watches. 'Cause that's all it was, it was material things. You know, who had a Rolex on and who had the thickest chain on, who had the thickest bracelet on (White, British 33 year old).

One participant, whose crimes mostly involved stealing and selling cars, itemised the luxury goods, designer clothes, and leisure pursuits he had spent his money on.

Cocaine, cannabis, couple of pills here and there, never anything else. I had my own car. I had an RS Turbo, legal until I lost the licence, but I still carried on driving. Nice clothes, Versace suits, Gucci shoes, Bling, things like that, what you need, walking around like you got a lot of money. Play stations, computers, things for my flat. Going to nice restaurants, going shopping with my girlfriend. I like splashing out on people I like. Take 'em away, they like it (White, British 21 year old).

Given the circumstances of his upbringing, another participant considered the fact that he had been able to buy expensive clothes, even for a short while, to be something of an achievement.

It started getting pretty wild. Good days. Yeh, I did have a lot of fun. For me growing up with absolutely nothing and going out and having all that fun, that's good times for me, and not having no education like. Clothes, we used to go in some shops and spend like £2,000 each and you'd get like jeans, a shirt and a jumper for like £800 and a pair of shoes for £400 and you'd buy another couple of jumpers for £300 a piece (White, British 22 year old).

Moreover, some participants considered their new criminal lifestyles to be romantic, cool, fashionable; to reflect an image of the gangster as hero derived from popular culture (Hayward, 2004). Instead of considering their criminal behaviour to be a rational, utilitarian response to social disadvantage primarily motivated by financial need, some spoke of crime as an addiction, a powerful seductive influence in their lives. Crime offered them freedom and adventure and was a sign to others of their "superior moral ability to transcend local communal boundaries and move in a spirit of freedom and emphatic self-respect without accepting social limitations" (Katz, 1988: 116). The experiential nature of the offences they committed is indicated by the fact that they did not plan or carry out their crimes carefully in order to avoid detection. Even commercial crimes, such as armed robbery, were often carried out with minimum organisation or calculation of the risks involved (Matthews, 2002). When asked why he and his crew regularly committed up to five armed robberies a night, when he did not need the money and he admitted to being constantly fearful of arrest, one participant explained:

I think it was a buzz, you know what I mean? It was like a gangster image. One time we had so much money round us. And I don't know, just robbing them places, it just seemed to be like a... I don't know, a fetish, do you know what I mean yeh? Cause when I used to stay with like certain girls, I used to like go through my money stash and think ahead and try and humble myself and look forward and think about not doing crime no more yeh. And I used to look at my money and think to myself, I could do things with this money, like invest in something. Do something and not get into crime no more and watch the money come back legitly. 'Cause it only takes a matter of time before the police start watching you, or people that are afraid of you start calling your name to the police, and then wherever you're staying gets kicked

off. But everyone was always down for it. I don't know man, it's just a way of life. Like if we weren't doing something dramatic like that yeh, there weren't no point us being together (Black, British 21 year old).

Another participant described how the thrill of committing crime, combined with the gratuitous consumption of fashion items, and the enjoyment of basking in the status and respect accorded the successful criminal, were all an integral part of the total experience of carrying out bank robberies. Crime was committed not for the money necessarily, but to derive the maximum amount of enjoyment from a day trip into the centre of London, based around an itinerary of unfettered excitement and desire.

It happened so many times. We'd go to West End, do a robbery in West End, an exchange bureau. The Abbey National was the prime target most of the time. From the robbery, jump in a getaway car, bus, taxi, we even took London transport some times as getaways. And from there, from the robbery, we'd go straight to like Cecil Gee's, buy an outfit, take off the clothes that we'd done the robbery in, put them in the bag, so we can dump them when we walk out the shop. Walk out the shop in our brand new clothes and then just go and get high on our marijuana, cannabis or whatever you want to call it, for a few hours until the rave starts. And then it's the respect, 'Ah! You did the Abbey National today, yeh wicked mate, yeh, champagne's on me'... It was like scoring a goal, you felt like an England goal scorer. When you were running away, you'd start giggling. You'd be running down the street, money in your hands, looking at each other 'ha ha ha ha' (laughs hysterically). And then that night you'd go and get your prize so to speak. The money was part of the prize, but there was still more prize to come. Women throw themselves at you. You'd look at pictures of how you were dressed the night before thinking yeh I look like David Beckham there, I look like Puff Daddy there. It was crazy man. (Black, British 28 year old).

Leaving home - offender mobility

As described in Chapter One, it is commonly assumed that in socially deprived urban neighbourhoods geographical differentiation has resulted in communities of people who have a fairly restricted activity space (Massey, 1999). As a consequence of being on the receiving end of space/time compression, throughout their daily lives they make only short-range, routine journeys (Gollege and Stimson, 1997). Today, immobility is generally considered to be "the main measure of social deprivation and the principal dimension of

unfreedom” (Bauman, 2001: 38). However, while spatial exclusion is a distinct characteristic of cities within the US, European cities are not spatially defined in the same way (Young, 1998). As described in the previous chapter, Greater London is not divided into distinct zones of poverty and affluence which allow no movement between one and the other. Although there are uniform patterns of social deprivation, neighbourhoods are not so isolated or closely controlled that they have developed separate cultural identities. Instead, people of different social class and ethnicity live and work together in close proximity, and their movement out of and into the neighbourhoods they inhabit varies enormously (Massey, 1997).

While the spatial activities of offenders who cease to offend relatively early in life tend to be routine and local (Wiles and Costello, 1992), as they get older, life course persistent offenders become more mobile. So called ‘criminal entrepreneurs’ think about place and space differently. In the UK, since the middle of the last century, when town planners separated housing areas from places of work and commerce, offenders have travelled to find the greatest rewards, particularly when the local neighbourhoods they come from are blighted by poverty and neglect (Morris, 1957). In search of new criminal opportunities and greater returns, career criminals tend to franchise and develop ‘business’ networks over a much wider area. As such, they loosen, and sometimes completely break free of, attachments to their home neighbourhoods. According to Mack (1964: 43)

The majority of persistent criminals today live in a neutral neighbourhood, or keep on the move. A criminal community may be predominately a network of communications over a wide region with some kind of foothold in various neighbourhoods but not tied to these neighbourhoods. The important thing is no longer a place but a system of social relationships and functions, including a status system.

As they explored different parts of London, many participants explained they no longer considered the places in which they had grown up to be home. In expanding networks of social relations, their experiences and understandings of space and place began to encompass a wider world, of routes across the city landscape, not roots within it (Massey, 1998). It is common for theories of place and space to stress that the attachment between

people and place is most manifest in the home, the family home, or the feeling of being at home within a specific neighbourhood or community. This is contrasted with the sense of adventure and excitement to be derived from venturing into the unknown, from escaping mundanely familiar social situations, and meeting new people (Seamon, 1979). For most of the participants, as the seriousness of their crimes increased, the home neighbourhoods in which they had previously derived most meaning and value in their lives were supplanted by new places which enabled them to establish a new identity for themselves based on a career as a 'professional' criminal.

Initially, a good reason for leaving home was that within their local communities they had developed reputations for themselves. For example, one participant explained that because he and his friends had become known to the people around them as "little thieves and thugs", they had been banned from local shops and constantly targeted by the police. Furthermore, a few participants expressed a sense of loyalty towards the people they had grown up with, encapsulated in the code of conduct: "you do not dog on your own doorstep". Home was where their families lived, and where friends and neighbours were more likely to become aware of what they were up to. Therefore, in order to remain anonymous it was in their interests to explore new areas of the city.

I have a philosophy, never dog on your own doorstep. So I'd go like Harrow on the Hill or Harrow and Wealdstone which is like west London but far, far away. And I'd have my little gang up there. So I was far away from family like cousins and relatives, so they wouldn't see nothing that was going on. They couldn't tell my mum anything and basically I'd be down there doing what I want to do. It turned from shops to actually people and robberies, street robberies you understand, and like very bad street robberies (Black, British 31 year old).

In addition, they had come to realise that criminal opportunities in their home neighbourhoods were limited; that, for example, "people around me didn't have much more than I had you know". Therefore they sought out new crime locations where rewards were greater. London, because it has a dense, concentrated and heterogeneous population which is also relatively unsegregated, offers numerous opportunities for criminals to live and work unnoticed in close 'proximity with strangers' (Young, 1990b). In such social circumstances,

“deviance is the freedom made possible in a crowded city of lightly engaged people” (Sennett, 1990: 126-7). Some of the participants set up home in one area, passing themselves off to their neighbours as respectable, law abiding citizens; while going out everyday, as if to work, to commit crime in other areas. One participant explained:

What you have to understand is that I might live in Battersea or New Cross but my activity was in Brixton. Brixton was where I made my money. Obviously, as we started to gain notoriety for ourselves, people started to live double lives didn't they. Basically, you wanted to live, and be to neighbours that respectable person that was bringing their kids up and taking their kids to school and all that. But you know, on the other side of that, the house was stacked with gear (laughs). It's the truth (Black, British 49 year old).

Some participants described how they developed networks of associates and instrumental alliances in different parts of London based around particular types of crime. In a few cases these involved small, closely organised business partnerships or syndicates, which - from the little information they were prepared to divulge - appeared to mostly involve drug dealing (Hobbs, 1995). However, rather than being instrumental alliances of criminal ‘business entrepreneurs’, for the most part they were loose, off the cuff arrangements, which formed as a consequence of chance meetings on the street. For example, motivated by boredom and frustration with his immediate peer group, one participant explained that he “bounced around”, trying out different crimes with different gangs from other areas. Another participant explained that by joining together for the day with gangs from different areas he would “run with the pack” and ‘steam’ through trains, buses and crowded shopping centres. Another participant described how he used to “use loads of decoys” and “bundle shops with loads of people”.

When we started getting more serious about the money and we couldn't afford to go on a robbery and come out unsuccessful, we would bundle the shop with loads of people. Sometimes we'd even go out of our way to find people that weren't interested in crime and say to them, 'Look just go in there and pack out the shop and be my decoy and meet me in half an hour and I'll sort you out for it'. So at that stage there was 15, 20, 25 people at a time (Black, British 28 year old).

On enquiring how they knew where to find other like minded criminals, it was common for participants to respond that through everyday social interaction on the street, “you just know how to find people”. One participant explained how he had become involved in other gangs as a consequence of meeting girls from other areas. Another described how the highly visible nature of drug consumption and drug dealing in London made it possible for him to develop contacts with large numbers of other drug users.

You just know where people are. That is their habitat and you get to know them. You just... if you've got drugs they'll speak to you, that's pretty much how it is... When I first started, all this crack was up Brixton Hill and then the police raided these places up Brixton and it went back to Camberwell. So everyone kind of follows the crack. Now, when I went down to Camberwell, I got to know a whole new set of Camberwell people and then some of them took me round to Walworth Road. And it just goes on like that and you see the same people. You know, I see half of them in here (referring to prison) (White, British 23 year old).

As with criminal activities generally, in the main joint criminal activities which involved travel were carried out with little planning or skill. For example, crime was committed casually, on the move, whenever “it seemed like a good idea at the time”. Even participants who committed commercial robberies - crimes which as a rule require a greater degree of care and sophistication than opportunistic crimes such as street robbery or car theft - usually carried them out with little research or planning. It has been suggested that the lack of a rationale for where, when or how crime is committed is typical of much criminal activity today which involves “haphazard, essentially amateur excursions featuring minimal planning, a low level of competence, and a lack of commitment to specialized criminality” (Hobbs, 1995: 9). One participant described the indiscriminate way his gang chose crime locations for armed robberies outside of London.

I've done robberies in places I wouldn't know how to get there or from there today. All I know, I would look on the train map, Anyone been there?' 'No'. 'Alright we're going there then', and we'd jump on the train for an hour there, pick somewhere at random (Black, British 28 year old).

Indeed, participants who travelled regularly and far to commit crime appeared to do so as much for the fun, adventure and excitement of visiting new places as for the criminal

opportunities they offered. Again, from the way they described their criminal activities it was apparent that their criminal behaviour was not motivated by rational calculation or self interest, as rational choice criminological perspectives suggest; but instead was wild, crazy and spontaneous. For example, one participant said he regularly stole cars on a whim “just to drive and get out of London”. Another recounted his experiences in different crime locations throughout the UK as if they were holiday excursions.

We used to go on the train up and down the country. Like we'd go to Scotland Devon, Kent, Brighton way. We used to stay in hotels, like five star hotels. We were having a good time. We was young, we was wild, really wild. Used to drink and have girls around us all the time. Smart clothes, nice cars and yeh...up and down the country. Manchester, we used to love Manchester, and then we'd go Bournemouth, then we'd go Dover, then we'd go Skegness. We used to be up and down all the time. Like we'd drive there, and then we'd start stealing cars out of show rooms (White, British 22 year old).

Conclusion

This chapter has described how the participant's attachment to the places they inhabited during childhood and adolescence gradually changed over time. Initially they thought of the places they grew up in as 'playgrounds', places of excitement where they could express themselves in a way they never could at home. At an early age, a desire to engage in high risk and often violent, adrenalin fuelled pursuits tipped over into crime, which most of them considered to be a normal childhood activity. As they got older, and as they became aware of the potentiality of crime to satisfy a growing desire for material possessions and more adult forms of excitement, 'crime as play' gave way to 'crime as lifestyle', or 'crime as a way of life'. Some retained contact with the places they had grown up, but for many an escalation in criminal activity necessitated an increasingly nomadic lifestyle. Throughout, criminal behaviour developed as a consequence of purposeful human agency acting in conjunction with situational context (Sampson and Laub, 2005). Although some participants attributed their criminal behaviour to specific personal and social characteristics such as having spent time in a children's home or living in a poor, crime ridden community, most described the escalation in their criminality as a deliberate

decision to achieve money, success and social status in the only way they thought was available to them. Having become inured to crime during childhood, and motivated by a desire to transform the personal, situational and social circumstances of their lives through consumption, they did not question the appropriateness of pursuing the gratifications and rewards a fully committed criminal lifestyle can bring.

Of course, persistent criminality is not without its downside. For many offenders it ultimately leads to prison; an experience which, for a time at least, puts an end to crime, as well as the excitement, respect and social status associated with it. On being imprisoned, the participants were faced with a different spatial experience altogether: one that is strictly monitored, highly regimented, and deeply invasive. The effect on the participants of repeated spells of imprisonment is described in the following chapter.

Notes

¹ This is not an academic, or an official, source. The website was started independently to store information for an academic dissertation on London gangs which at the time of writing has not been completed. The website developed as a consequence of the attention it received from writers and researchers searching for information on London gangs. It includes: detailed descriptions and maps of specific areas in which gangs are known to operate in Greater London; a list of gang names by area; gang histories and area profiles; gun and knife crime and gang prevention links; and a discussion forum.

Chapter Five

'On the in' - the impact of imprisonment

Introduction

What is known about the impact of imprisonment on prisoner behaviour is mainly derived from research which has sought to explain why it is that prisoners, for the most part, remain compliant when they significantly outnumber their captors (Matthews, 1999). As described in Chapter One, answers to this question have emphasised the controlling effects of imprisonment, in particular the security and surveillance methods employed; but also how prison rules and regulations tend to institutionalise prisoners causing them to behave submissively. Recently, the incarceration of increasing numbers of violent prisoners has prompted calls for the research literature on the impact of imprisonment to be updated (Wacquant, 2002). Today, although full scale prison riots are relatively rare, violence and robbery in prisons are a daily occurrence (Edgar *et al*, 2003). Furthermore, increasingly high rates of reoffending by ex-prisoners have focused attention on the extent to which prisons can be considered to be agencies of reform. It has been suggested that, although changing the behaviour of convicted criminals remains fundamental to the overall purpose of imprisonment, despite nearly a century of sociological analysis, we still do not have “a clear-headed understanding of what imprisonment means and what it does” (Pryor, 2001: 1).

In particular, the extant research literature on prisons lacks a prisoner perspective. Apart from the written testimonies of a small number of prisoners who have published autobiographical accounts of life in prison (for example see Leech, 1992; Turney, 1997), there is little research on what prisoners themselves think about the impact of prison. Given that “imprisonment is ultimately an experience which only those who have been incarcerated can adequately relate” (Morgan, 2002: 1160), this is a fundamental omission.

Gender differences between how men and women resist imprisonment (Bosworth, 1999), or reintegrate back into society (Eaton, 1993) have been addressed; but there are few detailed descriptions of how prisoners of different age, or who are serving different sentence lengths for example, respond to imprisonment in general, or to different prison situations and contexts in particular. Most importantly, the impact of imprisonment on decision making processes involved in reoffending and/or criminal desistance has been ignored. As we have seen, research on prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration has assessed the impact of changing objective variables such as the way treatment programmes are managed and administered, or the design of vocational training courses, but has tended to overlook how prisoners make sense of these changes subjectively in relation to the personal and social circumstances of their lives before, during and after prison (Matthews and Pitts, 1998). This chapter explores these issues by presenting the views of the participants in relation to four major characteristics of imprisonment: initial prison experiences, relations with other prisoners, 'doing time' and everyday life in prison, and preparations for release.

Initial prison experiences

Most participants had served time in a large number of different prisons. These included local prisons in London, as well as young offender institutions (YOIs) and training prisons in various parts of England and Wales. Prison was first experienced between the ages of 15 and 20, firstly in one of the local remand prisons in London, and then after they were sentenced - depending on their age at the time and the period of time they were imprisoned for - either in a borstal, a detention centre, a YOI, or an adult training prison.

First time in - the reception period

Given that most participants were imprisoned at a relatively young age, it was common for them to react to the prospect of going to prison for the first time with apprehension, fear and alarm (Harvey, 2005). Only a few claimed to have had no fear of prison, or that they

were indifferent to it. One participant, who prior to coming to prison for the first time was homeless and had a serious drug problem, thought it was “just another shit thing in my life, if you haven’t got anything anyway, what difference can prison make”. And another, who had friends who had been to prison before him, said he was “superstitious to see what it what like, get the feel of it”. However, in making the transition from ‘street to prison’, most participants admitted to being anxious about what they had seen on television or read in the newspapers about violence in prison, and so were concerned for their safety. For example, they had been “shit scared of the way things were, doors banging all the time”, or “nervous that I didn’t know no one”. One participant said he had spent his first few days in prison “crying my eyes out”. Another participant described his first few weeks in a Victorian built remand centre as a dramatic contrast to the life of freedom and excitement he had been used to outside:

It was one of the most mentally challenging experiences I’d had in my life. I remember spending one or two weeks in Rochester Prison and the cell was tiny, very little air coming in and out. It was hot summer and humid and I was locked up in that cell for at least seven days straight without ever coming out. I was allowed out twice for a shower and once to get my canteen. The food was brought to the cell door. There was no gymnasium and no reading material. And basically it was like laying on your bed staring at the ceiling literally for 24 hours a day. So it was tough. And at that point I really didn’t think I was going to be able to make it through the sentence. Although it wasn’t telling on my behaviour, I was really suffering (Black, British 40 year old).

Previous research has found that the reception period of a prison sentence can be particularly distressing; especially for young first time prisoners and can lead to severe mental depression and suicide (Liebling, 1999). Given the hedonistic lifestyle of most participants immediately prior to imprisonment, perhaps it is not surprising that the need to adjust to confinement and a strictly ordered routine initially had a ‘mortifying’ effect on them (Goffman, 1961). However, most explained they had grown accustomed to prison relatively quickly; that initial misgivings dissipated as they became more familiar with their surroundings and they realised prison was not as hard, threatening or claustrophobic as they had been led to believe by their limited knowledge of it outside (Jones and Schmid, 2000). Some even insisted that after a short while they had begun to enjoy everyday life in prison.

For example, once he had been processed into the system, instead of presenting him with a hard physical and mental challenge to contend with one participant found that prison was “quite relaxed actually”. Another said that after a few days he found it was “a laugh on the wings and that with a load of people”. And another participant explained:

You get used to it. You get used to it within the first week. You have to, the first three weeks of being in prison is the worst time. After that, it's like everyday life. It becomes everyday life (Black, British 31 year old).

Violence and young offender institutions

However, while it may be 'relaxed' or 'a laugh' for some, the ability to cope with everyday life in prison is dependent on a facility to deal with violence. Although violence is a fact of life generally in prison - where “the acts of violent men... sustained by a culture of masculinity, which idealises and equates personal power with physical dominance, reflects the world outside” (Scruton *et al*, 1991: 67) - conflict problems tend to be most prevalent in YOIs (Sparks *et al*, 1996). On entering a YOI for the first time, the participants soon discovered that the pervasive threat of violence in the cells and on the landings mirrored the violence they had grown up with outside. Having previously participated in gang attacks and fights in the streets, pubs and clubs near to where they lived, most had grown inured to violent confrontation. As such, they responded to bullying and intimidation in kind and with a marked degree of casualness. For example, because they had “been around violence”, they knew “what to do when push comes to shove”. Dealing with violence in prison was simply a matter of living “by the same rules inside as on the street”. On being asked to explain specifically how the experience of fighting in the area he had grown up helped him cope with violence in prison, one participant remarked:

I just kept myself to myself and when people come to me to cause trouble I dealt with it. I dealt with it my way. I'm quiet, but I'll flare up any time. The way I thought, the way I was brought up, it made me stronger. I just shut myself off (White, British 22 year old).

A common theme in the narratives was that violence in YOIs is mostly about “mind games” and fuelled by mindless aggression, for example “anger and madness”, “cussing people out the window” and “stupidness, like insulting your family”. At the same time, again reflecting their lives outside, violence is also the means by which young offenders achieve power, authority and respect amongst their peers. For example, some participants described how fights were staged in the open, in front of witnesses, “like some proving thing, to see who was badder than who, you get me”. Sometimes they were staged in front of prison officers, “so you know it’s going to get split up, so you save face, but you don’t actually get hurt”. Most importantly, a capacity for violence elevated prisoners to positions of power within a hierarchical system of prisoner relations based around the control of illicit trading networks (Valentine and Longstaff, 1998). Therefore fights were provoked deliberately, for example to “make sure everyone knew I could, and was willing, to fight”. Once a reputation for violence was established, it was possible to monopolise the supply of contraband such as phone cards, food, cigarettes, and most important of all drugs. One participant described how through violence and intimidation he had coerced other young offenders to work for him.

You had to have, like, they were called your boys. They would clean out your cell, they would give you their money, they would do anything you wanted them to do. And you might give them cigarettes, and you would send them out to go and sell cigarettes, and you would give them phone cards, and you’d send them out to go and sell them. And at the end of the day they would come back with a list of names of all the people they’d sold various products to. And at the end of the week they would go and collect it again. And if there was any problem with collection, then you would go and collect. But there never was any problem with collection, because they knew who you were (Black, British 40 year old).

It might be assumed that in describing violence in YOIs there was a tendency for some participants to glamorise their capacity for toughness. Only one participant, who claimed to have been attacked repeatedly in prison, admitted that he was incapable of defending himself. However, although most participants claimed they could handle themselves in a fight, any bluster on their part that they were ‘hard men’ was tempered to an extent by the negative way they spoke about prison violence generally. Large numbers of prisoners are victims of violence, especially in YOIs, and most participants described incidents in which

they had seen prisoners suffer appalling beatings and injuries, including sexual abuse and stabbings. As a consequence, once they were old enough, all of them had been pleased to leave YOIs behind and move on to adult prisons where the threat of violence was not as intense. One participant explained that in YOIs “they will plunge you, they will leave you bleeding, so you’d better know what you’re doing”. Another described how “people were hanging themselves in there, you couldn’t relax, not a very nice place”. Adult prisons, on the other hand were “a different experience altogether. A lot more relaxed in terms of the actual regime and the way people related to each other”. One participant explained that adult prisoners find ways to not draw attention to themselves, avoid trouble, and, as such, are “less against the system all the time”. He continued:

Adult gaols are more easy to get on. You got no young idiots running around doing stupid little things. Some of those you get in here, but it usually gets dealt with in the prison, not by the prisoners, who deal with it their way. In YOIs it got dealt with with razor blades and all that stuff. A lot of violence (White, British 22 year old).

Although they admitted to having been the same way themselves, many participants now considered young offenders to be, for example, “disgusting”, “bitter and twisted”, and to have “only one way of thinking” The participant quoted previously - who as a young offender controlled the sale of contraband - explained how when he was in a YOI he felt that he had had no choice but to engage in violent behaviour in order to survive.

Young people of that age group are terribly cruel and wicked to each other, everyone was hyperactive and always had a point to prove. So in order to avoid becoming an outcast, I found myself having to do things I never dreamed I would be doing. I had no choice but to get into it. But in reality I was a lot less of a bully, at least I like to think I was a lot less of a bully than.... (trails off).... I mean I befriended two guys from north London, both white, who I became very good friends with. In the end they both got shipped out because of the bullying. One of them was beaten senseless. The other one (long pause)... I managed to be able to establish a strong enough relationship with him to keep everybody off his back as long as I could. I mean I would speak to people and say ‘No, he’s alright, he’s safe’. But once (starts to laugh), once Mad H from Peckham Rye comes in mate, it’s all over, do you know what I mean? (Black, British 40 year old).

Prisoner relations

So far in this chapter the initial feelings of participants towards imprisonment have been described. It has been shown that in important respects the way young offenders relate to each other through antagonism and violence is a microcosm of their lives outside (Sykes, 1958). However, as the participants spent longer in prison and their knowledge of it increased, they began to respond in different ways to the conditions of their confinement. For example, depending on the personal and social circumstances of their lives outside they developed different understandings about the meaning of prison - what it is for, how it is designed and run, what to do to pass the time and so on. This next section explores the impact of prison environments on prisoner behaviour and emotions and how, in particular, this affects prisoner relationships.

The need to belong

As described in Chapter One, recent research has suggested that prison culture in the US has become more violent and gang rivalries more inflamed as a consequence of increasing numbers of prisoners from the same residential areas being imprisoned together (Wacquant, 2001). To assess whether a similar situation pertains in London prisons, the interviews investigated whether participants felt they shared a common residential location and/or background with other prisoners. Owing to the possibility of betrayal and deception, criminal network analysis has found that offenders generally are extremely wary of entering into relationships with people whose reputations they are unsure of (Chattoe and Hamill, 2005). As a result, most criminal gangs or 'crews' tend to be comprised of small groups of individuals who know each other well. As described in the previous chapter, such alliances are likely to be formed at an early age amongst groups of people who live in the same area, and commonsense suggests that, if and when offenders from the same local neighbourhoods are imprisoned together, criminal alliances or networks carry over into prison.

In order to cope with everyday life in prison, the tendency to fall back on the support of a small circle of friends with whom they had associated previously outside was a common theme in all the narratives. For example, one participant thought that the best way of 'doing time' in prison was "to stay in your own group... and keep yourself to yourself". Another explained that "all prisoner relations are built around where you come from, and everyone sticks to the people they know". Associating with prisoners from their home areas provided participants with safety and security, as well as company and support. Therefore being associated with a particular place of residence in prison was important.

There's all little groups in here. Everyone's got their little groups. There's a group from Stratford, there's a group from Dagenham, and a group from all different places. And we all know each other and we're just all friends and we try not to go out of our little circle. At least you know you can trust each other (White, British 22 year old).

Another participant explained that on going to prison for the first time knowing people 'from road' helped him settle quickly to everyday life inside.

Pals were there and people you knew from road and they make it easier for you. You know you get a puff, you get a puff in the day time and keep it until you're banged up, and you've got something to get your head down with (White, British 33 year old).

Obviously, the fact that participants were held in local London prisons increased the chances considerably that they would know people from their home neighbourhoods. For example, of the two prisons in London in which most of the interviews were conducted: HMP Brixton - because it accepts trial, remand and convicted prisoners from courts in the south of London - contains large numbers of prisoners from Brixton, Peckham and Streatham; and HMP Pentonville - because it accepts prisoners from courts in the north east of London - contains large numbers of prisoners from Tottenham, Hackney and Dagenham. However, given that as the seriousness of their crimes increased many participants began to travel around London and become involved with wider criminal networks, it was likely they would also know, either personally or by reputation, prisoners from other parts of the city. In order to investigate the extent to which participants were part of a distinct social

network of criminal relationships, they were asked to estimate how many prisoners they were presently incarcerated with that they had known previously outside, either as a friend, acquaintance, associate, or someone they were aware of by reputation. All the participants said they knew prisoners they had known previously outside. The minimum number of prisoners they said they knew was “about 12”. The majority said they knew between 30 and 70 prisoners. And a few claimed to know “literally hundreds” of prisoners. One participant in HMP Brixton claimed: “I know about 60 per cent of this prison from outside”.

The insularity of the social worlds (Coles, 2001) inhabited by persistent criminals was particularly borne out by the testimonies of participants who had been to YOI Feltham. As currently the only YOI in Greater London, 69 per cent of the juvenile and 70 per cent of the young adult population in Feltham is drawn from a 50 mile catchment area (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2005b). Yet, although its population is drawn from all parts of London - north, south, east and west - as one participant explained “in Feltham everyone knows everyone else”. Some participants described how on entering YOI Feltham for the first time they had been approached immediately by prisoners who knew who they were. One participant explained why this had made him feel good about himself and why, as a consequence, he had tended to live up to his violent reputation

Most of them knew me yeh. I wasn't really good with names, but faces I could remember. Every one knew me or heard of me yeh. And, I don't know, like a boost thing... people used to like boost each others names and that would create, I don't know, bad behaviour or rep. Do you know what I mean? (Black, British 21 year old).

Another participant explained:

Feltham had already been paved for me coming from Brixton. I had a reputation before I ever stepped in there. So a lot of the time they'd say, 'Who are you?' I'd say, 'I'm Ant'. 'What Ant from Brixton?' 'Yeh, right'. And, 'Oh, I've heard of you'. So very much I was alright. 'Cause a lot of people I know they've already been in there. My name's come up in conversations or arguments or gossip, whatever. It was just for me to prove that I was this way and, you know what I mean, I wasn't a coward (Black, British 28 year old).

Gang activity in prisons

A major outcome of the tendency for social networks in prison to reflect those outside was that participants adhered to groups and factions according to the area of London they came from. As noted in Chapter One, in some US prisons the organisation and cohesiveness of street gangs has become the determinant feature of prison culture (Jacobs, 1979). Indeed, it has been suggested that gang activity is now so prevalent it has destabilized the entire social system of prisoners, forcing it “to shift from ‘doing your own time’ to ‘doing gang time’” (Wacquant, 2001: 111). Overall, participants did not consider a similar situation pertains in UK prisons. Although they were aware of gang rivalry - which they said was imported from outside and “doesn’t change in the system” - it had not reached a level of organisation or sophistication that it affected their lives on a daily basis. For example, one participant described it as “mostly small scale stuff. Your friends might have a grievance with some other guys, nothing to do with you, but you’re brought into it because it’s your pals”. Nevertheless, many participants thought gang activity in prison was increasing, especially amongst younger prisoners. One participant described how immediately after being admitted to YOI Feltham he had been recruited into a gang:

Feltham is like what I used to get outside. Gangs, this area, that area and everyone wants to prove something, you know, fighting. It’s like when you go in, as you go in, you just get picked and taken, you know what I mean? And before you know it, you’re already in it. It’s like areas now, like east, west, north, south and that (Asian 26 year old).

It would be surprising if, in terms of security and control, prison staff were unaware of the threat of violent gang activity. Officially, HMPS has developed national policies to regulate the interior space of prisons to reduce bullying and violence, such as by segregating violent prisoners in separate accommodation blocks, or on separate wings. In addition, because prison officers in specific prisons have leeway to “manipulate the system to achieve more individual objectives” (McDermott and King, 1988: 369), several participants described how staff allocated prisoners from the same area to specific accommodation blocks in order to keep different groups of prisoners apart. This practice is particularly evident in local prisons, where rival gangs from neighbouring areas are more likely to come into contact

with each other. However, in large metropolitan areas like London which contain several local prisons, it is also frequently the case that significant numbers of prisoners do not come from areas that are local to the prison they are held in. For example, depending on where they were arrested and the court they were tried in, prisoners from east London can serve time in local prisons in south or north London. Therefore, responding to the threat of violent confrontation between prisoners from different parts of the city, as well as different neighbourhoods within it, is key to maintaining security and control in local London prisons.

As a consequence, many participants explained they had to be constantly aware of how prison staff organised accommodation blocks, and which wings and landings individual prisoners, or groups of prisoners, were held on. For example, one participant from east London explained that he would not attend education classes because he would have to move wings, and the accommodation block in which the education department was housed was “like the fucking Bronx. South London versus East London. A fucking war down there”. Another participant from Hackney explained that because of his past involvement in violent gang activity he had to be careful to avoid certain prisoners from Tottenham.

Being from Hackney, I couldn't be put on specific wings. I couldn't go to specific gaols because knowing certain people in them gaols, I know I would be putting my life in jeopardy, or putting their life in jeopardy (Black, British 21 year old).

Another participant described the problems that can arise when prisoners who are first admitted to prison do not know which prisoners from which areas have been allocated to which accommodation blocks.

If you don't know about the wings, you will go on there blinded, not knowing who anybody is. You might see a couple of guys from your area and they will, you know, give you the information really and truly this is an east London wing. So know just how you step, you understand? You can ask to move, but you have to give a good enough reason. If they want to put you on a wing where there's loads of east London and you're from north, you're going on that wing, whether you like it or not. They can do that, they have the power to do it. If they don't like you, like the look of you, you ain't getting nothing. You're on your own (Black, British 31 year old).

Reading prisoners' behaviour

Although generally prisoners share similar social characteristics (Walmsley *et al.*, 1992), only a few participants thought they have a common outlook on life, or a mutual understanding of their prisoner status. Some acknowledged that prisoners have certain things in common - a lack of education, an unstable family background, a drug habit for example - but this had not cohered into a unified response to imprisonment. Instead, prisoners could be extremely unpredictable and capricious in how they responded to everyday life in the cells and on the landings. Living in overcrowded and cramped conditions, and having no privacy from one another, often caused them to behave in ways that were difficult to read. Therefore, the participants explained it was necessary to not become too closely involved with prisoners who they did not know personally. It was also important, for example, "to judge people's character and you learn to do that quickly". Another participant explained that because "what you see in people's attitudes are often not what's going on in their heads, you have to keep alert".

By far the most common way to behave in prison - a form of prisoner adaptation invoked by the participants so often it appeared to have been accepted as established practice and was recited over and over again like a mantra - was "to keep yourself to yourself". On being asked to explain what this meant in terms of everyday life in prison, one participant responded: "I put myself in the cell and fucking never come out unless I need to, because I don't want to fucking talk to no one". Others explained it meant distancing yourself emotionally, for example, "to not get too involved", and "to keep your head down and just get on with it". Some participants also explained it was necessary to "re-programme yourself in prison"; in other words, to become someone different, and hide your true personality.

On the out I'm really sociable; do you know what I mean? Yeh, I like getting to know new people all the time. But in here, I don't know, I feel like I don't really want to get involved with so much people. You can be frustrated because like your true inner self's like, I don't know, yearning to come out of you, do you know what I mean? But you don't want people getting too comfortable with you (Black, British 21 year old).

Let's talk about drugs and crime

Although participants described prison as a small world, where everyone knows everybody else - one participant described it as “full of the same faces, over and over again” and another “like a big family” - most made it clear that there is a distinct lack of camaraderie or intimacy in prison. For example, one participant observed, “you don't really have friends in prison”. Quite the opposite in fact; most participants spoke about other prisoners in extremely derogatory terms. For example, one participant thought other prisoners were “leeches, people that are going to latch onto you”. Another explained it was necessary “to watch what you talk around with people, because it can get very nasty, and then lights out, and you don't wake up in the morning”.

Prisons have been labelled places of ‘de-communication’ (Gallo and Ruggiero, 1991); places in which, given the opportunity, prisoners spend the majority of their time ‘banged up’ in their cells sleeping, or seeking “escape into the fantasy life of television” (Johnson, 2005: 256). On being asked what prisoners talk to each other about everyday, the two topics of conversation mentioned most frequently by participants were the lowest common denominator ones: drugs and crime. Most importantly, prisoners avoid talking about themselves, for example their children, families, or their hopes and plans for the future. Showing a personal or vulnerable side to their characters was risky because, for example, other prisoners will “think you're moaning and you can't do your bird”; or they will “start thinking they can come and disrespect you”. One participant explained:

If you find someone you can relate to, someone you can talk to, and someone who will become your friend, not for what you've got, it's a good thing to have. Someone you can express your problems to. But it's impossible in these sorts of places (Black, African 43 year old).

Everyday in prison cigarettes, drugs and alcohol are constantly in demand. One participant, who did not smoke or take drugs, told me: “I keep away from the majority of people. It's disgusting to have, every second, someone ask you, ‘have you got any burn, or got any Rizla’. It's just ‘keep away from me’. All the participants explained that drugs were a

pervasive influence in every prison and were freely available (Ruggiero, 1995). As a means of relieving the stresses and boredom of everyday life in prison (Turnbull *et al.*, 1994), they were taken mostly, for example, to “keep calm and pass the time”, or to “block out the outside world and help me to sleep”. A few participants also described how their exposure to drugs and personal drug taking had increased in prison. For example, some said they had moved on to class ‘A’ drugs after they had been introduced to them for the first time by other prisoners. One participant explained that he had learnt “how to wash up cocaine and turn it into crack, how to chase the dragon, what speed balls are. All the jargon that goes along with drug taking became a part of my vocabulary”. And, as previously described in the section on violence in YOIs, some also described how they had been able to take advantage of the high demand for drugs in prison by dealing, and so were able to achieve positions of power within prison hierarchies (Ruggiero, 1995).

The idea that prisons are schools for criminal learning - that prisoners, because they spend long periods of their time sharing small, frequently overcrowded, cells, ‘contaminate’ each other - has been cited as a major failure of imprisonment ever since the early seventeenth century (Sharpe, 1990). Through a process of ‘collective socialisation’ and peer group influence, prisoners reinforce criminal behaviour between them resulting in “the maintenance of delinquency, the encouragement of recidivism, the transformation of the occasional offender into a habitual delinquent, the organisation of a closed milieu of delinquency” (Foucault, 1977: 272). Given the lack of other things to do in prison, many participants explained crime was an inevitable topic of conversation:

You sit in a cell for 23 hours everyday yeh, banged up everyday with a geezer, what are you going to be talking about? He’s going to tell you about his ideas, of how he does things (Black, British 30 year old).

They described how they had become more effective criminals as a result of going to prison. For example, they had learnt “how to do burglaries, how to deal with the alarms, whereas before I was just booting the door down”; or how “not to leave prints, the less you move around, the less you leave as evidence”. Furthermore, prisons provided them with new networks of contacts; associates who were “ready to aid and abet any future criminal

act” (Foucault, 1977: 267). Meeting new people in prison enabled them, for example, to start drug trafficking networks which they were able to develop after release (Ruggiero and South, 1995). Others considered prison to be a useful recruiting ground for forming new criminal gangs and ‘crews’ engaged in theft and burglary. For example, one participant described how after leaving prison he had been placed in a hostel where he had been visited regularly by former prisoners with whom he committed street robberies. Another explained that he had received many offers in prison to join criminal ‘crews’ which had been too tempting to turn down:

Associating with a lot of criminals in prison you tend to get offers. If you want to get involved and make money - the kind of money they're making, which they say you can – basically, they'll call me and contact me when you get out, whatever. And you're very tempted. (Black, British 39 year old).

‘Doing time’

Fitzgerald and Sim (1982: 58) have written: “Overall, the most striking feature of daily life in prison is the routinized boredom of people passing rather than spending time”. ‘Doing time’ is normally considered to be a form of prisoner adaptation which involves suspending human agency, avoiding trouble, and withdrawing all involvement with daily life in prison until ‘normal life’ can be resumed on the outside (Irwin, 1970). All the participants emphasised that the tendency for prisoners to distance themselves emotionally from their surroundings meant that everyday life in prison was, for example, “boring”, “monotonous” and “uneventful”. When asked to describe a typical day in their life, it was common for participants to say they spent most of their time, for example: “sleeping, getting my head down”, “doing nothing at all”, “banging my door shut”, “smoking joints”, “just sitting back and getting on with it”, “not making friends”, “watching soaps” “sitting in my cell doing nothing”, “chilling”, “sleeping”. One participant likened everyday life in prison to “groundhog day”, a repetitive cycle of routine activities which re-occurred day after day, because, he said, “there’s nothing else to do”.

The lack of activity in prison is sometimes considered to be a problem which is exclusively associated with local prisons. Given the high turnover of prisoners who are on remand and awaiting trial, as well as sentenced prisoners awaiting transfer, local prisons lack both the space and resources to provide constructive and purposeful activities for prisoners to engage in (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997). In comparison, training prisons are protected from overcrowding and provide regimes specifically to address the needs of the particular category of prisoners in their charge (*ibid*). Except for one participant who considered the education department in one training prison he had been to to be “very good and was very helpful”, this distinction was lost on the participants. Although they readily listed the names of the many different prisons they had spent time in, overall they did not think there were any significant differences between them. They noted obvious differences such as the security category, as well as structural differences such as the age or type of prison architecture (Victorian built, prison ship etc.). Drugs were also more freely available in some prisons than others, and levels of violence were also variable. In addition, whereas London prisons were “full of familiar faces”, prisons in rural areas outside London were anonymous places, for example places “out in the country somewhere”, or “full of people from Norwich and Newcastle and Manchester and all those far out areas”. However, in terms of regime activities and the ways they spent their time, as one participant described it, “prison is prison”. And another explained: “prisons are all the same, you do your bird and you get on with it”.

Research suggests that enforced apathy, and a loss of interest in anything but surviving prison, conditions prisoners to behave as if they are ill; that they demonstrate a form of ‘institutional neurosis’ (Barton, 1966), or ‘behavioural deep freeze’ (Zamble and Porporino, 1988) which results in a loss of personal agency. Certainly, all the participants agreed that prison is an alienating experience. Having responded with violence and anger to the authority of imprisonment as young offenders, as they spent longer in prison many had come to realise that it was futile to resist in this way. One participant who had a history of violent behaviour, and had been segregated many times as a result, explained: “The system always wins no matter what you do, shit your cell up, or go against the screws; you will not win, so you go with the flow”. Therefore, the best way to cope with the routine and

restrictions of everyday prison life was, for example, to “clam up” and accept “you no longer have any control”; which, another participant explained is “not an easy thing to do”, but nevertheless is necessary because “sometimes you got to look at the bigger picture”. Another participant described how he had been able to survive each of his previous 20 prison sentences by assuming the role of a subordinate:

For me personally I adapt very much an army private role. To me this is just, we're just on a battle field here, so I feel like I'm in the army, you know what I mean, I got to follow me orders (Black, British 28 year old).

The idea that prisoners adapt their behaviour to prison circumstances and thereby grow accustomed to ‘doing time’ suggests this is a temporary measure; that the institutional effects of prison are negligible (Zamble and Porporino, 1988), and that on release most prisoners revert to their former selves (Goffman, 1961). The resigned attitude of the participants towards order and control in prison, and their lack of physical activity and drive, do not necessarily predict that this behaviour will be carried over after release into the outside world (Matthews, 1999). Therefore, from the way they behave in prison it is difficult to distinguish between prisoners who will recidivate, and those who will seriously attempt to give up crime after release. For example, one participant contrasted the way he conformed in prison with the freedom he felt at being able to do as he pleased outside.

I don't tow the line out there. Society cannot tell me what to do. In here there's rules and regulations and I don't like them taking days off me, so I become a model prisoner. I don't get nicked or nothing. But out there, there's no chains, there's nothing to hold me back. So I tend to push them boundaries. I tend to push 'em, doing what I want, when I want, how I want (White, British 33 year old).

The extent to which a loss of human agency in prison is real, or an act put on by prisoners who have every intention of returning to crime after release, is explored further in the next section.

Prison as home

It is often suggested that a major reason for a seeming loss of agency amongst prisoners is the completely routine nature of everyday life in prison. The rules and regulations which restrict any opportunity to make decisions or exert choice mean that “the lives of most prisoners follow repetitive and restricted courses that dull their senses and corrode their abilities” (Irwin and Owen, 2005: 99). The descriptions of everyday life in prison provided by the participants indicate that, while this might be true for some prisoners; for others the appearance of apathy and powerlessness is exactly that, an appearance. While it may not be outwardly apparent, the participant narratives suggest that prisoners respond quite differently inwardly to the monotony of everyday life in prison.

In a study of social order in prisons, Sparks *et al* (1996: 75) employed ‘structuration theory’ (Giddens, 1984) to suggest that prison can engender a feeling of ‘ontological security’ for some prisoners, in that the routine nature of everyday prison life instils confidence and “trust in the reliability and durability of the life-world”. The authors argue that:

All this is of course most likely to happen (1) when the ‘locale’ in question is fairly small, and bounded, and (2) when many of those spending time in the locale have been there (or been back and forth from there) for an extended period, so that they know intimately aspects of the history, traditions, and culture of the place, and significant events which, in the past, have helped to shape the way that social life is now lived there (Sparks *et al*, 1996: 77).

This view of imprisonment was substantiated by some of the participants who, because of the circumstances of their lives outside, said they treated prison as a place to withdraw, recharge, and take stock of themselves. A place which provided them with routine and regularity in a familiar setting compared to the chaos and randomness of their lives outside, as well as an opportunity to stay away from drugs and crime for a while and get healthy. For example, one participant said that he had begun to think of his prison cell as “just like home... my own little bed sit”. Another participant admitted: “I come to prison to get away from the drugs. I don’t want to take drugs in prison. I want to go gym. I want to do this. I want to do that. But when I go out there, that’s the thing”. Another participant described

prison as a place where, “you ain’t got no bills, no responsibilities, no worries for paying rent, buying food, supporting the kids”. Another participant described a typical day in his life:

I get up at half eight. I have a wash. I go to education from nine o’clock. Ten o’clock, I have a cigarette break. I’m back here on the wing at eleven. Have my food at half past eleven. Get banged up until two, so I have a little nap until two. Back in education at two o’clock. Cigarette break at three outside. Finished at four. Come back, have a shower. Then I have my dinner. Close my door, and then I chill out for the night. I watch ‘The Weakest Link’. I watch ‘The Simpson’s’, and I watch the programmes as the nights go on and the weeks fly by (laughs). So I’m afraid I’m beginning to like it (White, Irish 37 year old).

However, this view was not shared by all the participants. The tendency of prisoners to enjoy prison and treat it like home was resisted by some of the other participants who thought there was a danger of becoming too complacent and comfortable in prison. They seemed aware of the deleterious effects imprisonment can have on people, especially the power of prison environments to control and re-program prisoners and render them helpless. Since the decline of penal welfarism as a guiding principle of imprisonment over the past two decades, increasingly prisons have been used to warehouse prisoners rather than prepare them for release (Garland, 2001). Today, prison regimes and prison environments are specifically designed to ameliorate prisoners and keep them compliant in the interests of security and control. Interestingly, some participants were critical of the way that in recent years prison conditions had improved, and privileges such as in cell television had been made widely available in prison. They thought prison had become, for example “too easy”, “no big deal” or “not like prison at all”. One participant described the contents of a typical prison cell.

You’ve got a stereo, a radio, a TV, DVDs, your kettle, tea bags, sugar, your toaster, blankets for your bed, curtains and stuff like that... with a fucking glass of hooch. TV, radio on. You’re just sitting in your bedroom really, ain’t you (White, British 22 year old).

These participants were scornful of prisoners they thought treated prison as a retreat, for example somewhere “they get their meal, somewhere to sleep, you know warmth basically, three meals a day”. Indeed, one participant thought prison had become so attractive to

prisoners that some of them deliberately committed crime so they would be re-arrested and re-imprisoned after release.

You haven't got the pressures that you've got on the outside in prison. You haven't got to worry about where you're going to live, what you're going to eat, what time you're going to get up, how you're going to get through the day. I think gaol's easy. It is now, it's easy. I mean I know certain people that like coming to gaol. They like it 'cause they've got no responsibilities whatsoever in gaol. You got no worries, you're in gaol, don't stress me, I'm in gaol, leave me alone. I've seen people go out deliberately to do crime to get caught. They've been on the out and it's coming close to Christmas. I know it's mad but I've seen it (Black, British 40 year old).

While on the one hand these participants considered prison to be, for example, “nothing”, “easy” and “relaxed”, and they gave every indication of cooperating and accepting the terms of their confinement; on the other it was, for example, “mind numbing”, “boring” and “like a trap”. Some said they missed their girlfriends or their children, or they found prison to be a restraining influence on them. Prisoners who appeared to enjoy prison, and particularly those who appeared to enjoy coming back, they dismissed as, for example, “pathetic”, “depressing”, “upsetting” and having “nothing in their lives”.

I'll tell you a lot of prisoners when they come back... I've seen people since I've been on this sentence go and come back, and they come back happy. When they see you its, 'Ah, how you doing?' and all that, like they're meeting old friends. I call them returnees. I don't talk to them, it upsets me (Black, British 31 year old).

Another participant explained:

I can think of various people, particularly now, that seem to not give a shit. They literally do not give a fuck. They run around this place like it's a fucking holiday camp, like Butlins yeh. Doing this and doing that and it's fucking like, they think it's great or something. It makes me laugh (white, British 23 year old).

Finally, irrespective of whether they accepted and felt comfortable in prison or not, most participants were dismissive of the notion that imprisonment rehabilitates offenders. And neither did they think that prison acted as a deterrent on their criminal behaviour. Since the wave of prison riots that erupted in over 20 prisons in 1990, and the subsequent inquiry by Lord Justice Woolf into their causes, prison conditions have improved in England and

Wales. According to Lord Justice Woolf, the major reason for improving prison conditions is that social order is maintained more effectively when prisoners are treated with humanity and justice. At the same time, consistent with the need to uphold security and control is the need to provide support to prisoners in order to prepare them for release and minimise the likelihood of reoffending. Balancing these priorities is the fundamental task of imprisonment (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997). Improve conditions without also taking measures to encourage prisoners to take responsibility for the offences they have committed (Woolf and Tumim, 1991: para. 10.39), and imprisonment fails according to any penal rationale (Mathiesen, 1990). One participant gave a chilling reminder of what can happen if prisoners are merely warehoused in conditions of relative comfort.

Kids of 11 and 12 are saying they want to go to gaol. I know, I've had kids come and tell me that for a fact. It's easier, they do what they want. You know it's better than living at home with their mums, so they say. Where they get that idea from I do not know, but obviously it's someone who has gone into prison and given them that info. The more easy you make it for people to commit crime by making the prisons more relaxed and you know more futuristic, if that's the word, the more people are going to come in (Black, British 31 year old).

This issue is explored further in the final section of the chapter which deals with preparations for release.

Family relations

Another means of 'doing time' previously observed in studies of prisoner behaviour is to sever all links with the outside world and construct a new life in prison (Irwin, 1970). Some prisoners make a conscious decision to distance themselves from family and friends; whereas for others the 'depth of imprisonment' (Downes, 1988) - the extent to which prisoners can become completely immersed in everyday prison life - causes them to lose interest in previous events and experiences in their past lives. It is often assumed that family relationships can encourage prisoners to stay away from crime because of the practical support they provide (Ditchfield, 1994) such as helping prisoners find temporary

or permanent accommodation, and/or employment after release (Woolf and Tumim, 1991). However, because the family backgrounds of prisoners are frequently disrupted, unstable and abusive (Walmsley *et al.*, 1992), home and family life does not have a single, fixed meaning which is necessarily positive or supportive. Therefore, it is important “to take account of the nature of power and its distribution in these micro situations” (Sim, 1994: 109), and to “identify which family relationships are likely to be (if possible mutually) supportive and beneficial” (Smith, 1995: 65).

The complexity of prisoners’ family relationships was conveyed by all participants. As revealed in the previous chapter, many of them had experienced the family home as a constraining place, a place they wanted to escape from. Even some of the participants who had been brought up in homes they described as supportive and caring had become separated from their families as a consequence of their criminal activities and lengthy spells of imprisonment. For example, some participants explained that their families had disowned them. Although their parents had done everything they could to steer them away from crime, as one participant admitted, since “it’s all my doing at the end of the day”, they had decided to break off all further contact with them. Moreover, many participants who had had children with different wives, girlfriends, or ‘baby mothers’ had lost contact with their children, or had been prevented by former wives and girl friends from seeing them. For others, family ties had been deliberately severed by the participants themselves. Indeed, some participants thought that the idea of re-establishing contact with their families was anathema. For example, one participant thought it was a sign of weakness to rely on his parents for support. Having made the decision to become a criminal he did not want his parents “to think that I come to gaol crying mummy and daddy”. Another participant considered that coping with imprisonment by himself, without the support of family and friends, was a matter of principle:

My last three year sentence I done it without contacting a single person, without even getting a single penny sent into me, do you understand? I did that all by myself, working in the prison, doing all the stuff that I had to do. So, it was like I done it on my own back. And I know I can do it again here. I will just lock off all outside contact with my family, parents and all that stuff, not contact a single person and just get on with it. That’s what I’m here to do. I put myself here. My

mum and dad never put me here, my friends never put me here, I put myself here, you get me? (Black, British 31 year old).

Participants who maintained regular contact with their families and friends and had, or wanted to have, visits from them also expressed concerns about the way contact was maintained. For example, a few were mindful that prison visits could be stressful for their parents. One participant spoke to his parents regularly on the telephone but had dissuaded them from visiting because “my mum’s ill and my dad’s diabetic, and I don’t want to put them through all this in their old age”. Others maintained contact but only on their terms. One participant explained that he would receive visits from his family only when he had gained the strength to give up drugs, and was “confident that I will do it this time before I contact them because I’ve fucked up so many times in the past”. Some had also taken active steps to avoid their children finding out they were in prison. In some cases, this was because they did not want their children to know they were criminals.

Relationships with my children, that will come later in my life, when I’ve got myself sorted. When they know that I’m stable and not going to go back into gaol, or relapse back into drugs. It’s not fair on them. At the moment they’ve got a good life and I don’t want to rock it, and I don’t think they need that unstableness in their life. Kids are very impressionable aren’t they, and it can fuck ‘em up psychologically, and I’m not the person to do that (White, British 33 year old).

For others it was because they did not want their children to see them in prison, depressed and subdued, poorly dressed, and looking unhealthy. One participant had recently cancelled a visit from his family because he did not want his children to see him “with bruises from fighting”. Another was worried that through visiting him his children might come to “see prison life as a good life, and follow in my footsteps”. In line with previous research which has found that many offenders marry, or form relationships with women who are also offenders (West, 1982), a few participants also thought that their wives and girlfriends were likely to influence them to reoffend after release - because they were criminals or had serious drug problems themselves; or, as one participant put it, because “girls are like that, they don’t want you in prison, but when the money’s there they like it”. As a consequence, they had refused to accept requests to visit from them.

Inside out - preparations for release

As noted in Chapter One, it is a fundamental characteristic of imprisonment to treat prisoners as objects rather than subjects. Because prison systems generally pay little attention to prisoners as individuals - a consequence of the way prisoners are “incessantly examined, observed and judged” (Duguid, 2000: 57) - imprisonment militates against the possibility they will consider the reasons for their past and present behaviour, or their future prospects (*ibid*). The lack of attention paid to the social and environmental conditions from which prisoners come, as well as the effect of different prison environments on them, is characteristic of a shift in penal policy over recent years which has lifted incapacitation above reform as the primary purpose of imprisonment. However, although penal policy has become more punitive, as pointed out by Garland (2001: 137): “older social democratic criminology... that depicted the offender as disadvantaged or poorly socialized and made it the state’s responsibility, in social as well as penal policy, to take positive steps of a remedial kind... has not disappeared or been scientifically discredited”. Despite a prevailing ‘culture of control’ (*ibid*), which today guides criminal law and penal policy in both the US and UK, prisons of all types and security categories continue to provide services intended specifically to prepare prisoners for release.

In England and Wales, balancing security and control with care and rehabilitation has been a major aim of the prison system ever since the 1895 Gladstone Committee report on prisons officially endorsed the belief that efforts should be made to prepare prisoners to lead ‘a good and useful life’. And today, the statement of purpose of HMPS is “to [keep] in custody those committed by the courts... and to help prisoners lead law abiding and useful lives in custody and after release”. In particular, HMPS seeks to reduce reoffending by helping prisoners secure accommodation, education, training and employment; overcome health, drugs and alcohol, finance, benefit and debt problems; maintain family relationships; and address various psychological factors linked to their criminal behaviour. However, despite the oft repeated intention to encourage prisoners to lead law abiding lives, a review of prison history shows that for the most part prisoner rehabilitation services

have been subordinated repeatedly and consistently to the demands of security and control (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997).

The final section in this chapter assesses how the interview participants regard the efforts made in prison to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into society. While the research did not address different rehabilitation services specifically, or attempt to evaluate their effectiveness, it did explore the response of participants to reintegration services generally, and in particular how relevant they thought they were to their past, present and future lives. It should be noted from the outset that the extent to which prisoners engage in prison activities depends in large part on the length of sentence they receive. Whereas short term prisoners often do not see the need to occupy themselves because they know they will soon be released, prisoners serving longer sentences are more inclined to engage in activities which help them pass the time (Cohen and Taylor, 1972). Furthermore, owing to overcrowding and a lack of space and resources, prisoners in local prisons are usually not provided with programmes and activities to prepare them for release to the same extent as prisoners in training prisons (SEU, 2002).

Prisoner/staff relationships

The difficulty of holding punishment, containment and rehabilitation in equilibrium is perhaps most evident when assessed in relation to the work of prison officers, the largest group of employees in any prison establishment. Although it is a condition of their employment that prison officers contribute to rehabilitative programmes and services in prison, their main priority is to ensure that security is maintained and that prisoners abide by the rules and routines of the prison regime (Liebling and Price, 2001). Not surprisingly, this affects the nature and quality of relationships between staff and prisoners, particularly in prisons such as local prisons where overcrowding is a daily concern. For example, given the impersonal and authoritative atmosphere of everyday life in prison (Scruton *et al.*, 1991), it has been found that some prison officers become frustrated at being unable to help prisoners and respond to them more positively; whereas others become inured to the job;

and pragmatic, disciplinarian, cold and emotionless in the way they relate to prisoners (Arnold, 2005). And for their part, whereas some prisoners consider it is in their interests to maintain good staff relationships, others can become aggressive, and much less inclined to be civil and to cooperate with staff (Wolf and Tumim, 1991).

Certainly, most participants expressed negative opinions about prison officers, which were perfunctory at best and downright hostile at worst. For example, whereas one participant said that he had “never had a problem with any of them. They respect me, I’ll respect them. I make jokes with them and they have a little joke with me”; another thought that prison officers were not interested in their work, they “just want an easy life”. Another thought they “are just in the job to annoy people”. Another thought they abused their position by “getting in my face and doing certain things to me. Whereas outside they might check their actions, in here they haven’t got that fear”. One participant described the way he was regularly spoken to by prison officers:

They have a nasty, general attitude towards inmates, just horrible. Being spoken to rudely, arrogantly, abusive, being shouted at for no reason, being ordered for no reason. And then you see they actually like being that way. Obviously there are a few officers who are just genuine, normal, straight going people who are there doing their job and fair enough. But the majority of officers, I don’t know, are on some power trip or whatever, you know giving commands. They actually enjoy it (Asian 27 year old).

A ‘law abiding and useful life’

How does the lack of intimacy and familiarity in prisons square with the intention to prepare prisoners for release? Most participants had accessed support services of one kind or another during their time in prison. These included education and training courses, drug programmes, as well as various psychologically based courses to address issues specifically related to their offending behaviour such as thinking skills and anger management. Participants expressed different opinions about the usefulness and relevance of prison rehabilitation courses and programmes. Whereas participants with drug problems thought it

essential to their chances of staying away from crime that they receive help to overcome their drug addiction, a few participants considered psychology courses to be incidental to their problems and needs, and were provided by staff mostly, for example, “to make their books look good”. Participants who attended education and training courses did so for a variety of reasons. For some, education provided “something to do”. For example, although “completely irrelevant” to his future plans, one participant thought that education helped him pass the time, and “anyway it’s always useful to learn new things about how the world works”. Another participant said he attended education simply to “get in the screw’s good books, make it a little bit easier for me, make it not so behind the door all the time, get out so you can make a phone call”. However, for others, education was an opportunity to effect fundamental changes in their lives. A few participants said they had learnt to read and write in prison. Some had also attended vocational training courses, because they hoped that by gaining a qualification they would find work after release. And one participant described the beneficial effect attending education had had on him when he had been given the opportunity to pursue a lifelong ambition to learn French.

In all the previous sentences while I was doing this stuff, while I wanted to learn French either the facilities weren’t available or security categorisations wasn’t open to me, or you just didn’t have the people with the openness of mind and the power to pursue any sort of rehabilitative programmes... But this education department was very good and was very helpful (Black, British 40 year old).

In line with previous research, most participants expressed severe misgivings about continuing to commit crime in the future (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986), which they said they had experienced in prison before and kept to themselves, only to see their good intentions evaporate as soon as they were released. Irrespective of whether they took courses or not, prison gave them time to think about their friends and family, and the problems crime had caused them throughout their lives. However, on release, money, drugs and crime soon regained precedence as their chief priorities in life. It has been suggested that a major factor in successful criminal desistance is the internalisation by offenders of the need to assume complete responsibility for overcoming personal and social problems in their lives (Maruna, 2001: 149). A few participants had contemplated their options after release, and decided their lack of job experience and the length of their criminal record,

excluded them from ever being able to secure a well paid job. Therefore, if they were to support themselves and their families legitimately, it would be as a result of their own efforts to re-evaluate their lives, and make the behavioural changes necessary to avoid crime in the future; and not because of any ‘treatment’ they received, or education or training qualifications they obtained, in prison. One participant explained:

I have actually realised there is no one and no kind of establishment that is actually helping people like me. In this establishment, in Feltham and in every other gaol there ain't no help for us. So right now I'm trying to use prison to my advantage. I'm using my time. I'm reflecting on life. I'm defining all my problems. I'm brain storming. I'm evaluating the consequences (Black, British 21 year old).

However, the decision to reject outside help and ‘go it alone’ can be self defeating. No matter how sincere and committed they were in their desire to personally take control of their lives, all of the participants who expressed a desire to stop committing crime appeared to be at a complete loss as to how to start planning for their future, or had wholly unrealistic expectations about what they could achieve through legitimate and legal means (Uggen *et al.*, 2004). For example, although he could not drive, one participant said that on leaving prison he wanted to become a long distance lorry driver. And, although he could not read, another said he wanted “a well paid job working with computers”. Aware of the legal requirement to disclose criminal convictions to potential employers, some participants had decided that self employment was their only realistic option. However, while this might seem a sensible career choice given the problems they faced, again it was apparent they had carried out little research or planning as to what self employment entailed in practice. For example, setting up their own businesses involved falling back on a natural talent to “sell sand to Arabs”, or relying on friends to give them a job who were already self employed. One participant described how he intended to set up a car clamping business after release.

I think if I had my own business, like waking up in the morning at 9 o' clock, having to go and do this and do that, it's something that's going to occupy my mind and my time. So that's what it basically boils down to yeh. I've looked into car clamping. I've already found out about it from my cousin. He looked it up on the internet. It's not hard or nothing like that, do you know what I'm saying. It's just getting it up and running, getting on the outside, getting up on the road, and getting it up and running (Black, British 30 year old).

Conclusion

The “strangeness and particularity of prisons” (Sparks *et al.*, 1996: 33) - the sense that in contrast to normal everyday life prisons are mysterious and alien places - is sometimes considered fundamental to their overall purpose. Deliberately situated in areas of dense working class population, the high brick walls of Victorian built prisons are meant to serve as a visible symbol to the poor of what awaits those who fail to accept the norms of society (Reiman, 1979). Disappear behind the walls of any prison and you are effectively ‘quarantined’ from the rest of society as a ‘foreign body’ (Combessie, 1998). Throughout this chapter it has been shown that the disconnection between prison and society is made even more manifest by everyday social relations inside. The degree of separation from the outside world is reinforced by a tendency of prisoners to adopt inward looking, blinkered responses to imprisonment. For many young offenders, prison is an extension of their lives outside. Fighting and the need to achieve hierarchical status amongst their peers is characteristic of everyday life in YOIs. On the other hand, for many adult prisoners prison is an *in camera* experience. In contrast to young offenders, adult prisoners deliberately close off outside experiences, and, as far as possible, shut out social interaction with other prisoners and prison staff. They might seek comfort and support from small groups of friends and, to protect themselves from the threat of gang activity, they might associate with prisoners from what they consider to be the ‘right side of town’. But, for the most part, they retreat into themselves. They remain compliant with the authority of prison, while at the same time withdrawing from any active engagement with it.

Personal isolation is further emphasised by the decision of some prisoners to sever all contact with family and friends, or alternatively the decision of family and friends to sever all contact with them. Moreover, a tendency of prisoners to treat prison as a home, a place of refuge, somewhere to escape paying the bills or supporting their children, causes attachments to the real world outside to deteriorate further. However, this is not true of all prisoners. Some prisoners resist imprisonment pragmatically, by conforming to the rules and regulations while at the same time resisting adjustment and retaining self belief. For these prisoners, the priority is not to become too comfortable in prison; to put up with

boredom and routine until normal everyday life may be resumed outside. It is suggested that although these responses to imprisonment are quite different, frequently they have the same outcome. Both the tendency of some prisoners to feel comfortable in prison, and the apparent preparedness of others to cooperate with prison rules and regulations, is a poor predictor of their behaviour after release (Pryor, 2001). Furthermore, the relationships that most prisoners have with other prisoners and staff, and the various activities and programmes they attend do little to disturb the well documented inevitability that most of them will return to prison after release. The experiences of the participants after release are described in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

'On the out' - after prison experiences

Introduction

As noted in Chapter One, while it is commonly recognised that place based factors are linked to the onset of criminal behaviour (see Bottoms and Wiles, 1992; Sampson and Laub, 1994), the effect of place to further embed criminal behaviour; to reinforce its continuity, or help bring about its cessation has not been assessed to a significant extent (Farrall and Sparks, 2006). In the US, research has found that when prisoners return in large numbers to deprived urban neighbourhoods, the capacity of residents to exert informal social control over local community life is severely restricted (Clear *et al*, 2003). However, to date these research findings have not been translated into policy terms (Petersilia, 2003). And in England and Wales, personal issues such as drug addiction, as well as social issues such as employment, housing, benefits and debt have been identified as factors which contribute to high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment (SEU, 2002: 38). However, the extent to which such factors are place specific has not been considered. As such, prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration policy remains concerned far more with individual character traits addressed through treatment or improving access to opportunities through education and training, than with addressing the effects of structural inequality or social situation (Gray, 2005).

In order to ascertain whether place based social and/or cultural factors are related to reoffending and/or criminal desistance, the interviews explored whether the meanings, motivations and desires - the way participants felt towards the places they returned to after prison - changed over time as they made the transition back and forth, sometimes repeatedly, between prison and the community (Visher and Travis, 2003). Having at a young age attempted to transcend the limitations of the places in which they lived by

satisfying a desire for excitement and pleasure through crime, the interview discussions investigated whether on-going and/or changing relationships to place influence a desire to reoffend or refrain from offending. The chapter begins by exploring the attitudes and emotional reactions of first time and short term prisoners towards the places they return to after release, compared to prisoners who have served longer prison sentences. It then assesses whether various social factors linked to reoffending - housing, social support and services, and employment - are place specific. Finally, the chapter examines how prisoner/place relationships are played out at the micro-level, for instance whether the way prisoners relate on an individual level, both cognitively and emotionally to their immediate environment, impacts on criminal behaviour. The intention throughout is to assess whether place based factors influence prisoners who have begun to question their criminal behaviour in prison but, so far, have been unable to successfully maintain a non-offending lifestyle after release.

Returning home

It has been observed that in the days leading up to release many prisoners become anxious about how they are going to survive in the outside world. Having become accustomed to prison, they are daunted by the prospect of having to move “from the top of a small world to the bottom of a large one” (Goffman, 1961: 71). However, the effects of imprisonment are not long lasting. The behavioural adaptations prisoners make to survive prison dissipate quickly on release, “partly because of the availability of secondary adjustments, the presence of counter-mores, and the tendency for inmates to combine all strategies and play it cool” (*ibid*: 69-70). As a consequence, after leaving prison, former prisoners soon revert to their former selves.

This observation is contentious and requires some qualification. The literature on the importance of place discussed so far suggests that people can experience a “profound and unselfconscious identity with place” (Relph, 1976: 64), particularly when they are exposed to the same place over a long period of time. If this is correct, prisoners who serve long

prison sentences, or have been to prison repeatedly over a long period of time, are likely to experience imprisonment in a more significant way than short term, or first time prisoners. This is borne out by previous research. Whereas short term prisoners “float through their sentences with little damage to their persons or impact on prison society” (Irwin and Owen, 2005: 115), long term prisoners suffer “more subtle, hidden kinds of psychological and emotional disability” (Jamieson and Grounds, 2005: 55). For example, they are prone to suffer from mental health problems such as post traumatic stress disorders, and more likely to experience disrupted family relationships (Liebling and Maruna, 2005). Therefore, having become reliant on staff for the distribution of various benefits and privileges, and grown accustomed to confrontation and violence as a norm in everyday social relations, “the destructive manifestations are not left behind the walls when the prisoner is released but often become part of his ‘taken for granted’ world on the outside” (Sim, 1994: 103).

First time and short term prisoners

In contrast, most short term prisoners are released from prison relatively unscathed. Having been imprisoned for the first time at an early age, most participants said they had returned home after serving a relatively short first sentence bitter and resentful towards conventional society (Irwin, 1970). Angry that they had been caught and unwilling to acknowledge the legitimacy of the punishment they had received (Scheff and Retzinger, 1991), they soon returned to crime. Furthermore, bolstered by a strong sense of pride and achievement at having survived prison intact, rather than being institutionalised or shamed by their new prisoner identity (Braithwaite, 1989), they emerged defiant. For example, on being released from prison for the first time one participant said he felt “big headed”, and another “like my virginity had been broken”. Another participant described how he immediately re-established contact with his former friends, and resumed the same activities he had engaged in previously.

You're running before you hit the pavement. When you come out, you're supposed to sit back for a few months, get your head together, get a plan, what you're going to do, this, that and the other. But I didn't have that plan. I just came out. Where's

my friends? Where's the girls? And you know, that was it. I was just all over the place (Black, British 31 year old).

It has been suggested that in some high crime communities, going to prison is generally accepted by many of the young people who live there as unproblematic, a normal part of life, even a 'rite of passage' to adulthood (Houchin, 2005: 25). Some participants explained that on returning home, being known as an ex-prisoner enhanced their reputation as 'hard men' amongst their immediate circle of friends. Returning to peer groups which viewed crime as exciting and thrilling (Katz, 1988), they were welcomed back as 'men of action', who have demonstrated they are "willing and even inclined to live life in a challenge" (Goffman, 1967: 182). One participant explained that because of the stigma attached to being an ex-prisoner generally within society, he learnt to have "no care for people that was not in my circle". Another said his new found status as an ex-prisoner meant that he was treated with more respect by the people he knew:

Now it's uncool to go to prison, a waste of time. But at that time, it kind of gave you a bit of street cred. This is the truth. It made me feel good. In Tottenham, if you'd been to prison before, like even just for a week, you got a bit of respect (Black, British 30 year old).

Another participant described how surviving prison intact had raised his reputation, and made him more attractive to women.

Prison is a place where people feel sorry for you. They know the pain you're going to go through. But if you go in and come out and can still hold your head high and walk straight with a spring in your step, they will think you had to be a hard man to survive it. So your hard man reputation, if you haven't got one already, it's enhanced. And women tend to throw themselves at men that's been in prison. They do. Women have shown a lot more interest in me (Black, British 28 year old).

Unsurprisingly, the acceptance and respect they received from former friends on returning home meant they were more inclined to deliberately embrace crime as a way of life, and withdraw further from mainstream society. As a result, they became more deeply embedded in close knit criminal networks comprised of criminal peers, gang members, and other ex-prisoners (Moore, 1996). Experiencing prison for the first time made them feel, for

example, “like I’d been down the stream”, “more advanced in what I was doing”, and “a criminal properly now”. One participant explained that because his friends respected him for “going through what it takes to be a criminal”, going to prison reinforced the impression that “crime is good, and if you do it properly, you can earn your money”. As a consequence, for many of the participants criminal activity escalated after prison. For example, they “got deeper into crime”, and “started doing bigger and better things”. One participant said that after prison “that was when I really started robbing hard”, and another said he “started doing all kinds of things, anything and every thing. If it was a good enough plan, and I thought we’d get away with it, I’d go and do it”.

Long term and repeat prisoners

Ultimately, the tendency of participants to escalate their criminal activities increased the likelihood they would be rearrested and re-imprisoned. As they got older, and the number and the length of the prison sentences they received increased, wearing their prisoner identity as a badge of honour gradually lost its appeal. Most participants viewed the time they had spent in prison in a far more negative light than they had done as young offenders. The idea that going to prison is manly, and therefore creditable in some way, they now considered to be puerile and childish.

I was shy and I was silly. I was young and I was very silly. And I used to think I was bad and it made you feel good and people would see you and they would have a bit of respect for you. He’s done a bit of bird and that. It had an impact on a time in my life when I was very impressionable (White, British 33 year old).

In this respect, the narrative accounts of the participants provide evidence of the importance of ageing in the criminal desistance process (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). Nearly all the participants said that as they had grown older they had begun to question the validity of choosing crime as a way of life, and to ponder the trouble and upset it had caused them. Only two participants said they fully intended to continue to commit crime after they were released. Even the participants who considered repeat imprisonment to be an occupational

hazard expressed regret over the time they had spent in prison. They gave a variety of reasons for wanting to give up. They wanted to support their families, see their girlfriends and children more, get off drugs, they were tired of being harassed by the police, and they were bored with prison and fearful prison sentences would get longer. Some had also come to realise that they had failed as criminals; that their dreams of becoming successful gangsters, as one participant put it, “only happen in cartoons and films”. The more time they spent in prison, the more they realised that the lifestyle they had constructed for themselves through crime and the consumption of expensive fashion items was mostly peripheral, short lived and situational (Lasch, 1980). One participant described how his plans and hopes for the future had failed to materialise:

In my original gangster plan I'd have already retired a couple of years ago. In my original plan I was already a 25 year old millionaire on a yacht in the middle of the West Indies, surrounded by women. Mr T was jealous. You know what I'm saying, it hasn't worked (Black, British 28 year old).

Another participant questioned the decisions he had made in his life so far:

There's a feller now who's been going to work since we was all out there and he's been our friend. And there's a few of them that work and they've all got houses now and mortgages and half us is stuck in prison. But it tells you something I suppose. We are the stupid ones, the lot of us. We've had a good time, but so have they, they've had a good time as well (White, British 22 year old).

However, although they were prepared to contemplate giving up crime in prison, most participants were unsure of their ability to resist the temptation to fall back into crime after release. As one participant expressed it, “every time I get out all my good intentions go out the window”. Again they gave a variety of reasons for this. As noted in Chapter Two, each participant fitted the description of the persistent criminal who, despite regular periods of imprisonment, fails to be deterred from a life of crime. When pressed to explain their propensity to reoffend and to be re-imprisoned, some shrugged it off in much the same way they had described the onset of their criminal behaviour. Although in prison they were prepared to consider the negative consequences of leading a life of crime, on release they considered reoffending to be normal, a consequence of wanting to enjoy life; a desire to

experience material wealth and indulge a lifestyle based on, for example, “having champagne tastes”. The lack of purposeful motivation to give up crime was expressed in particular by participants who had serious drug problems. Although in prison they refrained from using drugs and tended to “clean up and get healthy”, on release, as one participant admitted, “I find I just can’t say no”. Or having served a long sentence, they felt, for example “like I was owed one, that’s what I thought, that’s the way I looked at it, I was gagging for a pipe, so I went straight back to Hackney”.

Alternatively, for some participants returning to crime was a pragmatic decision, a means to an end. One participant explained “I always go back to crime because it’s the only way I know how to get money”. In comparison to the thrill seeking they had engaged in when younger, crime was now simply a matter of survival.

Crime was no rush, not enjoyable. It was strictly a money thing. You know it was not fun knowing that you have to go into someone’s house and take their goods to make money for yourself (Black, British 31 year old).

For these participants, prison was an occupational hazard. The view expressed by participants in the previous chapter that prison is boring and uneventful is not necessarily an indication they are overly concerned about the prospect of returning. Because for the most part the experience of imprisonment is passive and anonymous (Duguid, 2000), it fails to reintegrate prisoners back into the community, or address the anger and resentment they have towards conventional society (Irwin, 1970). Having survived prison once the deterrent effect of imprisonment becomes irrelevant, and therefore the prospect of returning to prison does not act as a check on further criminal behaviour after release.

Like in certain situations that might stop me acting on impulse, you think, ‘Ah, I could go to prison’, but when you’ve been to prison, you’re like... I don’t know, you don’t want to come back, but there’s no apprehension about coming back. Obviously you’ll be annoyed, and you’ll miss everything, but it’s like nothing really (Black, British 31 year old).

A third reason participants gave for not abandoning crime after release was that they felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems they faced. In keeping with the

observation that persistent offenders frequently feel ‘condemned’ to a life of crime (Maruna, 2001), some participants appeared weighed down by a sense of defeatism that they would ever be able to withstand the pressure to lapse back into their old ways. Many of these problems they associated directly with the personal and social circumstances of their lives in the places they returned to after release. In comparison to ex-prisoners who successfully cease offending, and who are mostly disdainful of the notion that moving out of their home areas is a pre-requisite for a non-offending lifestyle (*ibid*: 153), these participants thought that a major reason they continued to commit crime was the pressure they faced on returning to deprived, crime ridden environments. One participant explained:

I always go back home because that's where my people are. That's where everyone loves me. That's where I'll probably always go back to. It will always claw me back somehow. That's what I always say. It will always claw me back and it will always be my downfall (White, British 22 year old).

The extent to which these problems are real and unique to the social situation of ex-prisoners, or imaginary and used as an excuse or justification to continue offending, is discussed in the next section.

Overcoming social barriers to prisoner reintegration

As previously noted, research has shown that in the US large numbers of offenders who are removed from deprived inner city neighbourhoods to which they return after serving time in prison, further destabilise these neighbourhoods socially, politically and economically, leading to significant increases in crime over time (Clear *et al.*, 2003). Inadequate supplies of local capital and resources mean that most ex-prisoners receive little support when they return home to address structural impediments such as housing and employment which block their successful reintegration back into society (Petersilia, 2003). In addition, family life frequently deteriorates during the time they have been in prison because they have not been able to contribute to the financial support of their wives, partners and children (Rose and Clear, 1998). Similarly, in the UK it has been reported that prisoner reintegration is

hampered in local communities which “lack the resources and the will to engage in supporting desistance, preferring to remain merely ‘punishing’ communities” (McNeill, 2006: 57). As a result, many ex-prisoners fail to access housing services for example, and so must live in temporary accommodation or become homeless. Even in the period immediately after release most prisoners receive insufficient money to survive more than a few days, and frequently have no means of supporting themselves for the sometimes lengthy periods of time it can take to arrange benefits and secure housing (SEU, 2002).

In the first few weeks after release all prisoners have to make arrangements for their wellbeing and security as they seek to re-integrate back into the community. This includes re-establishing contact with families and friends, finding a place to live, and claiming benefits and entitlements (Visher and Travis, 2003). Then, if they are to successfully establish a non-offending lifestyle over the long term, they must develop the personal resources and social relationships necessary to achieve full civic participation and a new identity for themselves as law abiding citizens (Uggen *et al.*, 2004). This includes finding a good job, ‘knifing off’ previous criminogenic influences (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995), and establishing “a coherent, prosocial identity for themselves” (Maruna, 2001: 7). Unsurprisingly, as the participants spent longer in prison, and the length of the sentences they received increased, they found that the world outside, including the social and environmental characteristics of the places they returned to after prison, had changed in their absence. Most importantly, family and social relationships they had previously relied upon for friendship, support and solidarity, often were no longer available to them in the way they once were. As a consequence, they needed to overcome a range of personal and social problems by themselves. In their own words, these included: “drug addiction”, “being broke”, “the responsibility of looking after my children”, “worries about where I’m going to live”, “trying to get a job”, “lack of education”, “no training” and “the stigma of a prison record”, as well as the suspicion and fear being an ex-prisoner inevitably provokes amongst the general public (Petersilia, 2003).

Finding somewhere to live

Housing is considered to be one of the most important factors which influence re-offending. In the UK, around a third of prisoners lose their housing on being imprisoned, and a further third have nowhere to live (SEU, 2002). It has been estimated that around two thirds of ex-prisoners who live in unstable accommodation re-offend within twelve months of release (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1996). Although research has shown that just over 70 per cent of prisoners arrange accommodation prior to leaving prison (Niven and Stewart, 2005), because they return to areas where social housing and support for the homeless is often unreliable and in short supply, many have to rely on informal networks based around a small circle of family and friends (Wellman, 1979). This is particularly the case in London, where house prices and rents are the highest in the UK, and half of the private accommodation available is on insecure assured short hold tenancies (Greater London Authority, 2002).

The participants described a variety of housing outcomes after prison, which were mostly unstable and temporary. Five participants said that they were always homeless after release. The remainder either lived with their parents, relations, friends or girlfriends; or by themselves in hostels, hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation, or squats. One participant said he usually found somewhere to sleep by “living everywhere, friend’s places, floors, settees”; another said he always stayed with “girls that keep me on a level when I ain’t got nowhere to go”. Although over two thirds of the participants had families of their own, only a small number returned to live with their children after release because relationships with former partners and wives had irretrievably broken down. Furthermore, the lack of any meaningful social engagement with their families during the time they had spent in prison frequently made it difficult for them to resume relationships based on trust and compromise. Many of the participants who did return to live with their wives or parents described how tensions caused by their behaviour, especially their drug taking, or because there was not sufficient room for them in the family home, often led to permanent breakdowns in relationships. Even the few participants who said they always returned to their family home tended to stay there only as a temporary measure because their lifestyles

were incompatible with normal family life and relations. As a consequence, living arrangements made prior to leaving prison were often precarious and could be suddenly terminated, resulting in frequent periods of homelessness. One participant described why his behaviour after prison was unacceptable to his wife and had led to him becoming homeless:

There's a situation when I go home. She wants me out the house. She sees it like I'm taking the piss. I was really 'cause I weren't giving her no money. I was spunking the money, going out raving whatever. So, I'll be in doors and, I don't know, something might go pear shaped and she'll say, 'Get out of my house' and I'll just get up and go (White, British 33 year old).

Another participant explained that before coming to prison he had been living with his wife and children, but that because "I didn't want my kids to see the amount of drugs I was doing, I made myself homeless". Another participant described how because of his drug taking he had been put off living with his brother after release:

I wanted to go home, or as far as I was concerned, I wanted to see my brother. I just needed a cuddle. You know, I'd been in gaol. I'd had no letters, no phone calls, no visits from anyone in my family, because I chose not to have it. So then, when I went back to my area, I phoned my brother and he turns round to me and he says, 'You what, I don't need that shit around me'. He's talking about the heroin. And he says, 'Look, I'm not blowing you out, but I don't want that shit around me. I've got children', blah, blah, blah. Well I'm not hearing that, I'm hearing just rejection. Fuck off, you know what I mean, and I just went bollocks and ended up a user. I relapsed, proper relapse (White, British 33 year old).

Similarly, participants who had been allocated places in hostels, or young offenders' homes described how these arrangements were often precarious and short term. Bail and other government funded hostels used to house ex-prisoners with no accommodation to go to on release are frequently poorly managed and violent places, where young men make new criminal contacts and gang rivalries are intensified (Rock, 2005). Some participants explained that because they had broken house rules in hostels they had become, or had been made, homeless. One participant, who as a requirement of his ongoing residency in the hostel he was allocated to after prison was meant to go out only in the company of adults

recalled how he regularly used to sneak out at night with other residents to steal cars and commit street robberies. He was able to do this because:

They never used to keep tabs on us. They were young people and they weren't really, I don't know, tight with surveillance. So they were a bit laid back. We used to climb through the bedroom window, down the pole and what not. They had rules and regulations that you had to abide by, but I didn't keep up with them yeh. No one stopped me yeh. And I had a couple of fights in there and you weren't allowed to have girls in there and they used to find girls in my bedroom. All those things went against me in the end, so I left (Black, British 21 year old).

Accessing social and community support

Although prisoners in the UK are entitled to a range of benefits on release including income support, housing benefit, jobseekers allowance, community care grants etc., practical problems such as a loss of formal identification, or delays in processing urgent claims for food and clothing, mean that many prisoners must survive the first few weeks after release without any means of financial support (SEU, 2002). It has been suggested that many of the problems offenders face after release are no different from those faced by people generally who apply for social and community support. But faced with social situations they are unable to resolve, offenders tend to choose “a maladaptive, often criminal, response as a misguided coping effort” (Zamble and Quinsey, 1997: 10). In a study of recidivism it has been observed that:

In the case of offenders there was no evidence that the problems encountered outside of prison were distinctive in kind or severity from the ordinary challenges that most people encounter. However, their ways of dealing with these situations were at best ineffective and often exacerbated the original problems (*ibid*).

Certainly, many participants expressed a strong sense of frustration at having to deal with public bodies such as benefit offices, housing departments and job agencies, as well as the probation service. Believing the problems they faced required urgent attention, some responded to a failure on their part to secure the help and support they thought was most

appropriate to their situation by refusing to engage with public bodies at all. One participant described his reaction to not being able to find housing after release:

Housing, they always fob me off, fanny me off and I don't know why. I'm sick of it to tell you the truth. I think what the fuck, oh shag it, forget it. I won't beg for something, you know what I mean (White, British 33 year old).

The decision to reject the support provided by social services caused some of the participants further problems which they then tended to try and resolve through crime. One participant explained that because he had refused to claim unemployment benefit, and was cohabiting illegally in council owned property with a friend, he had been unable to disclose his home address to official organisations such as banks, housing associations, or prospective employers. This had resulted in him becoming “stuck in a place I did not want to live but which I could not leave”. Having no other way to pay the rent he relied on crime.

I'd say I committed crime to survive really. I stopped signing on so housing benefit stopped paying my rent. So, you know, things went down hill. Like I said to you, I didn't want to be living there, but I have tried to go for jobs . But my friend wouldn't let me use his address as a place of residence for them to send me bank statements; you know things like that (Black, British 27 year old).

Another participant recounted his failure to persuade the probation service to provide him with alternative accommodation after he had left his family home because of a row with his wife.

So I leave home. I go to probation. I said, 'haven't got nowhere to live. 'There's nothing I can do for you'. 'What do you mean, there's nothing you can do for me?' I said, 'I'm still on licence, I just finished four years. She says - now listen to this - I'm only vulnerable for the first six to eight weeks of coming out. Now don't you think that's bollocks? I've just come out of doing four years. I've done two years eight months and she telling me I'm only vulnerable for the first six to eight weeks. I ended up living in my car. That's when it all went pear shaped (White, British 33 year old).

Throughout this thesis it has been suggested that criminal behaviour results from an interaction between individual agency and social context and environmental situation. It

follows that an appraisal of the extent to which a lack of ability to cope is a factor in reoffending and/or criminal desistance needs to address individual factors such as impulsivity, as well as the effect of the social circumstances in which offenders make decisions and act upon them (Rex, 2001). In particular, the extent to which deprived neighbourhoods (Currie, 1985) and/or imprisonment (Shover, 1996) reduces the capacity of offenders to develop the levels of motivation necessary to successfully address social problems after release needs to be accounted for. One participant described how prison had a destructive effect on prisoners' powers of communication so that after release many of them are unable to negotiate on a level which is socially acceptable within mainstream society.

Inside you have to have an exterior that you're tough. You have to because if you don't you will get fucked. It's as simple as that. You have to speak the speak, and people have to know that you're not somebody that can have the piss taken out of. And we all do that, we do it in different ways. But in prison it is on a very physical level, a very showy level, and it's all very verbal. But when you're on the outside it doesn't work, it doesn't wash and it's a different context. If you've spent a long time in prison, those patterns of behaviour, you try to transfer them when you come out of prison. For example, if you're going into a situation where you're trying to claim a civil right and the person standing on the other side of the counter is working for a public body and you're all (grunts like an ape), they're not going to buy it. Your attempts to gain your entitlements will be thwarted because you're unable to communicate in the sort of way you need to communicate to get those things (Black, British 40 year old).

The assertion that the problems faced by prisoners after release are the same as the problems faced by most people in ordinary everyday situations needs to be put into context. Apart from differences caused by the unique structural and social impediments of long term imprisonment (Richards and Jones, 2004), ex-prisoners must contend with a range of problems that are specific to their personal and social situation. For instance, many ex-prisoners are subject to licence or parole requirements which restrict their movement and activities. Unless they perceive the arrangements made for them are useful and pertinent to their social situation, there is a likelihood that ex-prisoners will fail to adhere to the restrictions placed upon them (Winstone and Dixon, 2000 in Ellis and Winstone, 2002). One participant who had been subject to a licence agreement which specified that he must

live and remain in his home area after release explained that he had been breached and returned to prison because of his deliberate failure to comply.

The probation service keep trying to drag me back into the areas where I've been getting into trouble and I keep saying I don't want to go back to those areas. And they breached me for not going to probation in that area and living in that area. I don't like it down there no more. I've just had enough. The people I used to know, I just don't want to know those people any more. But they don't want to help. So I just get fed up and think sod it, I'm not going to bother going back to probation. So that's why I'm in here now (White, British 22 year old).

Finding a job

Another problem that is unique to the social situation of ex-prisoners is the requirement to disclose criminal records to potential employers. Traditionally, employment is linked to housing as a factor in prisoner reintegration because “the possession of a job will enable suitable accommodation to be secured and any problems within the family will be solved by [the ex-prisoner] assuming his traditional role of breadwinner” (Soothill 1974: 23). However, although a large number of studies suggest that ex-prisoners are more likely to reoffend if they are unemployed (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Farrall, 1995; Lipsey, 1995; Graham and Bowling, 1995; May, 1999; Raphael and Winter-Ebmer, 1999), the difficulty of securing work in highly skilled labour markets, mass unemployment in lower skill occupations, as well as the reluctance of employers generally to recruit known offenders, has meant that many programmes designed to prepare and secure work for ex-prisoners have been unsuccessful (Fletcher *et al.*, 1998).

An obvious problem is that at the meso-level, most ex-prisoners return to live in deprived areas which suffer high rates of unemployment, and provide “very little systematic and intensive work-related support... to ex-prisoners after release” (SEU, 2002: 58). Throughout the 1990s, as the London labour market worsened in comparison to national figures, the highest rates of unemployment became concentrated in central and eastern areas of the inner city (GLA, 2002). Given that their early criminal convictions and

imprisonment precluded entry into training and employment, most participants found that on release from prison any jobs open to them were likely to be low skill, low wage, require long or unsocial hours, and have little or no prospects of promotion (Nagin and Waldfogel, 1995). Therefore, very few participants had applied for jobs, or tried to find work through a professional agency (Niven and Stewart, 2005). One participant explained:

I ain't got no qualifications. I can read, I can write, but when you go for a job now, who's going to employ me? I've got 33 convictions, and the first thing you see on a piece of paper is have you got a criminal record? And if I lie they can find out, and then they wipe their hands of you (White, British 33 year old).

Nevertheless, many participants had begun to accept that getting a job was essential if they were to avoid crime in the future. Aside from a few participants who had previous experience of manual occupations, and were considering returning to work, for example as bricklayers, painters and decorators, or roofers etc, most considered that there were two possible routes to employment open to them. Aware that increasingly today only poorly paid and oppressive jobs are available to the working poor (Young, 1999), they could either use their past criminal histories in a positive way and become counsellors, and work with ex-offenders and/or young people 'at risk' of offending (Burnett and Maruna, 2006); or, as noted in the previous chapter, they could make their own opportunities in life and work for themselves (Soothill, 1974). However, as most of them had not sought, or been offered, professional guidance and advice to help them develop the skills and experience necessary to realise their ambitions, and aware of the difficulties they faced overcoming the stigma attached to ex-prisoners generally (Goffman, 1968) and the reluctance of employers to recruit them in particular (Fletcher *et al.*, 1998), in the same way they had attempted to find housing after release, they relied on informal networks of family and friends in the places they intended to return to after prison in order to find work. One participant explained:

Everybody's going to know I'm fresh from gaol, especially in my area, whether it be shop keepers or whatever, because everybody's used to seeing me. So when you've gone away for such a long time, people talk and automatically people come to a conclusion, 'Yeh, he must be away'. It will be hard for me. Like I ain't going to get no work, unless it's people that I know (Black, British 31 year old).

Another participant explained that the only way he had been able to find work previously was by using contacts he had made with and through other ex-prisoners. Over time his reliance on people who did not judge him or react negatively to him because of his criminal history, had caused him to lose contact with all his previous friends who were not criminals.

If it's a small place and the employer is someone who's an ex-offender, he might give you a chance. But most places, if you tell them you've been in prison, they just throw you through the door. They just say, 'Go away', you know. But I know where to go. I know the people to go to for my jobs. That is why all my friends are ex-prisoners. (Black, African 43 year old).

While this is a pragmatic solution to unemployment - because they fail to “expand their limited social circle to access jobs of higher quality” (Uggen *et al.*, 2004: 269) and develop the social and cultural capital necessary to establish a new permanent non-criminal identity based on independence and self worth - by maintaining social networks which revolve around former friends and acquaintances, especially those involved in crime, many ex-prisoners are prone to reoffend. Ericson (1975: 210) has described how many ex-prisoners are excluded from mainstream employment opportunities and at the same time are included within more intimate criminal networks:

... the ex-inmate tends to experience gross exclusion from distant others and gross inclusion from intimate others. He therefore begins to establish the meaningful aspects of his existence among his close associates rather than through wider community associations or the employment sphere. It is in this connection that a form of crime can re-enter the person's life.

The impact on ex-prisoners of returning to criminogenic environments and becoming re-involved in criminal networks is discussed further in the final section of the chapter.

Returning to local criminogenic environments and criminal networks

Previous research has found that offenders who successfully desist from crime succeed primarily because they disengage from delinquent friends and find a new direction in life (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Rex, 1999; Warr, 1998). While this may not be dependent on them taking the 'geographic cure' (Maruna, 2001: 153) - in other words moving out of local criminogenic neighbourhoods - it does involve establishing a new way of life which is no longer dependent on the support of criminal peers, and is at variance with the everyday routines and activities characteristic of a persistent criminal lifestyle. Substantiating the proposition that successful desistance is not dependent on moving out of local neighbourhoods, one participant asserted: "it doesn't matter where I am, there are a lot of things that will stop me offending that are nothing to do with where I live". Another said that before he was reconvicted he had managed to keep out of trouble in his local neighbourhood for over three years by severing all contact with his former delinquent friends, who, since he had had a child, he now considered to be "immature" and "stuck in a rut".

People got to know that I'm completely different now. So people respect that, even people that I've beat up in a school. They'll walk past me and speak to me, say, 'How's it going, is this your little boy?'. I'll say, 'Yeh, say hello Sam', and he says 'Hello', and people can respect that I've changed. (White, British 22 year old).

However, while some ex-prisoners are able to develop the human agency necessary to adopt 'social avoidance strategies' (Graham and Bowling, 1995) in order to overcome environmental factors such as housing, unemployment, stigma and peer group influence, others may be hindered from making the internal changes necessary to establish a new permanent non offending identity by their failure to withstand such factors. This is because the capacity of offenders to make decisions and purposefully follow through with a plan of action designed to support a non offending lifestyle is influenced by the interaction of both agentic and structural correlates of desistance (Sampson and Laub, 1993). In describing the personal and social circumstances of their lives after prison, the participants provide an

account of how neighbourhood factors can cause ex-prisoners, who express a desire to give up crime, to fail, and instead retreat further into close knit criminal circles.

Friends (dis)reunited

On returning home, many participants found that their former friends had developed new interests and priorities in life. In a few cases, the criminal activities of their friends had escalated in seriousness. For example, one participant explained: “when I came out of prison all of them had changed; they were doing professional jobs for like £50,000 a time”. As they got older however, most found that their former friends had significantly reduced the level of their criminal activity, or had ceased committing crime altogether. As is the case with most young offenders who are criminally active for only short periods of their lives (Smith, 2002), they discovered that their friends no longer lived as ‘social nomads’, seeking thrills and excitement as they had done when they were younger. Some of them had matured and developed new responsibilities in life. For example, they had started families and acquired mortgages and steady jobs. One participant described how on leaving prison he felt a strong sense of dislocation from the social networks to which he had previously belonged before going to prison.

If you go away for a month or so you can basically pick up from where you left off, but after a long prison sentence people just don't know you any more. People have moved on, they have matured in different ways, and the things that you used to do with them, and the way that you used to relate to each other, you can no longer relate to them on that level. So you find yourself becoming distanced and it can be a very lonely, isolating situation. For example, you go into prison and before you go into a prison a friend of yours was on the dole and, I don't know, living in a hostel, and when you come out after two years he's got his own cleaning company, and he's married. Do you know what I mean? You're talking to a totally different person (Black, British 40 year old).

Obviously, this can be a positive development which aids the desistance process. But it can also be a lonely and isolating experience. Although, as they got older several participants said they had come to realise that many of their friends had been a bad influence on them -

for example one participant thought his friends “ain’t really friends at all, they’re associates who just want to sell drugs and sell me drugs” - most agreed their continued attachment to criminal friends and/or associates stemmed largely from a need for company and support. Because during lengthy periods of imprisonment they had not developed the life skills necessary to get a job and participate fully within society as many of their former friends had done outside, they were drawn to associate with people of a similar emotional and practical maturity as themselves. Inevitably, these were other ex-prisoners. While a few had been able to maintain friends who were not criminally motivated and, for example, “flitted from one group to another”; most said that all their friends outside prison were former prisoners.

Because most ex-prisoners are unemployed, live in unstable housing, and use drugs (SEU, 2002), it is difficult for them to maintain friendships with people who, as one participant explained, “do not live the same way as we do”. For instance, their movement through space is not constrained by the need to travel to and from the same place of work everyday at the same times. Therefore, many participants found that on leaving prison their everyday habits and routines were at variance, both temporally and spatially, with most of the people around them. Unsurprisingly, the need to seek companionship with other ex-prisoners encouraged many of them to establish new social support and friendship networks which encouraged them to resume criminal activities (Moore, 1996). Asked why they continued to commit crime, despite professing a desire to give up, many emphasised the corrosive effect of continuing to associate with, for example “negative people”, “other drug takers”, and “other criminals”. Friendships, proactively based around the formation of new criminal crews, or ad hoc relationships which developed as a consequence of chance meetings on the street, inevitably led to new criminal opportunities which they felt powerless to resist. One participant explained:

You come out of prison and, alright, you can't go round to what's his names house today because he's working. And when he gets home from work he's tired and he's got to be up in the morning. And if you're not working yourself, and you've just come out of prison and you want company, you're going to go to people who are around. And you're walking down the street one day and you see somebody you know vaguely and it's like, 'I'm just going down the pub', and 'Are you coming?'

And then a couple of others, strays come in. And you're all sitting there drinking and, 'You know what, there's some money to be had around' and it's like 'How much?' and it's off (Black, British 40 year old).

Being a 'known geezer'

The effect of having a criminal reputation, of being “a known geezer” as one participant put it, was mentioned by several participants as presenting particular problems for them after release. Because they were known to be ex-prisoners they were treated with a considerable amount of fear and suspicion by local people. As well as restricting work opportunities and housing choices, this impeded their chances of participating fully and productively in local community life (Uggen *et al.*, 2004), sometimes with dramatic consequences. Asked where he was living before he came to prison one participant replied:

I was living in my car. Before that I was living with my mum in Whitechapel. I was living in my car because of prison and the community. I've been to prison so many times the community of the people around, the residents, give a hard time to my mum, asking her, 'Why's your son in prison?' It was just too distressing for her, so I just left for my own good. My car is parked about 10 minutes from my mum's. But just my mum knows where I am (Asian 23 year old).

Another participant, who claimed he had tried to give up crime on previous occasions after being released, explained he had had to move out of his local neighbourhood because he was constantly targeted by the police.

If I go back to Dagenham, I'll end up slipping back into my old ways, because all the police know me. They'll keep getting on my nerves, pulling me over, trying to get me for this and that. And I'll end up getting so fed up with it I'll end up retaliating and throwing everything back at them (White, British 22 year old).

For a few participants the stigma attached to them as ex-prisoners was compounded by particular circumstances related to their criminal convictions. For example, two participants said they had been reconvicted on the say so of previous victims. And a third participant,

who had been convicted of attempted murder and whose girlfriend had received death threats during the time he had been in prison, explained:

I'm moving up north when I get out. I'm moving away. I've said to my girl already, we'll move away and she said yeh. A fresh start basically. I get out, all it takes is for one person to say I said something to them, to ring up police and say 'He threatened me', and they're going to come and hit me and haul my arse back in here. Don't want that (White, British 21 year old).

'We gotta get out of this place'

Although it is often suggested that neighbourhood factors such as peer pressure and community based stigma are directly related to reoffending (Braithwaite, 1989), the way in which these factors can impede the intentions of offenders who express a desire to give up crime are less well documented (Farrall and Sparks, 2006). Compared to ex-prisoners who change sufficiently within themselves to withstand the influence of local criminogenic environments, and are able to successfully give up crime while remaining in their home areas (Maruna, 2001), many participants thought their motivation to succeed would be aided, for example, by moving “away from everyone that’s around me whose life is just crime orientated”. Whereas a small number of participants who had every intention of reoffending wanted to return home because, for example, “that’s where I’ve got family, friends, or thieving people, people who will buy stuff when I go out, stolen gear”; the participants who expressed a desire to give up crime described their home areas, for example, as places they “always got into trouble”, and went “from bad to worse”.

Sometimes expressed simply as a need to “just go somewhere else”, “somewhere nobody knows me”, “anywhere at all, I don’t care”, the desire to escape the harmful and destructive influence of local criminogenic environments contrasted markedly with how participants said they had related to their home areas as children and adolescents. Illustrative of geographical life course perspectives which suggest that the way people relate to place is age graded (Laws, 1997), they no longer looked upon the streets they had played in as children as arenas of excitement. Instead they were filthy, dangerous and hostile places,

places in which young people, for example, were “complete head cases”, “completely out of control”, and “far more violent than we had ever been”. Over the past twenty years, social relations in many inner city neighbourhoods have deteriorated to the extent that local residents are no longer willing or able to intercede for the common good, or confront young criminals (Pitts, 2003: 101). No doubt as young criminals themselves, rising crime, bad social relationships, mistrust and hostility in the places they lived would not have bothered them unduly. However, now they were older, and attempting to steer their lives away from crime, they were acutely aware of how their home areas had changed for the worse.

In the 1980s and 90s Brixton transferred from the softer drugs to the harder drugs. Everybody was looking and the stakes were raised. But people weren't really understanding what was happening on that level with the unemployed, the homeless and all these types of issues and drugs. In those days people turned a blind eye to it. Growing up in Brixton from my early childhood, the earliest memories I have of Brixton are quite happy because my front door never had to be locked and if my grandmother came out onto the step and said 'John', then a neighbour would say, 'Oh, he's here'. People didn't fear about letting their children out of their house. If you look at the whole picture it's gone from that to now you've got to have a steel door (Black, British 49 year old).

Their home areas were also unhealthy environments in which to bring up children. One participant, who had a long history of repeated criminal violence himself, described how he thought the place he had grown up was no longer a suitable place to bring up his young son:

I don't want my son being brought up around there because there's fifteen year olds running around where I used to live with guns now. It's just ridiculous, fifteen year olds selling crack with guns. And my son's five now. By the time he gets to 10, 13, what's it going to be like for him? It's going to be in the schools, and I don't want him brought up around that (White, British 22 year old).

The participants who expressed a desire to move out of their home neighbourhoods were asked to describe how, when, and under what circumstances they thought the problems they faced in maintaining a crime free lifestyle were related specifically to the places they returned to after prison. Many emphasised the need to associate with people who have stable and reliable patterns of behaviour. They thought a general acceptance of people

around them that crime is normal and justified meant they quickly became re-socialised to an offending lifestyle after returning home from prison. As a way of lessening the influence of other criminals on them, some participants stressed the importance of starting afresh in a new place, where they could live amongst people who did not know them and who had different everyday behaviour and interaction patterns to themselves. They said that returning to the same places after prison continually involved them, for example, in “a lot of rubbish”, “a no win situation”, “drugs and crime again”. In order to break the cycle, a few participants described the progress they had made in the past as a consequence of moving to new areas away from former friends and associates.

I cut them all off. Not one person in Hackney, not one of my friends actually come to visit me, actually knew I lived in west London. They might have heard from the bird, but no one would ever know where to find me. No one ever knew where I lay my head down or where my front door is. I was a new person. It was a fresh start. I put my whole heart into this fresh start. I really wanted it and I stopped doing what I was doing. I got a permanent place, a nice little one bedroom flat and started going to university believe it or not (Black, British 21 year old).

Another participant who moved to another part of London away from his former friends in Dagenham explained:

I got my life sorted out up there. I got off the drink, I got off the drugs. I got away from my friends. I just pushed them to one side and moved on. I got my own place in Southall with my Mrs and I'm happy. I haven't been in trouble once up there with the old bill not once. Not been stopped by police or anything (White, British 22 year old).

In a study of the factors and processes involved in criminal desistance, it has been found that adult social bonds to jobs and family are “significantly related to changes in adult crime” (Laub and Sampson, 2001: 20). Just as criminal behaviour is thought to develop through differential association with delinquent peers (Sutherland, 1947), it is thought to subside when offenders develop conventional social bonds with people who are law abiding, and which help to reinforce legitimate forms of behaviour and activity (Warr, 1998). Depending on the strength of these attachments - for example the quality of the work available and the commitment of offenders to holding down a long term permanent job

(Sampson and Laub, 1993), as well as the extent to which family relationships are mutually satisfying (Shover, 1983) - they can provide structure to daily life, develop independence and self worth, and aid the maturation process (Farrall, 1995). Several participants mentioned the need to disassociate from delinquent peers and develop new social bonds with people who were not crime orientated.

You know it would be a risk for me to put myself back in where I knew if I went into such and such a pub that half the people in there that I knew were dealing, or involved in some form of criminality. I mean after a few drinks I'd be like susceptible to any kind of suggestion if I didn't have a buck in my pocket and stuff like that. Now I need to surround myself with people who are working, family orientated and, you know, law abiding basically to give myself any type of chance of surviving (Black, British 49 year old).

As previously discussed, research has also shown that prisoners are more likely to reoffend if they return to communities which lack the power or social capital to encourage and support criminal desistance (Clear *et al.*, 2003). Bourdieu (1991: 229) distinguishes four different categories of capital which define social relations between individuals: 'economic capital' (monetary resources, land, employment, housing etc.), 'social capital' (valued and meaningful relationships), 'cultural capital' (lifestyle and knowledge), and 'symbolic capital' (social class, prestige, etc). The first of these categories includes physical and structural properties, while the latter three refer to personal skills and social relations which shape and define everyday social relations and behaviour. As noted in Chapter One, criminologists in the US have revealed how a deterioration in some, or all, of these categories combine at macro and meso-levels to tip specific communities into a spiral of decline resulting in rising crime (Anderson, 1990; Wilson, 1997; Sampson *et al.*, 1997).

In particular, a reduction in 'social capital' is considered to be linked to crime. More precisely, it has been shown that a deterioration in social relations and people's involvement in community life affects levels of public spiritedness, cooperation and trust, thereby allowing crime to rise unchecked in specific neighbourhoods. While most studies have drawn a link between social capital and the onset of criminal, particularly violent, behaviour (Lee and Bankston, 1999), recently in the UK, individual or micro-level

processes associated with social capital have been assessed at the community level in relation to social and personal correlates of criminal desistance (Farrall, 2004). Several of the participants revealed how the quality of social relations and interaction patterns in the places they returned to after prison obstructed their efforts to avoid reoffending. In particular, returning to areas with high rates of unemployment, where large numbers of people spent the majority of their time on the street, and crime was a visible everyday occurrence, caused them to quickly assimilate back into criminal networks and resume criminal activities. One participant explained why moving to an area where most people were employed would make it far less conducive for him to lead an active criminal life style.

If you live in an area where everybody is actively working, you're not going to stand up on the corner all day because you're going to feel like a punk. But if everybody's standing up on the corner, you know what I'm saying; it ain't nothing to stand up on the corner. So obviously where they put you determines kind of how you're going to be or what opportunities you get (Black, British 31 year old).

Furthermore, without a job or a permanent place to live, returning to places where large numbers of people were buying, selling and using drugs presented them with numerous opportunities to make quick and easy money.

They can't put me in a hostel when I come out of here in the middle of crack city and don't expect me to make a bit of money. That defeats the object, you know what I'm saying. That's what they done last time. They put me out in the middle of crack city. Every time I come out of my house I got rushed by about ten junkies. Have I got this? Have I got that? No, No, No. Come back in the evening, there's about 20 of them there. Have I got this? Have I got that? No, No, No. Until I decided, do you know what, I could make a bit of money here (Black, British 31 year old).

In particular, participants who were active drug users expressed a desire to move to areas where drugs were harder to come by, and drug dealing was less visible. Mirroring research which has found that drug users are more likely to desist when they associate with non-drug using friends and associates (Sampson and Laub, 1993), and that recovering drug addicts who return to places associated with their previous addictions are prone to relapse (Rawson, 1999), several participants emphasised the importance of making a new start in a new area

where, by living amongst non-drug using working people, the temptation to resume drug taking would be easier to resist.

It would help if I went to an area where I didn't know where the drugs was, somewhere I don't know nobody. Because the line of thinking I'm on now is I want to stay clean you know. If I go back I'm going to relapse, because I know where I can get it. Being around the people that do it you know (Black, African 43 year old).

Conclusion

In Chapter Four, it was revealed that in embracing crime as a way of life, many participants searched out new venues in London or throughout the UK away from the places they lived for new criminal opportunities, excitement and pleasure. This chapter has described how on returning home after serving their first, short term prison sentences, initially they were welcomed back as proper criminals, 'men of action' (Goffman, 1967). However, as they got older and the length and frequency of the prison sentences they received increased, many of them slowly became disengaged from former friends and acquaintances. As a consequence, they were dependent on re-establishing broken relationships with family and former friends in the places they had grown up in order to find housing and work. A tendency for informal support of this nature to be unreliable, or to be actively refused and withdrawn, meant that the living arrangements of most participants after release were highly unstable.

Moreover, many participants had grown to dislike the places they had grown up in. As well as considering them to be unattractive places to live, they failed to provide the social support necessary to help them give up crime, and develop a new non-criminal identity. Indeed, in many ways the personal and social contexts of their lives after prison encouraged them to continue offending despite professing a desire to give up. Although it may be possible for ex-prisoners to make the cognitive adjustments necessary to recast their criminal identities without moving out of the places in which they started their criminal careers (Maruna, 2001), collective factors such as stigma, peer group influence and social

relations; as well as structural factors such as housing and employment, restrict human agency and potential. The idea that criminal identities can be revised internally, irrespective of personal and social circumstances assumes that the responses of ex-prisoners to the problems they face after release is the main impediment to criminal desistance, rather than the problems themselves. The narrative accounts of the participants suggest that personal and social circumstances in the places they return to after prison can either hinder or help ex-prisoners to achieve the core changes to the self that are necessary to support a new prosocial identity and a permanent crime free lifestyle. The practical support required to encourage and support persistent criminals who profess a desire to give up crime to succeed in their intentions is the subject of the seventh and final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Seven

The importance of space, place and everyday life for the reintegration of prisoners and criminal desistance

Introduction

The life course analysis outlined in the preceding three chapters suggests that criminal behaviour is highly situational; that social structure and social relations in the places they inhabit impacts on the psychological, social and cultural life of convicted prisoners. Grounded by spatial analysis showing that the residential distribution of prisoners in Greater London is concentrated in specific wards which suffer the highest levels of social deprivation (see Chapter Three), these chapters have surveyed the structural and social context in which prisoners start offending, and in which many of them continue to offend after they are released from prison. In order to assess the extent to which increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment are related to the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of prisoners towards the places they inhabit throughout the life course, the thesis has explored prisoners' own interpretation of their offending behaviour along a pathway between the prison and the community. This chapter concludes the thesis by reconsidering the importance of space, place and everyday life for the reintegration of prisoners and criminal desistance in the light of the three central research questions presented in Chapter One.

The chapter begins by briefly reassessing the evidence that the prison population within the metropolitan area of Greater London is drawn from specific areas of the city. It then revisits the analysis of how prisoners relate to the places they inhabit - the places they grow up, prison, and the places to which they return after they are released from prison; and the extent to which their perceptions and understandings of these places are linked to reoffending and re-imprisonment. Finally, in the main section, the chapter concludes by

assessing the importance of space, place and everyday life for the process of criminal desistance, and the implications of prisoner/place relationships for future prisoner reintegration policy.

Place of residence, social deprivation and imprisonment in Greater London

Prisoner surveys have revealed that the prison population in the UK is overwhelmingly young, male, and socially and economically disadvantaged (Walmsley *et al.*, 1992). Relative to the population generally, a disproportionate number of prisoners have no educational qualifications, experience high rates of unemployment, and live in rented accommodation. Large numbers of prisoners also come from unstable family backgrounds, suffer from some form of anti-social personality disorder, and have a history of alcohol and/or drug misuse (SEU, 2002). This much is well known. What is less well known is that prisoners are drawn from specific urban areas which suffer high levels of social deprivation. Supplementing research undertaken in the US (Lynch and Sabol, 2001) and Scotland (Houchin, 2005), the spatial analysis of the home addresses of prisoners from Greater London presented in this thesis shows that there is a strong relationship between place of residence, social deprivation, and imprisonment.

As we saw from the analysis presented in Chapter Three, the prison population in Greater London is quite diffuse. Only five percent of the 633 wards in Greater London contain no prisoner addresses at all. However, there are distinct concentrations of prisoner addresses within the inner city, particularly within an area which contains just 16 per cent of the wards in Greater London, but as much as one third of the sample of prisoner addresses. When correlated against various indices of social deprivation, the spatial analysis also shows that prisoners in Greater London are concentrated in the poorest parts of the city. I want to briefly discuss two issues arising from these statistics which are interrelated: the extent to which prisoners in London are spatially and socially excluded from the population

of Greater London as a whole; and the extent to which they are socially excluded from mainstream society.

Spatial and/or social exclusion

As noted throughout the thesis, it has been suggested recently that a major factor in increasingly high rates of reoffending by ex-prisoners in the UK is social exclusion. In England and Wales it has been reported that high rates of reoffending are linked to a “sharp rise in social exclusion, in areas such as child poverty, drug use, school exclusion, and inequality” (SEU, 2002: 5). And in Scotland it has been reported that “the relationship between social exclusion and imprisonment is systemic. Risk of imprisonment is as much a correlate of social deprivation as are poverty, chronic unemployment or poor life expectancy” (Houchin, 2005: 77). However, although the connection between social exclusion and imprisonment is now firmly on the research agenda in the UK, the policy prescriptions recommended so far to address the problem of reoffending by ex-prisoners have been influenced by quite different perspectives on how social exclusion should be conceptualised and defined.

For instance, the reports cited above adopt singularly different positions concerning the most effective way to address the social exclusion of prisoners. In drawing a direct line between imprisonment and socio-economic conditions, the Scottish report recommends a strategy to physically and socially regenerate the relatively few communities, “the poorest council estates”, in which the evidence shows that the majority of Scottish prisoners are drawn. In particular, it reports that “the concentration of the problem in the City of Glasgow marks it out as standing alone in its need for social regeneration”(Houchin, 2005: 86). Alternatively, the report undertaken by the Social Exclusion Unit in England and Wales, recommends the introduction of rehabilitative programmes of support for prisoners to address various individual risk factors such as drug and alcohol misuse, and attitudes and self-control; as well as national measures designed to improve individual outcomes on social issues such as housing, education and employment. Clearly, there is a fundamental

difference here in the degree of importance each report attaches to space and place as a component of social exclusion. Whereas the version adopted in England and Wales pays little or no attention to the geographical concentration of prisoners after release, the Scottish report draws a direct line between area of residence, social deprivation and imprisonment. And in doing so, it suggests that reoffending by prisoners is “normal role behaviour, normatively governed and approved within its social context” (Houchin, 2005: 80).

Which of these policy perspectives is most relevant to address the link between imprisonment and social exclusion in Greater London? From the spatial analysis presented in Chapter Three, ostensibly it appears that place based factors are relatively unimportant to the London situation, at least in a concentrated sense. Most prisoners in Greater London do not come from a small number of specific estates or communities, as appears to be the case in Glasgow for example, but are distributed evenly throughout the inner city area as a whole. This pattern reflects the recent economic development of London which, as a global city, has been able to capitalise on global markets, and revitalise its industrial base by attracting new service sector jobs (Sassen, 1991). While there has been a consolidation of poverty in London in recent years, especially within the inner city, at the same time there has been a comprehensive (re)development of office complexes, and a rehabilitation of the housing stock, resulting in “a significant concentration of high income residents [as well as] a sharp increase in homelessness” (*ibid*: 254). As such, London is not characterised by absolute poverty to the same extent as other cities in the UK. As noted by Massey (1988: 75), “in spite of the poverty within it, it is rich”.

As a consequence, in many parts of London, including the inner city, the rich live in close proximity to the poor. The rich might insulate and protect themselves from the poor by living in gated communities, using private transport, and sending their children to private schools, but in many cases they live in the same wards, postcode areas, neighbourhoods, even streets and high rise flats. So does this mean there is not a clear connection between place of residence, social exclusion, reoffending and re-imprisonment in London? Based on the content of the participant narratives presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six, in the following section I argue this is not the case. Spatial analysis suggests that prisoners in

London are not as spatially excluded as in other conurbations throughout the UK - the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South and West Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, and Clydeside for example - where the experience of deindustrialisation, economic development, and geographic change has resulted in much more clearly defined patterns of social deprivation and spatial segregation (Pacione, 1997). Nevertheless, this merely underpins the generally accepted proposition that different forms of disadvantage arise from different economic fortunes and historical processes of urban development. The spatial distribution of pockets of deprivation, disparities between high and low income neighbourhoods, and high intensity crime areas, varies in cities throughout the UK. Compared to Glasgow or Manchester for example, where poverty and unemployment has become concentrated in large council housing developments peripheral to the inner city (Mooney, 1999), in Greater London the distribution of social deprivation is particularly fine grained, with concentrations of both high and low income households apparent in relatively small areas of the city (GLA, 2002). The impact of this; in particular the extent to which human responses to inequality, social exclusion and relative deprivation persist in specific parts of London, and affect community relations and 'local structures of feeling' linked to crime, reoffending and/or criminal desistance, is discussed below.

From A to B and back again - the life course perspective of persistent offending

It is common for perspectives on crime and place, crime and social exclusion, and reoffending and social exclusion, to consider these relationships in terms of separate processes and outcomes - for example, the effect of place on the onset of criminal behaviour, or imprisonment on reoffending (Visher and Travis, 2003). It is also common to explain criminality outcomes in relation to separate sets of factors which occur at particular points during the life course such as childhood experiences, family life, schooling, or unemployment during adulthood (Sampson and Laub, 2005). Recently, by adopting a longitudinal perspective which considers these relationships procedurally from childhood to adulthood and into old age, criminal careers research has shown how criminal behaviour

develops and changes over time (Laub and Sampson, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Sampson and Laub, 2005; Visher and Travis, 2003). In particular, criminologists have attempted to explain why, as they get older, most persistent offenders eventually desist from committing crime. For example, Sampson and Laub (2005: 166) have argued that:

persistence in crime is explained by a lack of social controls, few structured routine activities, and purposeful human agency. Simultaneously, desistance from crime is explained by a confluence of social controls, structured routine activities, and purposeful human agency.

In other words, during childhood and adolescence, the absence of social controls such as those exerted within the family, at school, or amongst peer groups; as well as a lack of structured activities such as those associated with stable patterns of work, or marriage, can result in crime being purposefully embraced by offenders for the rewards and/or the excitement and pleasure it brings. Alternatively, crime is rejected by offenders when, as they get older, involvement in family life, work, and other social attachments produces behavioural change which engenders a purposeful commitment to quit (*ibid*). I want to argue that, as well as particular life course events such as those associated with work and marriage, the age-graded process of criminal desistance may be strongly linked to how prisoners relate to the places they inhabit, and how this relationship also changes over time. While employment, marriage or having children can spur ex-prisoners to contemplate desistance, and also provide the stability of lifestyle which helps them to maintain law abiding behaviour, the quality, and therefore effectiveness, of these events to fundamentally change their emotional and psychological life is affected by social as well as situational context.

Of course, in important respects the way prisoners relate to the places they inhabit is no different from the way people generally relate to environmental circumstances throughout the course of their lives. As is the case with people generally, prisoners derive their identities from the places they spend long periods of time in to a significant extent (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Because the relationship between people and place is always subject to change, individual identities are forged and re-forged through on going

personal and social experience of different places over time. However, as emphasised in previous chapters, it is also the case that different individuals exposed to the same environment experience it, interpret it, and react to it differently (Caspi and Moffit, 1995). To reiterate: the central aim of this thesis is to investigate whether for persistent criminals the experience of place is distinctive in that it is structured along a pathway which leads back and forth, often repeatedly, between prison and the places criminal careers begin; and if so, what this means for prisoner reintegration and criminal desistance over the life course.

As described in Chapter One, it is common in spatial analyses of crime and place to examine how constraints imposed by social structure in particular places can result in criminal actions. Alternatively, accounts which consider crime to be a consequence of human agency, or a biological or psychological propensity to offend, tend to downplay the effect of place, arguing instead that patterns of crime and criminality are a consequence of, for example, chance differences in personality traits or a natural desire of people to live amongst people like themselves. In contrast to this view, this thesis has argued that crime is committed by actors, or agents within a structural context which is always place specific. That structure and agency cannot be considered apart from the particular locales in which the actions, including criminal actions, of everyday life occur. That crime is as much about structural constraints in particular places as it is about how people respond to those constraints. Not because criminals are psychologically predisposed, or conditioned to commit crime by social circumstances necessarily; but because they are purposeful, creative and emotional individuals able to respond to the situations they find themselves in, and to make their own decisions and choices in life.

From A

I want to briefly summarise the major life course relationships between crime, criminality and place that were expressed by the interview participants in Chapters Four, Five and Six. It needs to be emphasised that each participant has a unique psychology, as well as a unique personal and family history. Although generally their early lives were characterised by

poverty, family instability, lack of achievement at school, as well as exposure to criminogenic environments; the influence of these factors on them was variable. For example, in terms of family life, whereas some participants were abused, or inculcated into crime by parents and/or older brothers; others came from families which were supportive, and did everything they could to steer them away from crime. These experiences obviously had a differential impact on their early childhoods. However, irrespective of the quality of family social relations, all of the participants found they were able to express themselves most freely and creatively outside the family home, with their friends in the streets and open spaces in the areas surrounding where they lived.

Initially, the places they called home were important as signifiers of their identity. Their home areas distinguished them as people and, in the company of friends, provided opportunities to test themselves, most commonly by engaging in activities which mixed trouble and fun. In contrast to the confinement and boredom of home, the streets in which they played were social arenas in which “juvenile offenders and the exuberant cameos of teenage life reverberate; alternate and sometimes they get crossed” (Hebdige, 1988: 30). Yet, as they got older the participants became aware that they lived in places which constrained them in important ways. Compared to other people who lived in other places in close proximity to them, they realised they did not have the same opportunities in life to express themselves, or achieve social and material status. Presdee (2000: 4) has written:

In a society such as ours where emotion stands against the rational and material world, those without wealth are left only with the world of emotions to express their hurts, their injustices and their identity.

In this social context, whereas for some participants crime was a means to an end; a straight forward choice between making large amounts of money quickly, or working long hours in arduous, poorly paid jobs; for others, it was a physical demonstration of power and identity. A high risk criminal lifestyle, symbolised by the conspicuous display of expensive consumer goods - goods which, given their situation in life, they were supposed not to be able to attain. And just as many of them refused to accept physical and social constraints on their desire to consume, they also refused to accept they were constrained by space or

place. No longer tied by parental authority to the neighbourhoods they had grown up in, the whole of London - and indeed for a few participants the whole of the UK - presented a spatial mosaic of opportunities to leave their humble beginnings behind, and enjoy the rewards of a fully committed criminal lifestyle. Thus, in contrast to the spatial activities of offenders in other cities in the UK (see Wiles and Costello, 2000), as they got older the places in which they committed crime increasingly did not conform closely to the places in which they lived.

To B

Of course, persistent criminality is frequently brought to an abrupt halt by imprisonment. Although the onset of criminality in London is not necessarily related to spatial exclusion, it is a truism that imprisonment in and of itself spatially excludes criminals from mainstream society. The extent to which enforced separation from the outside world reduces the capacity of prisoners to escape, as well as exercise agency and resist, is central to the issue of order and control in prisons (Sparks *et al.*, 1996). However, it also impacts on efforts to prepare prisoners for release (Irwin and Owen, 2005). Although it is a fundamental feature of imprisonment to severely limit relations with the community outside (Combessie, 1998), except for a very small number of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences, imprisonment is a transitional experience. Therefore, because periods of imprisonment recur throughout the life course of persistent criminals, programmes which aim to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into the community need to address the social and environmental circumstances of their lives before they came to prison, as well as those to which they repeatedly return after they are released (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

Notwithstanding ongoing research into effective prisoner rehabilitation and treatment programmes (for example, see McGuire, 2002), little is known about the effects of imprisonment on recidivism (Gendreau *et al.*, 1999). The descriptions provided by the interview participants in Chapter Five suggest that imprisonment is not a uniform experience. It is adapted to differently according to age, length of sentence, number of

previous sentences, conditions of confinement, pre-prison circumstances, and previous experiences of release. For instance, as young offenders, many of the participants described prison as an extension of their lives outside. It was a hostile environment within which it was necessary to use violence in order to prove themselves in the company of others. Then, as they got older, and they moved on to adult prisons, imprisonment became merely routine and monotonous. Irrespective of whether they were held in training prisons some distance from their homes, or local prisons in London which contained large numbers of people they had known previously outside, the standard response to the conditions of their captivity was to 'keep themselves to themselves'. In local prisons, aware of the presence of rival gangs, some sought out friends from the same parts of London they were from. However, because the ambience of all prisons is impersonal (Duguid, 2000), a common response was to become disengaged from their immediate surroundings. Helped by the easy availability of drugs, some participants deliberately suspended their sense of agency and conformed to the routine of everyday life. Others considered the lack of social activity to be a comfort and used prison as a place of refuge, or a home where they could temporarily escape the uncertainty and chaos of their lives outside. Either way, imprisonment is an experience of almost total physical and social exclusion. It is extraneous to the social context of prisoners' lives outside, and it excludes any meaningful involvement with everyday social relations or activities inside.

And back again

It has been suggested that in order to overcome a range of personal and social problems that await them in the places they return to after release, ex-prisoners must learn new motivations and patterns of behaviour which provide "the same sense of empowerment and potency they were seeking (unsuccessfully) through criminal behavior" (Maruna, 2002: 121). As important as age is to criminal desistance, ex-prisoners are only able to successfully turn away from crime in the long term when they establish a permanent non-criminal identity that is able to control the, often chaotic, personal and social circumstances of their lives outside. Giddens (1991) has argued that individuals always retain the capacity

to construct, reflect upon, and revise their self identities - because human agents never passively accept, and therefore are never victims of, 'external conditions of action'. In line with this theoretical assumption, it has been suggested that the places ex-prisoners return to are tangential to the process of criminal desistance. Therefore, offender rehabilitation and/or treatment should concentrate on supporting offenders who have made the first steps towards changing their core identities to construct new life histories for themselves, which engender a sense of personal agency and self worth through legitimate rather than criminal means. In particular, offenders contemplating desistance should be encouraged to find a new purpose in life, for example by helping them to find work which is creative and productive, and officially recognising their efforts toward reform (Maruna, 2001).

I want to argue there is a problem with the idea that the core self is a revisable narrative which is self-determining and therefore unconditioned by external social circumstances. The experiences of the participants after release suggest that the ability to develop the 'reflexive awareness' (Giddens, 1991: 52) necessary to revise self identity; and to monitor and control various life experiences and circumstances such as homelessness, unemployment, family and peer support, personal relationships, poverty, living conditions and repeated exposure to criminogenic environments; is dependent on the nature and intensity of those experiences and circumstances, as well as the mental and emotional impact they have on different individuals at different stages of their lives. Layder (2004: 130) has written:

The actual extent to which the self-narrative is revisable is always limited, conditioned and constrained by external circumstances. It is never simply a reflexive project at the behest of the desires and transformative powers of the individual.

This is not to say, of course, that purposeful narrative development plays no part in the process of criminal desistance. But by concentrating solely on the cognitive dimension of reflexive awareness - the 'practical consciousness' of the ego to the exclusion of 'emotion and the unconscious' (Lash and Urry, 1994) - it suggests that offenders who successfully desist from crime possess an innate ability to monitor and interpret their narrative

development objectively. And that they do this irrespective of the influence of individual life circumstances on them, or the different ways that different individuals respond subjectively to those life circumstances. It may not be a pre-condition of successful reintegration to move out of particular places and so 'knife off' the immediate environment (Moffitt, 1993), but for many prisoners who profess a willingness to change, continued attachment to the places in which they began their criminal careers, and to which they return after release, can hinder the behavioural transformations they need to make in order to follow through.

As described in Chapter One, it has been asserted that a major characteristic of late or post modernity is that a permanent place of residence has become much less important as a signifier of identity; so that "where a person lives, after young adulthood at least, is a matter of choice organised primarily in terms of the person's life planning" (Giddens, 1991: 147). I want to argue that this does not apply to ex-prisoners. Owing to the fact that most prisoners on release are placed in hostels, or are homeless and unemployed, and so have little option but to return to their home areas to seek support from family and friends (Petersilia, 2003), unlike young people in general, they are faced with few alternatives concerning where they can live, and how to plan their futures. For most of the participants this was not a welcome prospect. Not only did it mean resuming relationships with parents, or wives and girlfriends which, owing to a lack of adequate accommodation or a drug influenced lifestyle, had become incompatible; it was a backward step, a retreat to a place they had grown away from, and had begun to dislike.

While it is relatively easy for prisoners who have served short sentences to pick up the thread of their lives outside, prisoners who have served longer sentences face considerable barriers to successful reintegration (Petersilia, 2003). Some of these are generic, such as disrupted family relationships and a lack of appropriate habits, values and skills; whereas others are place specific such as a wariness and mistrust of local people towards them, and ongoing exposure to criminal opportunities and local criminal networks. Furthermore, high levels of social deprivation in the areas which many prisoners return to after release mean they often do not provide the resources and/or services required to support prisoner

reintegration. Despite a lack of attachment, and in some cases an active dislike for their home areas, many participants found they did not possess the vocational skills and/or the personal capital necessary to move. Having lost contact with friends, who during the time they had been in prison had grown out of crime, and lacking the occupational or social skills to reintegrate back into mainstream society, for company and support they relied on people whose everyday routine activities and lifestyles were the same as theirs. Thus, they became further embedded in local criminal networks which tended to encourage the belief that the only way to survive is through crime (Hagan, 1993).

Social and penal policy implications

What relevance does this life course perspective have for prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration policy? In general terms, it is not usual for social commentaries on space, place and everyday life to address the issue of social policy. To a large extent, this is due to the abstract, fluid and contested nature of the concepts involved; in particular, the difficulty of representing the ‘truth’ of the relations between people and place (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). However, unlike other social scientific disciplines which have investigated the relationality between people and place, throughout its history criminology has rarely been detached from social policy and practice. Garland (2002: 8) attributes this to the convergence of two separate traditions within criminology – ‘the governmental project’, which aims to administer justice and empirically analyse the work of the criminal justice system; and ‘the Lombrosian project’, which has a purer social scientific aim, namely to discover the causes of crime. These two traditions are related because different academic theories inevitably lead to governmental ideologies which seek to confront and resolve social problems caused by crime.

For instance, at different times and in different situations the four theories of crime causation discussed in Chapter One have each resulted in distinct forms of governmental action intended to reduce crime. Theories which consider crime to be biological and/or psychological, rather than structural and/or social, in nature have resulted in mostly

'positivist' interventions based on the assumption that criminals are essentially different from ordinary people. As such, they have stressed the primacy of imprisonment for dealing with individuals and groups who are considered either to be pathologically predisposed to act criminally (Wilson, 1975), or likely to commit crime when they consider that the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Or they have attempted to improve the ability of 'problem' families to socialise their children (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990), and to instigate changes in thinking and attitudes through 'treatment' programmes which address psychological deficits linked to criminal behaviour (Andrews, 1995). Similarly, theories which consider that criminal behaviour stems from a rational response to environmental opportunities have resulted in 'administrative' measures designed to prevent crime in specific locations, for example through environmental and architectural design, increased surveillance, or 'zero tolerance' policing (Wilson and Kelling, 1982)¹.

Alternatively, the overall policy implication of structural and cultural theories of crime is that fundamental social and environmental change is required to address the social, economic and political conditions which are thought to influence criminal behaviour. In systemic terms, this has led to radical critiques of the effects of the capitalist system on geographical differentiation; for example the need to eliminate competitive bidding for land, which, it has been argued, is the primary cause of social marginalisation within US ghettos (Harvey, 1973). In the US, it has also led to measures intended to redistribute wealth through, for example, the improvement of educational and work opportunities for lower class people (Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994). And aside from these broad brush policy prescriptions, area based programmes have addressed social and structural problems in specific areas. For example, arising out of the work of the Chicago School of Sociology, various 'community projects' have attempted to increase levels of social organisation within high crime urban neighbourhoods through the physical restoration of housing stock, vocational training projects, and working with local juvenile gangs (Marris and Rein, 1974). And more recently, programmes designed to increase the capacity of local residents to exert informal social control over high crime urban neighbourhoods have been evaluated (Sun *et al.*, 2004).

In the UK too, various social and community initiatives, many of them funded by local government, have been introduced to aid community organisation and combat crime (Graham and Bennett, 1995). Examples of local crime prevention and community safety schemes include the Safer Cities programme, which between 1988 and 1998 aimed to reduce crime and the fear of crime in local communities, and to create urban environments in which economic enterprise and community life can flourish. And since the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, 375 Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships have been established throughout England and Wales, 32 of which are situated in London. These are bottom up, multi-agency partnerships between the police, local authorities, the probation service, health authorities, the voluntary sector, local residents and local businesses which aim to reduce levels of crime and disorder in specific areas. Other area based crime prevention measures include community policing and neighbourhood watch (see Crawford, 1998).

Unsurprisingly, given their markedly different ways of explaining criminal behaviour, each of these broad policy prescriptions has been criticised. Individual solutions have been criticised for denying that crime has a social dimension at all (Currie, 1985), and for using imprisonment to manage poverty and marginality (Wacquant, 2001). ‘Administrative’ solutions have been criticised for applying a ‘cosmetic’ fix to what is considered to be a “chronic ailment of society as a whole” (Young, 1999: 130). And social and community solutions have been dismissed as ‘utopian’ for believing that it is possible to eradicate poverty and modify behaviour (Wilson, 1975). Nevertheless, depending on which perspective has been in the ascendancy at the time, different penal strategies have been adopted by governments across the world to control crime (Garland, 2001). Today, it is a defining characteristic of late or post modernity that the guiding principle of social policy has changed from “the logic of wealth distribution in a society of scarcity to the logic of risk distribution” (Beck, 1992: 19). The consequence for penal policy of living in an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world, in which “change does not consistently conform either to human expectation or to human control” (Giddens, 1991: 28), is that previous penal welfare policies designed to remove structural constraints caused by social inequality have been replaced by a model based on risk management and actuarial justice,

and informed by a 'culture of control' (Garland, 2001). In terms of reducing reoffending, instead of being directed at reforming offenders, penal policies are now directed at controlling aggregate groups of potential offenders, in particular the 'underclass' and those classified as persistent offenders (Hudson, 2001). This has meant that offenders:

are now less likely to be represented in official discourse as socially deprived citizens in need of support. They are depicted instead as culpable, undeserving and somewhat dangerous individuals who must be carefully controlled for the protection of the public and the prevention of further offending. Rather than clients in need of support they are seen as risks who must be managed. Instead of emphasizing rehabilitative methods that meet the offender's needs, the system emphasises effective controls that minimize costs and maximize security (Garland, 2001: 175).

However, penal welfare measures have not disappeared entirely. As noted right at the beginning of this thesis, in both the US and UK, increasingly high rates of reoffending and re-imprisonment have recently prompted a re-evaluation of imprisonment as an effective response to recidivist behaviour and penal policies, or the lack thereof, to reintegrate prisoners back into society (SEU, 2002; Petersilia, 2003; Maruna and Immerigeon, 2004). Yet, it remains to be seen whether the linking of high rates of reoffending to social marginalisation and/or exclusion by academics and policy makers will usher in a change of approach to prisoner reintegration in practical policy terms. In the UK, the present Labour Government's approach to the alleviation of poverty generally has been criticised for assuming that social exclusion is a result of individual or family deficits, thereby ignoring the effects of systemic structural inequality (Levitas, 1998). Moreover, the Government has adopted a strategy of social reform based on the assumption that the most effective means of addressing social exclusion is through improving equality of opportunity, particularly in terms of education, training and employment. This approach has been criticised for failing to address the fundamental causes and outcomes of social inequality. For example, for suggesting that:

you can reduce the unpleasantness of unemployment while leaving the real rate of unemployment unchanged simply by helping some people to get jobs in place of others. To know that you are fairly allocated to poverty is little comfort and may actually increase the stigma attached to it; it certainly does nothing to reduce the pain of exclusion. The substitution of equality of opportunity for equality of

outcome as a political aim reflects a monumental failure even to begin thinking seriously about the causes of our society's problems (Wilkinson, 2005: 284).

In terms of penal policy specifically, although policy advisors in the UK have questioned the efficacy of imprisonment to address reoffending by persistent and short sentence criminals - for example, it has been recommended that "custody should be recognised as the ultimate sanction and as such be reserved for the most serious, dangerous and highly persistent offenders" (Carter, 2003: 30) - imprisonment rates continue to rise. Nevertheless, the Labour Government has not remained idle in terms of developing new policy initiatives designed to tackle increasingly high rates of reoffending. Based on the growing acceptance that reoffending is related to the experience of social exclusion (SEU, 2002), a new single National Offender Management Service (NOMS) has been established to ensure that persistent offenders are subject to end-to-end, seamless management which addresses a variety of personal and social factors linked to reoffending, both in prison and the community (NOMS, 2005). To reduce rates of reoffending, it has been accepted that there needs to be much greater coordination and 'continuity of service' (Clancy *et al.*, 2006) between prisons, probation and the other criminal justice agencies, as well as other post release community services relevant to prisoner reintegration (Home Office, 2001b; SEU, 2002; Carter, 2003). Therefore, a major aim of the new service is to foster the cooperation and support of local services, communities, groups and individuals, and thereby increase public confidence in the criminal justice system.

But while it is generally accepted that local community involvement is essential for the successful reintegration of prisoners, it is by no means certain how this will be achieved in practice. To date, NOMS has been criticised for relying too much on management, in particular 'contestability' - the application of New Public Management techniques to commission and contract offender services, most usually from the private sector - and much less on the procedures and methods that will be employed; the "process issues that will determine just how effective the new framework can be in meeting the twin targets of crime reduction and enhanced public confidence expected of it" (Raine, 2006: 8). In particular, there has been little attention given to the unequal provision of prison and probation services around the country, for example a network of properly resourced local prisons

which would enable prisoners to serve their sentences close to their homes, maintain contact with their families, and access local community services (Carter, 2003). Furthermore, the regional basis of the NOMS administrative and management structure has been criticised for “being some distance removed from the task of constructing local situations, schemes or relationships that would benefit individual offenders, victims or communities and achieve some reconciliation between them” (Faulkner, 2006: 86). Finally, as yet there is an unresolved tension in the purpose of the new service to, on the one hand, undertake offender management through the use of ‘technocorrectional innovation’ such as electronic monitoring (Nellis, 2006), and on the other to deliver interventions which are less impersonal and more ‘people focused’ (Liebling, 2004), and which seek to encourage processes of agentic personal change in thinking and identity (Maruna, 2001).

To repeat once again the guiding premise of this thesis: reoffending and criminal desistance can only be properly understood in relation to both structural and agentic factors. Crime is a purposeful act committed by individual human actors operating within a specific social context. Although the social factors related to crime are different for each individual, and they change and develop over the life course, spatial analysis at neighbourhood levels continues to show that social exclusion in particular places leads to crime (Johnston *et al*, 2004)². Therefore, the analysis presented in the preceding chapters suggests that in order to determine the level and type of support necessary for prisoners to maintain a crime free life after release, it is necessary to approach the issue of prisoner reintegration on two broad fronts. First, to assess each individual prisoner’s criminal history encompassing past experiences, present situations and future prospects (Visher and Travis, 2003), as well as their motivations, attitudes and understandings linked to reoffending (Maruna, 2001). And second, to address the structural and social issues faced by them in the places they return to after release that can obstruct criminal desistance (Sampson and Laub, 2005).

The informal order of everyday life

Most prisoners profess a desire to give up crime (Cusson and Pinsonneault, 1986). While some return to crime as and when criminal opportunities arise, those that make a serious attempt to change their way of life either develop the capacity to sustain non-criminal behaviour (Maruna, 2001), or are hindered from doing so by a failure to overcome various structural influences on them. To understand the nature and quality of the events in prisoners lives, how ‘structurally induced turning points’ (Sampson and Laub, 2005) impact on reoffending and/or criminal desistance, it is necessary to complement formal mechanisms of prisoner reintegration such as those which address housing and employment issues, with a thorough and detailed examination of personal and social circumstances, and how prisoners respond to these circumstances after release. To do this it is necessary to understand the impact of lifestyle and consumption on social and cultural practice, and the extent to which how we act and behave in particular places betrays our social location. Therefore, the routine and mundane details of everyday life after prison, what has been referred to as the “informal order of everyday life - the ‘blood and guts code’ of families, groups and neighbourhoods” (Jordan and Jordan, 2000: 10), is crucial to an understanding of why it is that some prisoners successfully give up crime, while others do not.

It is suggested that a fundamental way of exploring what everyday life means for prisoners, and how it affects reoffending and/or criminal desistance, is to examine how they relate to the places they inhabit. Throughout this thesis it has been argued that being attached to and identifying with space and place is an integral part of how we conceptualise selfhood. In spite of the tendency within late or post modernity for social relations to become increasingly stretched out in time and space (Giddens, 1990), for most people places still matter. Although awareness and attachment to place has been altered by modern communication and transportation systems which have had the effect of bringing places closer together, many people still turn to places in order to ground and identify who they are as human beings. Much of the information used to explore how prisoners relate to place is likely to be highly personal and, as well as attitudes and meanings associated with reoffending, involves an up close understanding of psychological and/or family factors, as

well as early childhood experiences and age graded developmental factors. It therefore necessitates a much closer examination of the subjective lives of prisoners than takes place at the moment within prisoner reintegration.

How can this information be accessed? In order to build on the doubts many prisoners express about continuing to commit crime; for example to positively confront fatigue with 'street life' (Shover, 1996), and a sense of disillusionment at not having achieved a career or a family (Uggen *et al.*, 2004), Burnett (2004: 170) has advocated one-to-one counselling with offenders conducted in such a way that "the relationship between the worker and the individual becomes the safe 'place' where personal history can be revealed and where conflicting feelings and dark thoughts can be brought into focus and explored". Studies of reoffending and criminal desistance have concluded that advice is readily received by offenders "provided it [is] based on a demonstrated understanding of themselves and their situation" (Rex, 1999: 376); and that "supervision might become more effective in reducing recidivism if it were to focus on some of the mundane events in offenders' lives especially the problems they encounter, how they manage these problems, and their moods and emotional reactions" (Zamble and Quinsey, 1997: 149).

In a practical sense, the relevance of this for prisoner reintegration has barely been touched upon. While prison officials encourage prisoners to maintain contact with their families, and some prisons have implemented joint working practices with outside organisations and agencies to help prisoners find housing and work, little attempt has been made to assess the personal and social circumstances of individual prisoners before and after release, for instance the impact of their everyday living arrangements on reoffending and/or criminal desistance. Moreover, little or no attempt has been made to understand the different perceptions, attitudes and emotions of prisoners to the circumstances of their lives after prison; in particular the degree to which reoffending may be self-determining, an everyday emotional experience, and a result of conscious choice rather than individual deficiency (Sampson and Laub, 2005).

A major reason for this is a lack of resettlement work which seeks to establish strong relationships between offenders and their supervisors based on trust and understanding (Burnett and Maruna, 2006). As explained previously, in prison settings offenders traditionally are treated as objects rather than subjects (Duguid, 2000). In England and Wales, ever since the May Committee (1979) realigned the purposes of imprisonment to emphasise containment over rehabilitation, relationship work with prisoners has steadily decreased. And in terms of supervision after release, ‘aftercare’ work with offenders has been downgraded ever since the Statement of National Objectives and Priorities for the Probation Service stated that “social work for offenders released from custody, though important in itself, can only command the priority which is consistent with the main objective of implementing non-custodial measures for offenders who might otherwise receive custodial sentences (Home Office, 1984). As a consequence, for the past two decades, probation officers have been concerned mostly with risk management and delivering performance targets. And as such, “the professional autonomy [of the Probation Service] has been steadily eroded to the point where many probation officers see themselves as nothing more than criminal justice operatives, concerned only with the technological aspects of a bureaucratic job” (Worrall, 1997: 74).

Nevertheless, although the May Committee reported that “the rhetoric of ‘treatment and training’ had had its day and should be replaced (May, 1979: para. 4.27), as noted in Chapters One and Five, in recent years there has been a reintroduction of rehabilitative treatment programmes some of which have demonstrated that they can help prisoners to undergo behavioural change (Harper and Chitty, 2005). As well as cognitive behaviour programmes which seek to improve offenders’ thinking and social skills, these include programmes which support offenders’ own narratives of change through processes of ‘pro-social modelling’ and/or ‘motivational interviewing’ (Raynor and Maguire, 2006). Such processes are meant to underpin behavioural work with offenders by confronting ambivalent attitudes towards change, and encouraging and reinforcing positive action (Miller and Rollnick, 1991). These methods are thought to be most effective when offenders feel valued, and they are engaged in the supervision process (Trotter, 1999). Furthermore, it is thought that instead of attempting to resolve everyday problems for them,

it is more effective to encourage offenders to solve their own problems, by providing advice and guidance, and jointly exploring normative processes which can facilitate change (Rex, 1999). Offenders respond best to behavioural programmes in prison when they provide advice and guidance which is based on a close understanding of the local environmental and community contexts in which ex-prisoners make decisions and act upon them (*ibid*). For instance, it is important to ensure that any behavioural change effected in prison is maintained after release by addressing social factors such as accommodation and employment after release (Elliott-Marshall *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, while it is recognised that “offender management models that adopt a generic or integrated, rather than specialist or fragmented, approach are likely to be more effective in reducing re-offending... it is important (and necessary) for such approaches to reflect local circumstances” (Chitty, 2004: 74).

It is suggested that an important (and necessary) way of reflecting local circumstances is to encourage offenders to talk about the social context of their lives, and its effect on their attitudes towards reoffending, in relation to the places they inhabit. As explained in Chapter One, there is a strong relationship between people’s behaviour and their experiences of place (Seamon, 1979); and as well as other forms of behaviour, place shapes and re-shapes criminal behaviour (Herbert, 1993). The analysis presented in Chapter Four suggests that criminal behaviour develops in particular places as “a shared collectively conditioned consciousness” (Relph, 1976: 34), which reinforces the idea that crime is natural within its environmental context. Whereas some psychological approaches suggest this is characteristic of a ‘culture of poverty’ through which criminal behaviour is inherited within a specific social context (Mead, 1997), diametrically opposed approaches suggest it is an adaptive response to structural constraints (Wilson, 1997), and/or a consequence of how people react mentally and emotionally to the social, economic and cultural world around them (Young, 1999). In order to understand the truth of the matter - the extent to which the relationship between offenders and place affects crime, reoffending and/or criminal desistance - it is necessary to explore how different offenders react subjectively to the places they live as they grow older. It is suggested that through counselling and intensive interviewing the pathways can be traced that different prisoners take between the

community and prison and back again. In this way it is possible to explore the extent to which reoffending and/or criminal desistance is affected by the motivations, perspectives and emotions of prisoners in relation to environmental and social context. This thesis is by no means an exhaustive summary of all the issues involved, but aside from commonly identified barriers to reintegration such as housing and employment, the narrative accounts provided by the interview participants suggest that the following prisoner/place relationships should be taken seriously as factors in why so many ex-prisoners reoffend:

The decision to reoffend after prison is age graded. Young offenders are more likely to be unaffected by the experience of imprisonment. After an initial period of uncertainty, they respond to prison actively and confrontationally. As a means of achieving social status and respect, surviving prison through violence and intimidation is an extension of their everyday lives outside. Having served relatively short prison sentences and survived the experience intact, many young offenders return to social circles which accord respect to ex-prisoners, and revel in the excitement and challenge of violent crime. As a consequence, their social status is further enhanced. In comparison, older offenders are more likely to respond passively and inactively to prison. Whereas some treat prison as if it were a waiting room, a place of solitude where they deliberately suppress their natural behaviour in order to cope with the boredom and routine of everyday life in prison until they can resume their normal lives outside; others treat prison like home, a place they can escape the chaos and instability of their lives outside. It is suggested that both these responses are incommensurate with the fundamental purpose of prison to prepare prisoners to lead law abiding lives after release.

In important respects, the attitudes, perspectives and emotions of older prisoners towards the places they return to after prison are affected by whether they have contemplated giving up crime or not. For instance, prisoners who intend to resume criminal activity are more likely to return to places they know well for the support and opportunities they offer the persistent criminal. Prisoners who express a desire to give up crime on the other hand are more likely to be reluctant and even afraid to return to the places they began their criminal careers. This is because of the effect of other criminals, especially drug users or gang

members, on them; the pervasive availability of criminal opportunities which they feel unable to resist; a need to live somewhere new where they can expunge the stigma of their previous criminal identities; or simply a natural desire to live somewhere better and safer for their families and children to grow up.

Finally, on returning home many prisoners who have served relatively long prison sentences find that former friends have developed new interests in life. For instance, they have got married and/or found a job and, as a consequence, have given up or deescalated their criminal activities. Therefore, having not developed the occupational or social skills in prison to participate in mainstream society as law abiding citizens they find themselves disengaged from local community life. Often imbued by a sense of narrow mindedness and a callous regard towards the people around them, and still motivated by a desire to transcend their local environment through crime and consumption, inevitably they are drawn to other ex-prisoners for company and support. Thus, they fail to form productive attachments that might help them establish prosocial identities as law abiding and active citizens.

The case for a local community perspective

Why has the relationship between prisoners and place been so neglected in prisoner reintegration? A major reason for the lack of attention given to the places prisoners return to after release is the on-going primacy of psychological approaches to prisoner treatment and rehabilitation. As described in Chapter One, psychological explanations of criminal behaviour have tended to ignore the effect of social circumstances as a factor linked to criminality, for example family life or poor performance at school, preferring instead to view the individual's response to social and environmental conditions as the problem, rather than the conditions themselves. In failing to provide an equitable distribution of practice and resources aimed at addressing social and situational as well as personal and familial factors, the acceptance within psychology generally that problem behaviours such

as crime are individual rather than social in nature has obscured the need for social change (Albee, 1990).

Another related reason is the lack of a local community perspective in prisoner reintegration. In most respects, prisoner reintegration remains the responsibility of the criminal justice system. As noted previously, the Government reviews which have informed the development of NOMS have recognised the need for local community engagement, particularly for short-term prisoners who make up the majority of the prison population, and who have the highest rates of reconviction (SEU, 2002; Carter, 2003). This has led, for example, to a new 'Custody Plus' sentence which involves a short period in custody followed by a lengthy period of supervision in the community; as well as a programme of 'Resettlement Pathfinder' research designed to improve partnership working between prisons and local employment services, benefits agencies, relevant voluntary and private sector agencies, and local authorities (Lewis *et al*, 2003; Clancy *et al*, 2006).

However, while policies for the 'civil renewal' and empowerment of local communities have been developed between national and local government (Newman, 2001), the practical steps required to take this agenda forward specifically in the context of prisoner reintegration have not been addressed (Faulkner, 2006). For example, although local authorities have become more involved in crime reduction initiatives since the Morgan Report recommended they be given a statutory responsibility for community safety and crime prevention (Morgan, 1991), this has not been translated into any meaningful involvement in prisoner reintegration. As a consequence, services provided by local authorities, for example in the areas of housing, employment, education and skills, childcare, mental health and substance misuse, have not been harnessed to address high reoffending rates by former prisoners in the communities they return to after release (LGA, 2005). More recently, the Government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' (DCLG, 2006: 6) has stressed that there is "a critical role for local government to play, working in partnership with NOMS, local probation boards, and youth offending teams, in reducing re-offending and protecting the public". However, to date this has not resulted in concrete proposals for the devolvement of the regional powers of NOMS to

cities, towns and neighbourhoods. Indeed, according to the Local Government Association (2005: 19), the aim of NOMS to energise local communities is not commensurate with its regional approach and management arrangements. This is because:

Localities differ markedly from one local authority to another and within their boundaries from one neighbourhood to another. NOMS should engage with local government at the local level to understand the complexities, concerns and creativity of communities, as well as the services available in a local area where an offender will be a member of the community.

Furthermore, while in some important respects, evaluations of the Resettlement Pathfinder initiative have been positive, they have also revealed a range of practical problems; in particular indications that “some of the critical ingredients in effectiveness depend on interagency collaboration of a kind that will not be easy to reproduce” (Maguire and Raynor, 2006: 32). And, at the time of writing, the introduction of ‘Custody Plus’ has been deferred due to budgetary constraints, with no timescale published for its future implementation.

Evidence presented in Chapters One and Three that large numbers of prisoners originate in specific places which suffer high rates of social deprivation to which they return after release, only to reoffend and be re-imprisoned, suggests that much more needs to be done to resolve practical issues relating to effective local community engagement. While there is disagreement about the definitions that should be attached to the concepts of community and social exclusion in relation to crime, it is generally accepted by social commentators who take space and place seriously that in order to engage local communities effectively it is necessary to address the “larger social and economic forces” that give rise to geographic differentiation and thus poverty, poor health and problem behaviours in particular neighbourhoods (Currie, 1988: 283). Obviously, this thesis is concerned with only a small part of such a broad social and economic agenda. Nevertheless, the narrative accounts provided by the interview participants of disrupted family life, poor schooling, gang activity, unemployment, unstable housing, and antisocial relations compliment a wealth of research evidence showing a link between social exclusion, poor health, unstable family life, conflictual social relationships, hostility and violent crime in socially deprived places

(Wilkinson, 2005). Having explored the connection between place of residence and imprisonment in Chapters Four, Five and Six, in conclusion it is suggested that the following are important elements of a programme of prisoner reintegration which seeks to address the personal and social contexts within which the processes of criminal desistance are embedded.

Maintaining family relationships is not a panacea for reintegrating prisoners back into society. Although family contacts can help prisoners find housing and work, as revealed in Chapter Five family relationships of prisoners are often complex, disrupted and unstable, and cannot be relied upon to provide them with a permanent home after release. Therefore, an evaluation should be made of the home situations prisoners return to; in particular whether family living arrangements and relationships are likely to support or hinder prisoners to sustain permanent crime free lives after release. Moreover, intervening with families to improve parenting skills is only a partial response to the problem. Frequently, it is the impact of prisoners' anti social behaviour on normal family life that is the cause of a breakdown in family relationships.

An important part of prisoner reintegration should be to gather information on the places prisoners return to after release. At the moment this is carried out only to monitor the distances prisoners are held from their homes, and how far relations and friends must travel in order to visit them. However, it also underpins proposals, first recommended by the Woolf Inquiry into prison disturbances that a community prison system should be established involving a national network of local prisons. These should be situated either:

near to the main centres of population, as many local prisons are now, with the facilities and accommodation capable of holding most prisoners throughout most of their sentence. Or they could be arranged in clusters of separate prisons within a locality through which the prisoner could progress (Woolf and Tumim, 1991: 25).

The prospect of such a system being established is of course dependent on the prison building (and closure) programme, fluctuations in the prison population, and a substantial injection of additional resources. Therefore it was accepted in the Government response to

Woolf and Tumim at the time that proposals for a community prison system would only be implemented, if at all, over a long timescale (Cavadino and Dignan, 1997). Nevertheless, a major aim of the Government's recent 'Five-Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending' (Home Office, 2006), which has set a target of reducing reoffending by 10 per cent, is to establish a community prison system which will provide "facilities for less serious offenders, and for those getting close to release, which are local, which link to the local community, and to local services" (*ibid*: 30).

It is suggested that much could be achieved in the short term to realise this aim by analysing much more efficiently than takes place at present which local areas and/or neighbourhoods receive released prisoners. Recently, in the US a new geographical approach to prisoner reintegration has been piloted in a small number of states based on the understanding that "there is no logic to spending a million dollars a year to incarcerate people from one block in Brooklyn... and return them, on average, in less than three years stigmatized, unskilled, and untrained to the same unchanged block (Tucker and Cadora, 2003: 2). Using spatial analysis to identify which neighbourhoods receive the most released prisoners, the 'Justice Reinvestment' project³ aims to focus prisoner reintegration resources where they can have the greatest impact. It has been suggested that due to reductions in the prison population from such an approach, state legislatures are able to redirect spending from correctional budgets to focus on local community restoration projects, which in turn strengthen the capacity of local residents to reduce levels of crime (*ibid*). Similar spatial analyses should be carried out in this country.

Although released prisoners are not as geographically concentrated in the UK as they are in the US, the evidence presented in Chapter Three suggests that prisoners are drawn on a recurring basis from specific urban areas. Moreover, Chapter Four has revealed that local prisons in particular are 'small worlds' in which many prisoners know, or know of each other, through their previous involvement in close-knit criminal networks outside. While this presents a potentiality for conflict between rival gangs in prisons, it also provides an opportunity for prisons to work closely on an outreach basis with organisations and agencies in the places most prisoners return to after release. The NOMS Offender

Management Model (NOMM), in particular the introduction of seamless sentences which aim to ensure that programmes of rehabilitation started in prison are continued in the community after release, would be improved by targeting cooperative practices between prisons and community organisations in the most relevant places.

As described in Chapter Two, current information gathering procedures are inadequate for identifying with accuracy the home addresses of prisoners. The Offender Assessment System (OASys) should be used to improve procedures for gathering and disseminating address information, and to determine reintegration needs accordingly. OASys has been introduced to standardise the assessment of offenders, and refer them to services best equipped to meet their needs. While the components of OASys are comprehensive, and include an assessment of offences committed, accommodation, education, training and employment, financial management and income, relationships, lifestyle and associates, drug and alcohol misuse, thinking and attitudes; and while address information is also recorded, there is no indication of how, or indeed whether, service providers will be targeted to meet these needs in the most appropriate areas. Address information collected by OASys should be used to develop place based strategies which coordinate services so that areas which receive large numbers of returning prisoners have the capacity to balance supply and demand.

As emphasised in Chapters One and Five, prisons traditionally have paid little attention to the places prisoners return to after release and, for the most part, have not sought to engage with local services. While some improvements have been made in recent years; in particular through the more active engagement in prisons of voluntary and community sector organisations such as Nacro, the crime reduction charity; RAPt, the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust; and 'Partners in Reducing Re-offending', which aims to develop partnership work between NOMS and the voluntary and community sector in London; there remains little evidence of a contribution by local government, local business, or local people to addressing reoffending by former prisoners (LGA, 2005). Therefore, aside from identifying gaps in resources and provision, place based strategies for reducing reoffending should include systematic partnerships with a range of voluntary, public and

private organisations to bridge those gaps. This would facilitate local community solutions to reoffending, as well as more generic solutions such as informing local social services of particular issues and difficulties associated with reintegrating ex-prisoners back into society; working with local employers to implement fair policy and practice for recruiting people with criminal records; liaising with local authorities and probation services to improve applications from ex-prisoners for social housing and provide adequate supplies of supported accommodation; and ensuring that prison drug programmes are integrated with those in the community. Overall, the aim would be to provide services that are properly sequenced, so that ex-prisoners continue to make progress on a range of multiple issues in an ordered and systematic way both in prison and the community (Clancy *et al.*, 2006).

Finally, employment in and of itself does not necessarily lead to successful desistance. Indeed, owing to the multiple problems faced by ex-prisoners it has been found that “offering employment in isolation is unlikely to have significant effects in lowering the recidivism rates for the general run of the prison population” (Soothill, 1974: 7). Evidence presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six suggests that prisoners are aware of the problems they face, for example that they have poor employment skills and face serious difficulties disclosing criminal records to potential employers. Willing to contemplate giving up crime, but unwilling to accept what they consider to be low paid and boring jobs, many consider the possibility of self employment (*ibid*), or a career working in caring professions, for example with ‘youth at risk’, or offenders like themselves (Burnett and Maruna, 2006). Given their personal and social circumstances, these are not unrealistic career options. Yet, most prisoners have little or no idea about what they need to do to achieve them. Improving equal opportunities in local job markets can help. However, unless there are also macro-economic policies which aim to redistribute socio-economic resources and create jobs, high unemployment rates in the places most prisoners return to after release will continue to inhibit their chances of gaining worthwhile employment. More specifically, by liaising with local authorities and employer organisations, agencies that work with offenders can contribute, for example, to the creation of customised education, training and employment programmes which impact directly on the structural problems faced by ex-prisoners in local employment markets.

By adopting these and other methods like them which seek to engage constructively with local communities, it is possible to address reoffending and encourage criminal desistance in a way that is mindful of the multi-layered and complex relationships between prisoners and place. By following closely the pathways prisoners take throughout their lives between prison and the community through one-to-one, in-depth counselling and relationship work, and by identifying the practical problems they face in the places they return to after release through area based analysis, the extent to which the psychological, emotional and experiential factors associated with reoffending and/or criminal desistance are situated, circumstantial and socially structured, may be better understood.

Notes

¹ Zero tolerance policing is a penal policy prescription which seeks to effectively confront disorder as well as signs of disorder in a given area owing to its link with more serious crime. Claims (Kelling and Coles, 1997) and counter claims (Young, 1999) have been made regarding its effectiveness to reduce levels of violent crime.

² More generally, in a study of the effects of inequality on health and social relations, Wilkinson (2005: 146-147) has noted that “there are now at least fifty papers showing that violence is more common in societies with bigger income differences. This relationship holds up both when we compare different societies internationally and when looking at regions or small areas within them... normally violence is concentrated among the poor themselves: the poorer neighbourhoods of most cities are well known to be the most dangerous.”

³ Based on work carried out by the Justice Reinvestment project, recently the International Centre for Prison Studies has undertaken a similar project in the local authority area of Gateshead. The project aims to transfer the budget allocation on inefficient crime control to more positive expenditure within the local community, to create a better dialogue with the Prison Service to plan for prisoner release, and to involve tenants and residents in having a say about the estates and areas in which ex-prisoners live.

**APPLICATION
TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH
IN HER MAJESTY'S PRISON
SERVICE**

Name of researcher(s)	<i>Nick Flynn</i>
Project title	<i>The extent to which home area influences released prisoners to persist in, or desist from, committing further crimes</i>

Please type or print, using black ink

RESEARCHER(S) DETAILS

Surname: Flynn
etc...) **Mr.**

Title: (e.g. Mr. Ms. Dr.

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Name, Status and Address of Research Supervisor (if appropriate):

Director of Studies: Professor Roger Matthews, Middlesex University, Queensway, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 4SF

Supervisor: Dr Karen Duke (address as above)

Name and Address of Sponsoring Body (if appropriate):

Middlesex University

If more than one researcher will be engaged on the project, please copy this page and provide details on all.

Please attach a CV for all researchers

PROPOSED RESEARCH - AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Reason for undertaking research project:
(e.g. for Ph.D. thesis, for commissioning body, or as part of the programme of study of a research unit)

PhD

What is (are) the research question(s)?

An investigation of where prisoners originate from in England and Wales and the extent to which there is a connection between the prison population in London and specific neighbourhoods in the Greater London area.

A record of prisoners and ex-prisoners experiences, attitudes and motivations towards their home environment and an assessment of how these may have contributed to the development of criminal careers and affected their prospects of ultimately desisting from offending. General questions to include the following:

What is the relationship that individual prisoners have with their home areas?

How have these relationships influenced their criminality?

How have individuals reacted to prison life?

To what extent do they consider prison to be different or similar to their life outside of prison?

What are their future expectations?

More specific questions to include:

To what extent does prison for the habitual offender become an accustomed way of life, not dissimilar to their life in the community?

To what extent do prisoners retain contact with the outside world, or cut themselves off from it?

To what extent do prisoners engage with prison activities and with services in the community?

Is imprisonment something to be avoided at all costs, or merely a consequence of deciding to commit crime, something to put up with?

How much blurring is there between life in the community and life in prison and if there is a lot, what effect does this have on prison

culture, on the communities to which prisoners return, on the levels and types of crimes committed?

To what extent do prisoners consider themselves to be products of their environment?

What processes influence offenders to re-offend when research shows that the majority say they intend to desist from committing further crimes prior to their release from prison?

How does the experience of imprisonment influence the lifestyles of offenders after release?

What expectations do offenders have for their future lives? To what extent do they consider the areas in which they live to be an aid or a hindrance in meeting such expectations?

What effect would moving to another area have on their propensity to re-offend?

How much of an influence on them is peer group pressure?

To what extent is there a need for them to create a new identity in order to desist from crime?

What influence do factors such as education, employment, family life and marriage have on them?

What about participation in social activities, cultural and leisure pursuits?

To what extent does the availability or non-availability of support mechanisms in local areas help offenders to desist from offending?

How should attempts to persuade prisoners to desist from committing further crimes be developed as a consequence of all this?

Is there related published research of relevance to the study?

If so, please describe:

Research from America has shown that large numbers of prisoners originate from a small number of neighbourhoods in inner city areas to which they return on their release and are then reconvicted creating "a self-perpetuating cycle of escalating socio-economic marginality and legal incapacitation" (Wacquant, 2001). The prioritisation of penal rather than social responses to the problems of inner city neighbourhoods (Feely and Simon, 1994) has over time engendered a sense of marginalisation amongst communities that has tipped over into an oppositional culture, that of "the streets" (Anderson, 2001). This street culture, centered on gang loyalties and "hypermasculinist notions of honor, toughness and coolness" (Wacquant, 2001) has transformed prison life and then been exported back to further disrupt the neighbourhoods from which it evolved. The result is a constantly revolving door between prison and certain inner city communities.

Although in the United Kingdom the case has not been made for such a direct relationship between the prison population and a small number of inner city neighbourhoods, the last National Prison Survey in England and Wales, 1991 showed that the highest number of prisoners per thousand population came from inner city areas (Howard, 1994). Furthermore, the recent report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) draws a line between high rates of re-offending and social and environmental factors such as family, educational and health disadvantage, a lack of job prospects and a black, or minority ethnic background, all of which are closely associated with inner city areas. This would suggest that while the relationship between prison and inner city neighbourhoods may not be as overt as in America there is nevertheless a relationship between the prison population in England and Wales and the inner city, the precise nature of which remains unexplored.

What is perhaps most important regarding the relationship between home address and prison is that social and environmental context appears to be as important to understanding how crime and desistance from crime occurs (or does not occur) as are developmental and psychological factors (Laub and Sampson, 2001). Although it has been accepted that characteristics of deprived neighbourhoods – lack of community cohesion, unemployment, stigma, isolation, etc – can increase levels of crime, it is less well understood how such conditions can obstruct the intentions of released prisoners to 'go straight'.

It is therefore necessary to explore how the propensity to re-offend is "shaped within the constraints and opportunity structure of the social world in which people live (Maruna, 1997). This requires an understanding of how structural differences, ie neighbourhood differences, interact with individual differences to increase the probability of crime (Moffitt, 1994).

The research methodology adopted for this exploration will take a phenomenological approach. This will facilitate an investigation of how different individuals exposed to the same environment may experience it, interpret it, and react to it differently (Caspi and Moffitt, 1995). Using an interview framework based on story telling, or narrative research, this approach allows individuals the space to discuss what is important to them and attach their own meaning and relevance to decisions they have made (Parker, Aldridge and Measham, 1998). The methodology is intended to reveal subjective aspects of human life such as emotions, thoughts, motivations and goals and therefore is best suited to empirically examine the interaction of individual behaviour and

environmental influences (Maruna, 1997).

Anderson, A (2001) 'Going Straight: The Story of a Young Inner-City Ex-convict'. *Punishment and Society* 3(1):135-152.

Caspi, A. & Moffitt, T.E. (1995) *The Continuity of Maladaptive Behaviour: from Description to Understanding in the Study of Antisocial Behaviour* in Cicchetti, D. & Cohen, D.J. (eds), 'Developmental Psychopathology: Vol. 2. Risk, Disorder and Adaptation' (pp 472-511). New York: Wiley.

Feeley, M. & Simon, J. (1994) *Actuarial Justice: The Emerging New Criminal Law* in Nelken, D. (ed) 'The Futures of Criminology', pp. 173-201. London: Sage.

Howard, L. (1994) 'Where Do Prisoners Come From? Some Information about the Home Areas of Prisoners in England and Wales'. *Research Bulletin No. 36*. London: Home Office.

Laub, J. & Sampson, R. (2001) 'Understanding Desistance from Crime'. *The University of Chicago*.

Maruna, S. (1997) 'Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives'. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Books.

Moffitt, T.E. (1994) *Natural Histories of Delinquency* in Weitekamp, E. & Kerner, H.J. (eds) 'Cross-National Longitudinal Research on Human Development and Criminal Behaviour', Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Parker, H., Aldridge, J. & Measham, F. (1998) 'Illegal Leisure: The Normalisation of Adolescent Recreational Drug Use'. London: Routledge.

Social Exclusion Unit (2002) 'Reducing Reoffending by Ex-prisoners'. London: Social Exclusion Unit.

Wacquant, L. (2001) 'Deadly Symbiosis; When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh'. *Punishment and Society* 3(1): 95-134.

What are the potential benefits of the research:

- **to the Prison Service?**

Implications for the development of present policy directives to incarcerate greater numbers of prisoners closer to their homes, in

particular initiatives such as intermittent custody and custody plus.

Relevance to What Works literature, pathfinder projects and strategies generally intended to rehabilitate offenders. The Joint Prison/Probation Accreditation Panel has reported that some aspects of re-offending are under-researched and that community based and prison based initiatives have developed in isolation from, and are not fully integrated with, each other. By exploring the symbiotic relationship between prisons and certain neighbourhoods, information about the impact of social context on the decisions of released prisoners to desist from crime would benefit attempts to foster greater local community involvement in prisons.

- **to academic knowledge in the field of study?**

The research proposed would fill a gap in the desistance literature, which for the most part has focused on the individual to the exclusion of socio-economic, environmental and cultural contexts (Vanstone, 2000). The research would provide valuable information about the ways in which prisoners interact with the social environments to which they return.

The research would also shed light on the more fundamental question of why it is that under highly criminogenic circumstances, such as a shared experience of social deprivation, one person commits crime while another refrains from it. By attempting to explore with offenders the emotions, impulses and motivations for committing crime, the research will explore the extent to which foreground and background factors, structure and agency are linked and mutually reinforcing.

Vanstone M. (2000) 'Cognitive-behavioural Work with Offenders in the UK: A History of Influential Endeavour'. Howard Journal, 39, 171-183.

RESEARCH PLAN AND METHODOLOGY

Briefly describe the research methodology:

Information about the home areas of prisoners in England and Wales will come from i) Prisoner location and access to home reports, provided by the Prison Service Estate Planning Unit, Directorate of Security and ii) numbers of court proceedings in

both magistrates and crown courts by Petty Sessional Areas and Commission of the Peace Areas, published in Criminal Statistics for England and Wales.

The home addresses of prisoners, either on remand or currently serving sentences, in London prisons will be gathered via statistical records for each of the six local prisons in the London area.

Semi- structured interviews will be conducted with prisoners in two prisons in London, one from the north of the city and one from the south; and with ex-prisoners in a set number of community locations. Interviews will be flexible enough to allow participants the opportunity to relate what is important to them. Interviews will attempt to establish the facts, but more importantly also allow participants to express how they feel about the facts and attach meanings to them. It is estimated that each interview will last for between two to three hours. Interview data will then be quantitatively coded and compared for cross-case similarities and differences.

During the course of interviews, participants will be asked whether they are willing to participate in a follow-up study to take place one year after the first interview has taken place. This will assess the changes that have occurred to individuals during this period of time.

What data gathering and sampling techniques will be employed?

Please include with this application any research tools such as questionnaires, interview schedules etc... Where data on prisoners is required, details of the information sought should be attached.

Information gathered by the Estate Planning Unit, Directorate of Security is not public information and is provided for management reasons only. However, Ian Goode the Head of the Unit has explained that the Unit would be prepared to answer specific questions submitted in writing as long as these were broad brush and did not cause any expense in terms of time or effort. In the light of this, it is intended that information will be accessed regarding the percentage of the prison population in London which has a home address within the circumference of the M25, along with similar regional information for the prison populations in other major conurbations such as Manchester, Merseyside, Birmingham, etc.

In order to explore whether there are a number of estates or neighbourhoods in London that are generating a disproportionate number of prisoners, discussions have been taking place with Pat

Dowdeswell, Programme Director for Criminal Justice System Analysis within RDS at the Home Office. It is understood that prisoner records can be accessed from a table on an RDS extract file for the most recent month. Information fields to be accessed will include: postcode, sex, age, ethnic origin, offence and previous offences. The home areas of prisoners will then be mapped against the postcodes of London using a Geographical Information System such as Arcview (8.3). In addition, information on the social, environmental and cultural characteristics of these areas will be gathered from 2001 census data sets using UKBORDERS software.

Finally, it is intended that interviews will be conducted with up to 80 prisoners and ex-prisoners from two sample frames: two prisons in London and from ex-prisoners in a set number of locations. The figure of 80 is aspirational and will be scaled down if appropriate. It is worth noting that previous research that has included in-depth interviews exploring the personal histories of offenders have included Cohen and Taylor, 1972 (35 interviews) and Maruna, 1997 (65 interviews). It should also be emphasised that the sample for the interviews will not be drawn from the RDS extract file. The mapping exercise described above will determine which prisons and locations are chosen. The samples will then be drawn from three major sources: prisoners who are self-selecting having learned about the project from leaflets and posters placed in the prisons, suggestions from probation officers, education staff, personal officers, etc working in the prisons and from probation offices and public/voluntary organisations working with ex-prisoners in the community.

Follow-up interviews will be conducted one year later with up to 20 prisoners and ex-prisoners (25 per cent of the initial sample). All participants in this will again be self-selecting.

(A draft interview schedule for the interviews is attached.)

Cohen, S. and Taylor, L. (1972) Psychological Survival: the Experience of Long Term Imprisonment. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Maruna, S. (1997) Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association Books.

How will internal and external validity be established?

Internal validity will be established by:

- **checking with colleagues and supervisors that the methodology is robust and accurate;**
- **conducting follow-up interviews with 20 per cent of the original sample to re-visit the information initially provided;**
- **triangulating methods of data analysis by having coding systems and conclusions checked by other researchers and supervisors;**
- **comparing interview transcripts with what is known about the social and environmental characteristics of the home areas concerned;**
- **complimenting the interview data with informal discussions with people working in the areas concerned – police officers, social workers, prison staff, probation officers, charity workers, etc.**
- **asking for feedback from participants on the accuracy of the conclusions.**

External validity will be established by:

- **ensuring the sample of interviewees is representative of the prison population as a whole in terms of age, ethnic origin and offence history. It should be noted that women are unlikely to figure in the analysis as Holloway, the only women's prison in London, draws its population from a large catchment area covering the whole of the south of England;**
- **describing any limiting effects of the sample selection. It is intended these will be kept to a minimum if the target figure of 80 interviews is reached;**
- **describing whether the findings are generic enough to be applied in other settings;**
- **making suggestions for further testing of the conclusions;**
- **assessing whether the findings are replicated in other studies on desistance.**

Which (if any) measurement tools will be used?

- **Arcview Geographical Information System (see above)**
- **Content analysis system for narrative data (the most appropriate system is currently being explored with colleagues at Middlesex University)**
- **NUD.IST**

Please list any equipment, which you are intending to bring into the prison establishment.

E.g. tape recorders, etc...

Tape recorder

What is the proposed timetable for the research?

Activity	Completed by
Desk research	December 2003
Access and networking	June 2004
First interviews	July 2004
Analysis of information	June 2005
Follow up interviews	July 2005
Analysis of information	September 2005
Writing up of findings	October 2005

When is the research due to be completed?

Fieldwork: July 2005

Report: October 2005

RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

How will the research results be analysed?

- **Arcview Geographical Information System**
- **Content analysis system for narrative data**
- **NUD.IST**

How long will the research materials be retained?

Data from the RDS extract file will be retained for the period of time it takes to map the information on to the GIS system. It is envisaged this will take about two months.

How will the results of the research be disseminated? (e.g. thesis, article, book etc...) Indicate how the results will be made available to the Prison Service.

PhD thesis – a copy will be lodged with the Prison Service library
Articles
Book

If considered appropriate, information could also be provided to the Prison Service in the form of a list of policy implications. I would also be willing to present findings to Prison Service staff at a briefing session.

**ACCESS TO PRISON ESTABLISHMENTS, PRISONERS
AND PRISON STAFF**

What establishment is access being sought for (name(s) or type(s) of establishment)?

Two local prisons in London

Have these establishments (or any others) been approached separately about this research? If so, please provide details:

No, the identity of each prison is dependent on information arising from the mapping exercise.

How long will the researcher(s) need to be inside each prison establishment (number of days and numbers of hours a day)?

It is intended that this will be kept to a minimum. An estimate of the time would be: each prison – 2 weeks, 10 days, 6 hours per day.

How long will the researcher(s) need to be in contact with prisoners?

Each interview will last for between two and three hours.

How many prisoners would be involved?

About 40. This may be revised downwards, see above.

Are there any special requirements (random selection, specific prisoner groups etc.)?

No.

How long will the researcher(s) need to be in contact with prison staff?

Only for as long as it takes to explain the nature of the research. Ideally, this would be done at one group session, at which I would explain the nature of the research and the practicalities and answer any questions. If appropriate, this could be achieved

through correspondence only.

Which type of staff would be involved?

Probation officers, education staff, personal officers, other staff who may work with prisoners on a one to one basis.

How many staff would be involved?

I would envisage about six staff in each prison.

Are there any resource implications for Prison Service Headquarters? (anticipated demands on staff time, office requirements, information etc...)

I would need access and a desk in RDS, Home Office. This has been discussed with Pat Dowdeswell, Programme Director for Criminal Justice System Analysis. Please see above. Other than being briefed on how to access the data file, there would be no demands on staff time.

RESEARCH ETHICS

What procedures are there in place to ensure that the consent of inmates will be obtained on a valid and informed basis and that the information will comply with the Data Protection Act? (Attach examples of consent forms)

Please, see attached consent forms.

Under which ethical guidelines will the research be conducted?

The British Society of Criminology

Has a relevant Ethics Committee approved the research?

Please attach a copy of the submission to the Ethics Committee and its

response:

Please see attached submission to the Research Ethics Advisory Panel, Middlesex University.

Signature:



Date:

2.10.03

Please return this form, together with

- Copies of the CVs of all researchers**
- Copies of any submission to an Ethics Committee and its response**
- Copies of any questionnaires, topic schedules, and consent forms**

To ONE of the following:

- Prison Governor/ Research Contact**
- Area Psychologist**
- Prison Service Headquarters – Applied Psychology Group**

APPENDIX A (2)

Middlesex University

Queensway

Enfield

EN3 4SF

7th September 2004

Gareth Davies
Governor
HMP Pentonville
Caledonian Road
London N7 8TT

Dear Mr Davies

I am writing to you to seek permission to conduct a series of interviews with prisoners currently held in HMP Pentonville. The interviews are the second part of a study I am undertaking into *The Influence of Social and Environmental Factors on the Propensity of Ex-prisoners to Reoffend*. The study was granted permission to proceed in October 2003 by Dr Sarah Milne, London Area Psychologist for the Prison Service. I have enclosed a copy of her letter to me, as well as a more recent letter from Patrick Luke, Acting Area Psychologist, which also confirms that permission was granted by headquarters.

I have also enclosed a summary of the research proposal for your information, which includes details of its aims and objectives. In brief, I would like to conduct interviews in two London prisons – Pentonville and Wandsworth. I envisage 15-20 interviews would be conducted in each prison. Ideally, I would like to commence these at the beginning of November this year and to have

completed them by middle of January 2005 at the latest. The sample would consist of the following:

Age range:	17-35
No. of previous sentences served	At least two
Home area	London

Each interview is intended to last for about two hours. I envisage that if I complete up to three interviews per day, that would mean a maximum of seven days to complete all the interviews. In terms of resources, ideally I would require a room that is quiet and private. And in terms of staff help, I would need to place some posters around the prison to let prisoners know about the project (all interviewees will be self-selecting), liaise with education staff, probation and prison officers in order to arrange for referrals and have prisoners escorted to the interview room.

I do hope you consider the project to be worthwhile and that you feel able to cooperate with it. I would of course make every effort to ensure that the work is carried out with minimum disruption and that staff in the prison are kept fully informed.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Nick Flynn
Research Student
Middlesex University

APPENDIX A (3)

28 February 2005

Prisoner name (number)
HMP Brixton

Dear

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in the research I am carrying out for Middlesex University, which you should have received some information about from Cheryl Brown in the Psychology department.. I would like to give you a little more information about the research.

The research is seeking to record your experiences and feelings about the areas in which you live and about imprisonment in general. The topics covered will include: your attitudes towards imprisonment, the affect of imprisonment on your lifestyle after release, your relationship to your home area, and your future hopes and expectations. The research is funded by Middlesex University. And it is anticipated that it will be published for an audience of people interested in efforts to rehabilitate prisoners.

The project is not linked to any official government agencies. Complete anonymity and confidentiality can be assured. Your name will **not** be included in the research report or any subsequent publications. The interview will be recorded unless other arrangements are requested. Nobody other than the two of us will have access to the interview transcripts. You are free to decline to answer any questions and may stop the interview at any point. A summary of the research and a full transcript of your interview will be available to you if you wish.

Finally, some brief details about myself. Over the past 16 years I have worked for a variety of organisations providing training, education and employment for prisoners and ex-prisoners and as deputy director of the penal reform charity the Prison Reform Trust.

Thanks again for agreeing to take part. Cheryl will speak to you in the next few days to arrange a date and time and a room for the interview, which should take place the week beginning 7 March. I look forward to meeting with you then.

Yours sincerely

Nick Flynn
Research Student
Middlesex University

Appendix A (4)

11 March 2005

HMP Pentonville

Dear prisoner name (number)

I am writing to thank you for the interview you granted to me as part of the research project I am currently undertaking at Middlesex University. Your cooperation is much appreciated, especially as some of the areas we touched upon were quite personal to you. I am particularly grateful that you answered all of my questions openly and honestly and that you freely disclosed information about your life to me that under normal circumstances you would probably have wished to keep to yourself. Please rest assured that, as I stated in my initial letter to you, information and/or quotes contained in your interview will only be used in such a way that ensures your complete anonymity.

It is hoped that the findings of the research will be useful in the planning of future services for prisoners both during and after their release from prison. It is intended that the research will be published and made available to a wider audience of practitioners such as prison and probation staff, community organisations working with ex-prisoners and other interested members of the public.

I am sure that because of the quality of the information you disclosed to me the research will present some useful and interesting findings.

Thanks again for your cooperation and good luck to you in the future.

Best wishes

Nick Flynn
Middlesex University

APPENDIX B (1)

ARE YOU 17 - 35 YEARS OLD?

HAVE YOU SERVED AT LEAST TWO PRISON SENTENCES?

DO YOU LIVE IN THE LONDON AREA?

IF SO, ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE PART IN SOME RESEARCH, WHICH IS SEEKING YOUR VIEWS ON WHERE YOU LIVE, PRISON, AND WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

THE RESEARCH IS BEING CONDUCTED BY MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY AND IS NOT LINKED TO ANY OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

COMPLETE ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED

IF YOU ARE WILLING TO TAKE PART, PLEASE GIVE YOUR NAME AND PRISON NUMBER VIA THE NORMAL APPLICATION PROCESS

TO

BY

2005.

I NEED YOUR NAME AND PRISON NUMBER SO THAT I CAN SEND YOU A LETTER GIVING YOU MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT, ABOUT MYSELF, AND ARRANGING A TIME TO MEET.

THANK YOU

**Nick Flynn
Research Student
Middlesex University**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This consent form is to check that you are happy with the information provided about the research and that you wish to take part in the study.

Have you read the information about the research? YES/NO

Do you understand that your name will not be used in the research? YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to decline to answer any question? YES/NO

Do you understand that you may stop the interview at any time? YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to give any feedback or comments about the interviews at any stage? YES/NO

Do you agree to take part in the research? YES/NO

Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview one year from now to see whether you have changed your mind about any of the topics we have discussed? YES/NO

If you wish to receive a summary of the research or a transcript of your interview, please give an address below.

Signed _____

Address _____

Nick Flynn
Middlesex University
Queensway, Enfield, Middlesex, EN3 4SF
London

Questionnaire

1. What is your current area of residence?

2. What other areas, if any, have you lived in? (Please give dates if possible)

3. How old are you now?

4. How would you describe your ethnicity?

5. How old were you when you were first convicted of a criminal offence?

6. How many times have you been convicted of a criminal offence?

6. How many times have you been to prison?

7. How many times have you received a community sentence?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Purpose (RP):

To investigate the extent to which home area influences released prisoners to persist in, or desist from, committing further crimes

|
|
|

Central Research Questions (CRQs)

Theory Question One: To what extent are there common social, environmental and cultural factors associated with the home areas of prisoners that influence their prospects of desisting from committing further crimes?

Interview prompts

- What are your current living arrangements, or living arrangements prior to imprisonment? What type of accommodation is/was it and who do/did you live with? Public/private, low rise/high rise/ temporary/permanent. What do/did you feel about this kind of accommodation?
- How long have you lived at the same address? How many times have you moved? Why did you move? What areas have you moved to and how far have these been from the family home?
- How would you describe your life in the family home? Happy, sad, fractious, etc? Why do you think it was as you have described?
- How often did you spend time in the home? How did you spend time in the home? Television, computer, music, food, etc.
- In what ways do you think your parents, brothers and sisters influenced your behaviour?
- How would you describe the area in which you live?
- How attached or 'at home' do you feel in the area that you live?
- How and where do you spend your leisure hours outside the home? What are your interests – clothes, music, cars, etc?
- How would you describe your relationships with friends?

- Do drugs and alcohol play a part in your life? To what extent? Casual or problematic?
- How often do you/did you leave the area in which you live and for what reasons?

Theory Question Two: How do prisoners compare and contrast the experience of imprisonment with their lives outside?

Interview prompts

- How did/do you feel about going to prison? Was it worse or better than you expected?
- How would you describe your lifestyle in prison? How long each day were you confined to your cell? How did you cope with being inside? Did you make friends with other prisoners? How much would you say you had in common with other prisoners?
- Did you maintain contact with family and friends on the outside while you were in prison? Why/why not? Problems, difficulties with this?
- What would you say were the main differences between your life outside of prison and in prison? Loss of autonomy, ability to make choices, etc. Would you say there are any similarities?
- After release, how did it make you feel being an ex-prisoner?
- In what ways, if any, has the experience of imprisonment and/or being on probation made a difference to your circumstances now?

Theory Question Three: What expectations do prisoners have for their future lives and to what extent do they consider the areas in which they live to be an aid or a hindrance to meeting such expectations?

Interview prompts

- To what extent have you been involved in criminality? Has involvement in criminality been pervasive, transitory or intermittent?
- What justifications, excuses would you offer for your involvement in criminality? Why did/do you commit crime? What do you think would make you stop?
- How many times have you been re-convicted of further offences since imprisonment and/or probation?

- Have you always returned to the same area/address after each period of imprisonment and/or probation? If yes, what influence do you think this might have had on your criminality? Would moving out of the area in which you live have an affect on your propensity to re-offend?
- What are your feelings about re-offending now? Has imprisonment or probation made a difference to the way you feel about re-offending? If you are still involved in offending, what are your reasons for continuing to offend?
- If you have stopped offending, what are your reasons for stopping? How likely is it that you will refrain from committing further offences in the future?
- Are there any specific factors about the area(s) in which you live that influences the way you feel about re-offending?

Theory Question Four: What influence do life course events such as age, changes in family life, marriage, education and employment have on prisoners' attachment to their home areas?

Interview prompts

- What is your marital status? Do you have any children? Has having a stable relationship, getting married and/or having children changed the way you feel about the area in which you live? If so, how?
- What schooling have you had? Did you enjoy school and do you think it has been a worthwhile experience?
- Are you employed/unemployed? Please describe your employment history.
- How easy/hard is it to find employment where you live? Would finding a job influence your decision to re-offend?
- Since leaving prison and/or finishing probation, have you accessed any services (education, drug and rehabilitation, employment) in the area in which you live? If so, were these helpful? How? If not, why not?
- Have you changed your attitudes towards the area in which you live as you have grown older? If so, what changes in your lifestyle have occurred?
- Have your ideas about home life changed as you have grown older? How? Why?

Middlesex University
School of Health and Social Sciences
Criminology/Sociology Academic Group
Application for research ethics approval

The purpose of this form is to help staff and students in the Criminology/Sociology Academic Group in their pursuit of ethical research methodologies and procedures.

For staff members, the Research Ethics Advisory Panel will review all proposals/forms, where ethical approval has not already been obtained from a recognised research ethics committee external to Middlesex University. No fieldwork should begin until such approval has been obtained.

For research students (B.Phil, M.Phil/PhD), the Research Ethics Advisory Panel will review all proposals/forms. Where ethics approval has already been obtained from a recognised research ethics committee external to Middlesex University or through research ethics procedures of the academic group, this will be taken into account. No fieldwork should begin until such approval has been obtained and ratified by the Research Degrees Committee. Any proposed change to the methodology outlined on this form must be discussed with your supervisor(s). This may necessitate a fresh application for ethical approval.

Please complete the form giving as much detail as possible. If a question is not applicable, please indicate by marking N/A. Research students should discuss and complete the form with their supervisors.

2. Personal details

a) Name of principal investigator: **Nicholas Flynn**

b) Address: **81 Regina Road, London N4 3PT**

c) Phone Number: **020 7281 5428**

d) Email address: **nick.flynn@blueyonder.co.uk**

e) Name(s) of staff and/or other collaborators (if applicable):

2. For research students:

a) Year of study: **2002-2005**

b) Mode of study: **Full-time**

c) Names of supervisors: **Professor Roger Mathews
Dr. Karen Duke**

d) Date of enrolment: **October 2002**

e) Date of registration: **June 2003**

f) Date of transfer from MPhil to PhD: **October 2004**

3. Details of proposed study:

a) Title of study: **The extent to which home area influences released prisoners to persist in, or desist from, committing further crimes.**

b) Please give a brief description of the nature of the study (no more than 50 words), including details of data collection procedures:

An investigation of where prisoners originate from in England and Wales and the extent to which there is a connection between the prison population in London and specific neighbourhoods throughout the London area. Data collected via interviews with London prisoners regarding their experiences, attitudes and motivations towards their home environment.

c) Will primary data be collected?

Yes

If no, please skip to Section 7 of this form.

4. Details of the participants in the study:

a) From what population will your participants be drawn?
Prisons and community organisations.

b) How many participants will be involved in your study? Please provide an estimate. 80

c) Are children aged 16 or under to be involved? No

If yes, what ages will your participants be?

5. Access and consent:

a) Briefly describe how will access be gained to the participants.
Participants will be self-selecting and will be encouraged to take part through the distribution of information about the project. Information will also be provided to gate keepers such as prison governors and probation officers so that they will support the project and make referrals for interview.

b) Will informed consent be sought from any gatekeepers? Yes

If so, which gatekeepers? **Prison officials, prison governors, probation officers, managers and staff of community organisations.**

Will you obtain written consent from the gatekeepers? Yes

c) Will informed consent be obtained directly from all participants Yes

If yes, will you obtain written consent? Yes

d) Will payment or an incentive be offered to participants? No

If yes, please state amount of payment or type of incentive

e) Length of session for an individual participant (if more than one session, please give number and nature of sessions and amount of time for each):

All interviews (first interview and follow-up interview) will last approximately three hours

f) In which locations will data gathering take place?

Prisons, probation offices, community organisations, other public venues such as cafes, pubs.

- g) Will you inform your participants of their right to withdraw from the research? **Yes**
- h) Will you guarantee confidentiality of information to your participants? **Yes**
- i) Will you guarantee anonymity to your participants? **Yes**

6. Safety and legal issues

- a) Will you be alone with a participant? **Yes**
- b) Will you be alone with a group of participants? **Yes**

b) What safety issues does your methodology raise for you and for your participants?
**Only issues involved in being alone with any person for the purposes of carrying out research.
 As far as possible all interviews will be held in public locations.**

d) What legal issues does your methodology raise for you and for your participants?
Data protection issues. Interviewees will remain anonymous and confidentiality will be maintained.

7. Codes of ethics

a) Have you read and understood the Code of Ethics for Researchers in the Field of Criminology by the British Society of Criminology?
 (available at **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)
 or the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice?
 (available at **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)
Yes

b) Are there any ethical issues which concern you about this particular piece of research? **No**
 If yes, please specify:

Please attach (if available) a) draft of any interview schedule or questionnaire you propose to use; and b) any information sheets and/or consent forms for participants.

I believe the information given above to be true. The methodology outlined above will be the methodology used in my research. I will notify my supervisor (students)/REAP Chair (staff) of any proposed changes to this methodology.

Signature of Investigator: *N. Pym* Date: *22 May, 2003*

Signature of Supervisor(s): *P. Matthews* Date: *22 / 05 / 03*

Passed by Research Ethics Advisory Panel

Name of representative: K. Deane

Signature: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Date: 22/5/03

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