

"EXPLORING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN AT RISK OF OFFENDING"

LUCY WAINWRIGHT

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ABSTRACT

Improving the outcomes of children exposed to criminogenic risks and displaying early delinquent behaviour is of paramount importance if England and Wales are to succeed in their fight to reduce criminality. This PhD explored factors affecting delinquency in early adolescence.

It begins with an exploratory study using semi-structured interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Young people who had experienced criminality but who had largely desisted were interviewed individually. Participants' responses led to questions which correspond well with those trending in adult corrections, regarding the efficacy of building offenders' strengths as opposed to focusing on their deficiencies. Prominent themes emerging from interviews mapped well onto those raised by the Self-Determination Theory of Need and the Good Lives Model of Offender Rehabilitation as being fundamental to psychological well-being and optimal functioning.

Deficits (in the form of interpersonal problem solving [ICPS] skills) and strengths (in the form of hope and possible selves) were then explored with a sample of 126 boys aged 11-13 in London, to understand which were more useful when considering 'what works' in preventing child offending. A self reported measure of delinquency was completed by all participants as was a demographics form which collected information on six well-established criminogenic risk factors.

The first quantitative study explored three ICPS skills empirically shown to be to be relevant to delinquency. The three skills were Means-End Problem Solving, Consequential Thinking and Alternative Thinking. Correlations existed between deficits in each of these ICPS skills

and self-reported delinquency, in line with previous research. Correlations also existed between deficits and criminogenic risks. However, it was evident that the acquisition and application of skills is both dependent on social environment and requires some personal relevance to be adopted.

The second quantitative study considers the role of hope in protecting young people against criminality through the use of the Children's Hope Scale (CHS). The CHS assesses two components of hope; *Pathways thought* (the ability to generate strategies to reach goals) and *Agentic thinking* (the perceived capacity to utilise strategies to reach individual goals). Results suggested that exposure to certain criminogenic risks affects the development of hope, and that low levels of hope affects participants' propensity for delinquency. The impact of having high hope on delinquency was most significant for those with high criminogenic risks. Further analysis showed hope to be a more useful predictor variable for delinquency than ICPS skill. This has implications for interventions, especially so given the extent to which ICPS skills are targeted in preventative and corrective treatments across the world.

Lastly, Study 4 explores the short-term hoped-for and feared 'possible selves' of the individuals within the sample. Results indicated few differences between the quantity and content of short-term possible selves articulated by high and low delinquency groups. However, the more delinquent participants were more likely to give longer-term aspirations associated with celebrity and wealth and could articulate fewer and less realistic strategies for reaching their goals.

Towards the end of this PhD, it became apparent that although each quantitative chapter is largely independent, there is a unifying thread between them; the ability to plan. This

planning is one of the ICPS skills (Means End Problem Solving), a component of hope (pathways thinking) and is a necessary skill in order to reach possible selves. It is proposed that instead of being embedded within broader psychological theories that planning should play a more central part in interventions, especially given the number of obstacles young people 'at-risk' of offending need to negotiate. This unites deficit and strengths based perspectives and would be personally applicable and therefore motivating for the young people involved.

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DECLARATION

Whilst registered for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

WORD COUNT - 34,695

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

THE PARABLE OF THE RIVER

Once upon a time there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good and life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly swam out to save the baby from drowning. The next day this same villager noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. And the following day four babies were seen caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more!

The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watchtowers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue babies. Rescue squads were soon working 24 hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies floating down the river increased. The villagers organized themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. While not all the babies, now very numerous, could be saved, the villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they could each day. Indeed, the village priest blessed them in their good work. And life in the village continued on that basis.

One day, however, someone raised the question, "But where are all these babies coming from? Let's organize a team to head upstream to find out who's throwing all of these babies into the river in the first place!"

(www.rmcmc.org/MI/Justice/Parable_of_the_River.doc)

THE ORIGINS OF MY PHD

A shabby piece of paper containing the words of 'the parable of the river' still sits blue-tacked on the side of my desk and marks the starting point for this PhD, at least in terms of my own thought processes four years ago. When I found this story, I was working with adult male prisoners as a 'psychologist in training' with HM Prison Service, working towards the second stage of chartership. I had undertaken the more academic first stage several years

before, during which I had been introduced to the study of child offenders. However, at that time, I remember being focused on working with adult prisoners, since these were the people who had actually offended. I remember at that time considering interventions with children to be less important than interventions with established offenders, a perspective which has changed substantially.

I had two main roles while working in prisons, the facilitation of cognitive skills offending behaviour programmes and psychological parole assessments.

The offending behaviour programmes I facilitated abided by the principles of the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model of offender rehabilitation. We assessed prisoners for the programme and accepted those with the highest level of *risk* and with the most pressing *needs*. Within sessions, we focussed on treating the criminogenic needs of impulsivity, poor problem solving and social skills in a *responsive* way [NB. criminogenic needs are characteristics of offenders empirically linked to criminal behaviour]. Due to Key Performance Indicator targets and low staffing, limited time was spent working with offenders on their non-criminogenic needs in any targeted way.

However, conducting parole assessments allowed me to appreciate the importance of such non-criminogenic needs to offenders. For example, the desire in offenders to feel a sense of competence or pride in something was palpable, and actively sought, irrespective of its legality. I began to get the impression that the skills I was teaching were not matching up to the needs prisoners felt they had. Parole interviews also reawakened my interest in childhood criminality. I was saddened (at least weekly) by how many prisoners reported starting their criminal careers prior to adolescence and how few reported undergoing any memorable interventions at that time. Stories of childhoods spent on street corners, with erratic parental

discipline, no sense of direction nor any fear of the criminal justice system were commonplace.

I came across ‘the parable of the river’ around this time and I asked myself why we were not directing our resources into the origins of offending, in childhood. I therefore approached this PhD with a vested interest in understanding how to better intervene with those who were on the periphery of offending careers, so that they did not end up incarcerated as adults.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILD OFFENDING

We know from decades of empirical study that children who offend prior to adolescence stand a much greater risk of becoming serious, violent, and chronic offenders in adulthood, when compared with those who become involved in offending in their teens (Moffitt, 2006; Loeber and Farrington, 2001). We also know that these ‘life-course persistent’ offenders are expensive to the public purse, relevant in these times of financial austerity. In 2006/7, £649 million of public money was spent on youth justice in England and Wales (Solomon and Garside, 2008). And further to these obvious and immediate costs, are later problems in relationships, employment, accommodation, physical health and emotional wellbeing although actual costs differ dramatically from person to person (Farrington, 1990).

Given these costly and long term consequences, it is concerning that, in 2010/11, there were 22,206 children aged 10-14-years-old involved with Youth Offending Teams in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2012), and that punitive sanctions are dominant. It has been estimated that the cost of placing one young person in a secure children’s home for just one year is £215,496, which is more than the cost of placing a young person in Eton College for six years (Glover and Hibbert, 2008). It might be assumed that the outcomes for those

entering youth custody must be worth such high investment, i.e. they go on to lead crime free lives following incarceration. Disappointingly, nearly 80% of 10 to 14-year-olds released from custody re-offend within 12 months (Medhurst and Cunliffe, 2007). Yet investment in custody continues, with England and Wales seeing an increase of 550% in the use of custody for 10-14-year-olds from 1996–2006 (Glover and Hibbert, 2008). Moreover, in 2006/07, just 5% of the Youth Justice Board budget was invested in preventative work (Solomon and Garside, 2008). Given the statistics laid out thus far, this does not feel appropriate.

A wealth of empirical research points towards increased investment in early intervention to prevent childhood delinquency becoming adult criminality (see Farrington and Welsh, 2007 for a comprehensive review). This has been supported by neuropsychological research, which has identified that the area of the brain controlling executive functioning has not developed fully until approximately 21 years old (Giedd, 2008). As such, the brain is very malleable in early adolescence and therefore open to positive influence from intervention strategies. This also means, of course, that negative influences will be particularly strong at this time.

The seminal Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development has provided strong evidence for the factors in a child's life which correlate with later offending, known as the risk-factor paradigm. This longitudinal study, following 411 working class males from the age of eight through to adulthood, found these risks cluster into five domains: personal or individual, family, peers, school and community. Table 1 gives more information on the factors within each domain. The more of these risk factors a young person is exposed to, the more likely they are to engage in delinquency (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott and Catalano, 2000).

Individual Factors	<p>Pregnancy and delivery complications.</p> <p>Low resting heart rate.</p> <p>Internalising disorders.</p> <p>Hyperactivity, concentration problems, restlessness, and risk taking.</p> <p>Aggressiveness.</p> <p>Early initiation of violent behaviour.</p>
Family factors	<p>Parental criminality.</p> <p>Child maltreatment.</p> <p>Poor family management practices.</p> <p>Low levels of parental involvement.</p> <p>Poor family bonding and family conflict.</p> <p>Parental attitudes favourable to substance use and violence.</p> <p>Parent-child separation.</p>
Peer factors	<p>Delinquent siblings.</p> <p>Delinquent peers.</p> <p>Gang membership.</p>
School factors	<p>Academic failure.</p> <p>Low bonding to school.</p> <p>Truancy and dropping out of school.</p> <p>Frequent school transitions.</p>
Community factors	<p>Poverty.</p> <p>Community disorganisation.</p> <p>Availability of drugs and firearms.</p> <p>Neighbourhood adults involved in crime.</p> <p>Exposure to violence and racial prejudice.</p>

Table 1 – Risk factors associated with delinquency

Many of the risks listed in table 1 are known as ‘static’ risks, as they are historic and/or unchangeable. While such risks are hugely beneficial for practitioners who assess children’s

risk of future criminality (Muncie, 2004), more changeable, dynamic risks (such as aggression and academic failure) are more useful to consider when designing interventions. Furthermore, developmental crime prevention requires the promotion of protective factors (Tremblay and Craig, 1995). Protective factors may be less well understood than risk factors but what we do know is that the five domains used to categorise risk factors are also applicable with protective factors. Examples include: *healthy prenatal and early childhood development, positive attitudes, values or beliefs, stable housing and positive adult role models* (Hoge, Andrews and Leschied, 1996).

The recent attention given to protective factors aligns with current shifts towards strengths-based approaches with adult offenders. Yet, research is still limited regarding ‘what works’ with offending children (Nee and Ellis, 2005). Perhaps there is a reluctance to dwell on children who offend, due to them constituting such a small proportion of the offending population (Nee, Ellis, Morris and Wilson, 2012). Perhaps it is due to the number who simply ‘age-out’ of offending without any intervention (Moffitt, 1993). Or perhaps it challenges our belief in childhood innocence too much and thus challenges our satisfaction with society (Armstrong, 2004).

This PhD research keenly seeks to explore risk and protective factors in early adolescents who are either not offending, at risk of offending, or actively offending. It starts with a qualitative exploration of the process of desistance in a group of children who had offended in the past. The issues raised by participants support theories underpinning strengths-based approaches to adult rehabilitation, rather than the more deficit-based work I practised in the prison. I was curious as to whether the cognitive skills I once taught to adults might be useful to children on the periphery of offending. I was also reminded of the need for hope and

purpose discussed by prisoners in parole interviews. These interesting components of my work as a practitioner became the principle components of this PhD research, which covered Cognitive Skills, Hope and Possible Selves. Four empirical studies have been conducted and included within this thesis, which has the following format, separated into chapters:

Study 1 - The Good Lives Model: New directions for preventative practice with children?

This introductory, qualitative study considers whether the Good Lives Model, a strengths-based rehabilitative theory currently used to guide interventions with high risk adult offenders, might be a useful framework for preventative practice with children.

Study 2 - Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving and delinquency in early adolescence

This quantitative study considers the relevance of three of the cognitive skills currently addressed in adult offending behaviour programmes to the lives (and delinquency) of early adolescents in the UK.

Study 3 - Hope Theory and its relevance to emerging delinquent behaviour

The second quantitative study of this PhD looks at the potential role of hope in preventative interventions, by assessing hope in early adolescents and correlating this with delinquency and risk.

Study 4 - “I wanna be rich, I don’t know how, but I’ll get there somehow”: Future possible selves and delinquency in early adolescence

This mixed methods study explores the future orientation of early adolescent boys and considers how this is affected by their exposure to criminogenic risk, and how this might then affect delinquency.

Limitations

This brief chapter details some of the limitations of the work.

Conclusions -What have we learnt? A model for the prevention of delinquency in early adolescents?

This chapter summarises the research and presents a model for early intervention practice based on these results.

Reflections

This short concluding chapter includes some personal reflections of my own PhD journey and what I have learned from the process.

Please note that the four empirical studies contained in this research are presented in journal article form and have either been accepted by peer reviewed journals, submitted for consideration, in preparation or have been presented at academic conferences. Consequently, there is some repetition, particularly in methodology sections. Following each paper, there is a brief description outlining the connection between this and the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY 1

THE GOOD LIVES MODEL – NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PREVENTATIVE PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN?

STUDY 1 - THE GOOD LIVES MODEL – NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PREVENTATIVE PRACTICE WITH CHILDREN?

ABSTRACT

The study of young offenders has tended to focus on adolescents, despite knowledge that those who are engaging in criminality during childhood are more likely to experience long lasting, life impairing consequences. This qualitative study investigated how child offenders experience the process of desisting from crime. It was hoped that this would provide further insights for those involved with prevention programmes for young offenders. Seven young people aged between ten and eighteen, engaging with the Preventing Youth Offending Project (PYOP) in the UK, were interviewed and the data collected were subject to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Four themes emerged from the narratives, all converging on a changed self-identity for those successfully desisting. PYOP aims to enhance the lives of young people and this approach appears to encourage this identity transformation, through the provision of purposeful activity, supported education and mentoring. The increasing popularity of strengths-based, enhancement approaches to rehabilitation, such as the Good Lives Model (GLM; Ward and Stewart, 2003), is discussed in relation to its potential role in the prevention of criminality in young people. It is proposed that the GLM principles could provide essential foundations for early intervention approaches as well as rehabilitative measures for established offenders.

INTRODUCTION

As parental control begins to diminish in late childhood and before commitments to work and family develop, criminality is known to peak sharply around age 15 but then reduce again in early adulthood (Piquero, Farrington and Blumstein, 2007). While the majority of young people will ‘grow-out’ of crime when they reach adulthood, a small minority will continue offending throughout their adult lives (Moffitt, 1993). This minority will typically begin offending much earlier than their peers, with those who start the earliest having the highest likelihood of a more serious criminal career (Krohn, Thornberry, Rivera and LeBlanc, 2001). Therefore, it seems that any effort to reduce criminal activity should be grounded in an understanding of why some young people desist when others do not. Yet to a large extent, studies still focus on the reasons for individuals’ initial involvement and not on their experience of desistance (Maruna 2001; Laub and Sampson, 2001). The present paper contributes to the growing need for further exploration into the process of desistance, and focuses specifically on very young offenders who appear to have the most to gain from desistance (Krohn *et al*, 2001). We present findings from a qualitative, phenomenological study into the ‘lived experience’ of being a young offender engaging with an intervention programme in the UK. Further, we consider whether the principles of the Good Lives Model (GLM; Ward and Stewart, 2003) might be applicable to the prevention of criminality in children.

Early delinquent and defiant behaviour reduces opportunities for children to practice pro-social behaviour and to develop strong relationships and social skills (Loeber and Farrington, 2001). An associated reduction in motivation for school can often lead to truancy, discipline problems and a disrupted education. This can ultimately weaken a young person’s

employment prospects, an outcome known to be one of the major risk factors associated with criminality (Andrews, Bonta and Wormith, 2006). Crime prevention and early intervention are therefore critical to prevent today's 'at-risk' children becoming tomorrow's criminals, with all the associated costs. The earlier the intervention, the less chance there is of the young person having extensive contact with the criminal justice system and having serious and/or entrenched criminal behaviour (Allen, 2011). Commendable efforts have been made in relation to 'what works' when treating adult offenders, however much less is known about what is particularly effective with child offenders (Loeber and Farrington, 2001; McGuire, 2010), and criticisms have been made regarding the interventions currently available for young people in England and Wales (Chambers, Ullmann, and Waller, 2009).

As stated in the opening chapter, rehabilitative efforts with adult offenders have recently seen a shift from a risk and deficit-based model of criminality to those that also incorporate the strengths of the individual (Maruna and LeBel, 2002). The GLM is a good example of this (Ward, Yates and Willis, 2012). This shift in focus derives from a belief that offenders need something to motivate them more effectively towards a life without crime (Ward and Stewart, 2003). Though controversial in comparison to more punitive ideologists, Ward and Stewart reason that by equipping offenders with skills, capacities and opportunities for living a more fulfilled life, individuals are less likely to perceive crime as a worthwhile or potentially necessary exercise (Ward, 2002). Within therapy, a 'Good Lives Plan' is constructed between therapist and offender which is personally relevant to the offender's own values and identity, and provides a greater sense of cohesion in his or her life (Ward and Maruna, 2007). Such a method should also simultaneously reduce the dynamic risk factors (or criminogenic needs) which are well established in the related psychological literature. The GLM therefore has two

primary goals: to enhance well being as well as to reduce risk of offending (Ward *et al*, 2012).

The rationale for enhancement as a form of intervention is rooted in Deci and Ryan's (2000) 'Self-Determination Theory of Needs', which defines all humans as inherently active organisms seeking three basic psychological needs: *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy*. Arnhart (1998) claimed that this is not limited to particular cultures, but that such "natural desires" will be similarly evident within every human society in history. Individuals seek to satisfy these needs not only as a means of acquiring a fulfilling life overall, but because each need is fulfilling in itself (Ward and Maruna, 2007) and as such, will be inclined toward supportive frameworks for these needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000). The Self-Determination Theory is applicable to a wide range of human behaviour, and researchers have investigated how the fulfilment (or otherwise) of basic psychological needs might affect such things as college satisfaction (Filak and Sheldon, 2003), intimate relationships (La Guardia and Patrick, 2008), and various forms of psychopathology (Ryan, 2005; Moller and Deci, 2009). When these needs are not being met, due to supportive relationships being unavailable, or when opportunities for learning or making independent decisions are thwarted, individuals will be drawn to alternative methods of meeting them, including offending (Ward and Stewart, 2003). Ward and Maruna (2007) stress that rehabilitation with no clear focus on achieving a good life will only provide some of the conditions needed for change, rather than the essential inspiration and drive necessary for maintaining a pro-social future.

Ward and colleagues have further developed Deci and Ryan's (2000) theory, proposing 11 specific 'primary goods' as necessary for optimum well being and important in terms of rehabilitative practice (Ward and Gannon, 2006). However, Deci and Ryan's (2000) three

fundamental needs of *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy* still feature within this more evolved model. Therefore, at a rudimentary level it would be reasonable to suggest that early intervention strategies should, at the very least, assist young people in securing the three very basic psychological needs proposed by the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) and embraced by the GLM. Empirical evidence stemming from research on the development of criminality supports this notion, since young people's relationships, competencies and autonomy have long been shown to affect their involvement in crime, as considered in the following paragraph.

Discussion of the link between relationships and criminality has been ongoing for generations. Positive peer relationships provide emotional support and promote developmental functioning (Bender and Losel, 1997). For these reasons, poorly developed social relationships are said to be highly predictive of offending behaviour (Loeber and Farrington, 2001). Competency also features within the research literature relating to child offending. For example, a low IQ has long been established as a risk factor (Farrington and Welsh, 2007), with low intelligence, measured at age three, significantly associated with offending up to age 30 (Stattin and Klackenber-Larsson, 1993). Competence in problem solving or social skill can also act as a protective factor for young people (McGuire, 2005) and even belief in competence is predictive, since people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks with more determination than those without (Bandura, 1994). The last of the fundamental needs proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000), *Autonomy*, has perhaps some of the most compelling evidence linking it with offending. Indeed, in a phenomenological study of 65 offenders, Maruna (2001) proposed that offending may be an attempt to demonstrate personal agency and control, when it is seen to be lacking elsewhere. For young people, it has been posited that 'edgework' (or risky behaviour) can provide the

means of achieving this sense of independence (Wood, Wilson and Cochran, 1997). Further, a sense of independence has been classified as a protective factor for some 'at-risk' young people, as they are less likely to enter anti-social peer groups and make more productive life choices with regard to education and employment (Blum, 1998).

Most rehabilitation techniques do not routinely draw on the importance of narrative identity (Maruna, 2001). Yet Maruna's work highlighted the crucial role of developing a coherent, plausible and pro-social identity when desisting from crime. Offenders lacking a clear narrative identity (or indeed possessing a maladaptive identity) will be more likely to continue offending as they will not be able to envisage a more positive future. A focus on the development of a pro-social identity seems especially relevant to early adolescent offenders, since individuals in this age group are said to be on the verge of negotiating an identity crisis (Erikson, 1950), with either achievement or confusion as the potential result. Erikson (1968) notes that during this crisis, adolescents are simultaneously encountering situations whereby they are forced to enhance their agentic abilities, strengthen skills and manage social obstacles successfully; these are the same three components essential for optimum well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

In recent years, a body of empirical evidence has accumulated on the construction and content of possible selves for the future, with reference to the self-regulatory nature and motivational influence of these possible selves, particularly in relation to behaviour and delinquency (Hoyle and Sherrill, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee and Terry, 2006). Conversely, a pessimistic future orientation has also been empirically linked to problem behaviours in young people (Robbins and Bryan, 2004). In terms of preventative practice, it therefore seems entirely appropriate to provide some assistance to young people in formulating a

positive, non-criminal identity to take into adulthood (see study 5 - for an empirical exploration of possible selves).

Interventions for very young offenders are rare in the UK and suitable evaluations of these interventions are rarer still (Ross, Duckworth, Smith, Wyness and Schoon, 2011). One UK based intervention which has yielded favourable evaluation results, however, is a community-based (non-residential) programme; The Preventing Youth Offending Project (PYOP). Referrals to the programme come from social workers, the local Youth Offending Team (YOT), the Education Department, a local community safety partnership, parents and from participating offenders themselves. The criteria for referral and acceptance onto PYOP (in line with Youth Justice Board recommendations) are those classed as prolific offenders, defined through the national Youth Offending Information System database (YOIS) as:

- Anyone with 10 offences in 12 months
- Anyone facing a custodial sentence
- Offenders with highly specialised offending needs, such as sex offenders
- Preventative/protective referrals for young people between 7-12 years old (known to be offending by the local police and the project coordinator).

PYOP provides individualised, holistic support by trained project workers and may include some or all of the following:

- One-to-one mentoring for reintegration into education, anger management and constructive use of time
- Group-work for antisocial behaviour; problem-solving; anger management; victim awareness; interpersonal skills; substance misuse; appropriate sexual behaviour; and health issues

- Music, art and drama workshops as well as outdoor activities to develop self-esteem, healthy competition and interpersonal skills.

Where needs are identified that cannot be addressed by staff at PYOP, other agencies are called upon. Support for families is provided where necessary, such as counselling and skills training. Furthermore, siblings are offered the same services as the child offenders to reduce negative competition. Children and adolescents are welcome to remain involved in the programme for as long as they personally feel necessary, and a surprisingly high number choose to be involved for 18 months or more. The programme aimed to be fully responsive, with no two intervention plans being identical but subject to the participant's individual needs, strengths and current circumstances. Therapists using a GLM approach also collaboratively tailor individualised intervention plans, the aforementioned Good Lives Plans, with offenders to suit their narrative identities. In a more explicit way than PYOP, the GLM takes into consideration the weightings an offender gives to the different primary goods, the strengths they may possess to help them achieve their goals and the obstacles they may face in achieving them (Ward and Maruna, 2007).

Nee and Ellis (2005) conducted the first evaluation of PYOP using an established risk assessment tool, the LSI-R (Andrews and Bonta, 1995), to show highly significant reductions in participants' criminogenic risk and actual offending behaviour over time. There were also strong indications that the level of offending behaviour had decreased during the intervention, in comparison with the control group which was unchanged in terms of risks, needs or offending rate. To complement Nee and Ellis (2005), the present qualitative study was considered worthwhile to further enhance our understanding of young people's experiences of PYOP. We concur with the view that young people 'at-risk' of criminality should very

much be considered as '*part of the solution, not just part of the problem*' (Lyon, Dennison and Wilson, 2000, p. vii). However, despite these young people providing the key to understanding how to move forward, it is still surprisingly unusual to canvass the views of those participating in interventions (Nee, 2004). We took a largely exploratory approach in this study, to understand more about how PYOP was experienced and how this programme might aid the process of desistance in a small sample of PYOP participants. It is our belief that this will benefit not only our academic understanding, but also highlight important areas for further research regarding interventions.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Seven participants, (aged 10, 14, 14, 15, 16, 18, 18) took part, all of whom had commenced criminality before adolescence. Participants were recruited from PYOP firstly via a letter to each parent/caregiver explaining the aims and methods of the study, and requesting consent for the young person to take part. Young people who wished to take part, after parental consent had been given, contacted the researcher through their key workers on an ad hoc basis. The sample size is small because our aim was to provide a detailed interpretative account of a few willing participants who had experienced PYOP and we chose to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to do this (Smith, 1996). Studies using IPA are conducted with small sample sizes so that the individuality can be retained.

All participants had experienced substantial contact with PYOP, with an average of 5.2 years of intervention. All participants were male, Caucasian and living in the Portsmouth area. Six of the seven participants could be described as having desisted from offending, which became apparent after their recruitment, through both their own assertions and those of the project

coordinator. However, it is not possible to give an exact time relating to how long they had desisted due to the fact desistance is a complex process (Maruna, 2001). To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, each participant has been given a pseudonym which has been used throughout this paper.

PROCEDURE

Interview Process

All interviews were conducted in an environment familiar to the young people to ensure they were uninhibited and comfortable. Two young people chose to include their support workers in the interview process and one mother was also involved. This was seen as appropriate for the younger interviewees. A topic guide can be found in Appendix 1.

In line with the principles laid out by Smith (1996), semi-structured interviews were used to gather information about participants' experiences. All participants were asked about the following areas: their experience of offending behaviour (i.e their reasons for initial involvement and their feelings throughout any act of criminality), their experience of engaging with PYOP (i.e. what they found useful or difficult), and their experience of desisting (where appropriate, such as their inspiration for cessation and any associated struggles or successes). Despite a number of topics being raised within interview, most interviewees chose to mainly focus on desistance. It was important to allow participants to determine the focus of the interview, allowing what Smith and Osborn (2003) call 'novel avenues', in order to appreciate the phenomenology of their realities rather than imposing the researchers' reality onto them. Ethical guidelines were followed including informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, anonymity, and full debriefing (see Appendix 1). There were no time constraints on the interviews, but all interviews were conducted within 30

minutes. This was due to participants becoming restless, distracted, having limited time with their support workers or due to interruptions at the PYOP centre. However, in all cases, participants remained after the interview and continued in an informal discussion.

Process

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the investigator only, with references to names and places removed. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilised because our own aims seemed to fit well with the philosophy of the approach in that we wanted to understand ‘lived experience’ and how participants personally make sense of their experience (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Our aim was not to produce an exact record of what participants experienced at PYOP, but to explore the personal accounts of how participants felt about it, eliciting important themes and forming alliances between them. This necessarily makes the analysis subjective in nature and indeed, forms the ‘interpretive’ part of the process alongside the ‘phenomenological’. This approach is deemed suitable for research of a difficult and personal nature (Kay and Kingston, 2002) and has become a popular method for analysing personal accounts for small samples in recent years (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Although subjective in nature, the accounts of the participants are the accounts of experts in this subject matter, which are essential to document as a way of understanding what works and what does not work.

Each individual transcript was reviewed several times before analysis took place to ensure familiarity. Interesting and indicative responses were then noted in the left-hand margin, with potential themes noted in the right-hand margin. Similarities between participants’ themes and any emerging interconnections were then considered in line with Smith’s (2004) recommendation to “*imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping*

to make sense of them.” (p.71). IPA acknowledges the need for interpretative activity on the part of both the participant and the researcher, due to the fact it is not possible to fully appreciate the experience under investigation in exactly the same way as the participant (Eatough, Smith and Shaw, 2008). A second researcher assisted the process by identifying any potential themes overlooked and areas where the first researcher may have unwittingly imparted previous assumptions and biases (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Inter-rater agreement was reached on 85% of master themes and only those with mutual agreement have been included within the paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While each participant was given the freedom to choose personally relevant experiences during interview, most discussions corresponded well with the three fundamental needs of Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000), also represented within the GLM (Ward and Stewart, 2003). Four master themes emerged from the narratives with one theme, self-identity, assuming both a salient and influencing position over the other three. For the purpose of this report, these three other themes; social awareness, self-development and self-hope will be expanded upon in greater detail, with the theme of self-identity being interwoven into each.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Despite being essentially a private construct, self-identity is socially constructed and modified (Goffman, 1959), namely by the peer group in adolescence (Harris, 1998). In fact, all but one of the young people in this study discussed the overwhelming importance of their peer relationships. It is well established that reputation, popularity and power among peers has real significance for adolescents, especially when exploring possible identities (Sica,

2009). It is little surprise therefore that these same six participants also discussed the pressure they felt to conform to their peers' expectations, with the following comment by Martin (age 18) being highly representative of participants' experiences;

"My friends put pressure on, and then I do it"

Martin focussed heavily on the respect he feels he has earned within his peer group, accepting the inescapability of conforming. However, most participants alluded to making an active choice to offend, rather than feeling powerless like Martin. In Craig's case, he was seeking a particular status within the group, consistent with Brezina's (2000) proposition that delinquency is a very calculated method of solving a social problem. Craig (age 14) is very transparent when discussing the perks of committing crime in terms of social acceptance when he describes the day after being arrested for shop-lifting.

"I got into school the next day, all the boys were saying, oh well done, that's well cushdy [good]"

Through conforming, both Martin and Craig are able to demonstrate an identity, however negative it may seem to those following a more conventional route, which is fostered within an offending group. In contrast, to oppose or desist from anti-social behaviour begins a process of alienation for young people whereby they are stripped of their identity as a group member. This can be particularly distressing for young people already in a state of identity crisis (Erikson, 1968). This is exemplified by Dave (age 15) who had not yet stopped offending, when he explained that he actively chose not to associate with a non-deviant

group, whom he labelled as “gimps”. Even forming loose associations with this ‘out group’ could lead to rejection from his peer group:

“I’d get terrorised if I was seen with them”

The potential label of a ‘gimp’ is disparaging and would understandably cause embarrassment for those trying to desist from offending and might therefore deter delinquent young people from trying. Dave’s description of non-offending peers as ‘gimps’ represents an interesting variation of labelling theory (Becker, 1963), whereby young people who are vulnerable to receiving the label ‘criminal’, distribute labels to others, possibly to reinforce not only the group’s identity, but their individual place within it.

It is clear that peer relationships, so intensely valued by the young people in this study, can also be detrimental. Relationships appear bolstered by an act of anti-social behaviour, yet threatened by an act of self-redemption. While Andrews and Bonta (2006) have certainly recognised the importance of social relationships in their RNR model, the complications of ‘reducing’ criminal peers and ‘enhancing’ non-criminal peers warrant particular consideration in relation to social identity.

According to the GLM, the peer relationships described by these participants are not sufficient to satisfy the human need of *Relatedness*. Instead, relationships built on trust and respect would satisfy this need. In reality, young people in our study did not consider their peer groups to be appropriate sources of advice or guidance, but instead turned to the mentors and support workers provided by PYOP, known to benefit adolescents in their development (Tarling, Burrows and Clarke, 2001). All participants considered the recruitment of mentors

and support workers to be complex, with the concept of ‘understanding’ being fundamental to the role of a mentor. Ben (age 14) discusses this powerfully when giving recommendations for PYOP:

“Pick the right staff.... Be like us when they were younger, know what it’s like.... Done the stuff that we’ve done, been in care.... cos a lot of people wouldn’t have a clue”

Just as policy makers have been criticised for creating a dramatic distinction between themselves and offenders, Ben is creating a similar ‘Us and Them’ division. Yet, Ben highlights the necessity of such a distinction, as he believes those who have successfully managed similar criminogenic risks are in a strong position to advise those who are struggling to do likewise. This brings an added dimension to the word *Relatedness*, since the mentor is able to relate personally with what the young person is experiencing. Bandura (1994) stressed the need for vicarious role models to be present during adolescence and who are seen as similar to the young people but also as possessing competencies to be sought after. This raises the young people’s beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to succeed in life and this therefore strengthens self-efficacy.

The theme of ‘Social Awareness’ has shown how young people lacking a supportive, non-criminal peer group can benefit substantially from strong, trusting relationships formed with their support workers who provide guidance and can be trusted. These strong relationships go some way to fulfilling the basic human need of *Relatedness* (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ward and Stewart, 2003) thereby contributing to overall well-being and hopefully to desistance. A particularly insightful comment made by an ex-gang member succinctly weaves this discourse with the next, which relates to participating in purposeful activity; "*Kids can walk*

around trouble, if there is some place to walk to, and someone to walk with" (McLaughlin, Irby and Langman, 1994, p. 219).

SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Self-efficacy is not only gained through supportive relationships, as mentioned in the previous theme, but is also boosted as individuals learn and master new skills (Bandura, 1994). Unfortunately, it has been found that young offenders spend an excessive amount of time engaging in 'passive leisure' activity rather than anything productive (Farnworth, 2000). Martin stressed the importance of worthwhile activities in reducing criminality, stating that the area in which he lives has little to offer:

"there's not much for teenagers to do that's why they gets in a lot of trouble"

Again, there is an element of avoiding responsibility in Martin's statement. He is suggesting that young people are almost forced into offending because they have not been presented with alternative options. However, displacing responsibility was not an uncommon position, and Liam (age 16) reasons that his offending was a result of limited activities: *"I was bored"*. Similarly, Craig gave boredom as the fundamental cause of young offending:

"his mate says 'oh I'm bored' and he says 'yeah, I'm bored as well' and then they go out and cause trouble, to waste the time"

'Boredom-inspired offending' could be significantly more problematic following an exclusion from mainstream education, due to growing associations with other excluded

young people and minimal organised activities. However, Dave gives a further rational explanation for offending:

“I like it...doing crime”

To give up any enjoyable pastime, there needs to be sufficient negatives present to outweigh the positives (Cornish and Clarke, 1986). In Dave’s life, the balance is not yet in favour of desistance and he accepts periods of incarceration in exchange for the ‘prestige’ crime gives him within his peer group. At this stage in his life therefore, he sees little reason to stop. Craig provides further understanding of the appeal of crime:

“I suppose you get a thrill from it too. I mean, when I was stealing from the shop, as I was running away, I did feel invincible”

Craig admitted to feeling belittled when he was ultimately caught by police, as his thrill seeking had led to him developing a distorted view of his abilities to avoid capture. Nonetheless, he had felt excited and untouchable on a regular basis prior to capture. Craig’s sense of power was most likely reinforced by the fact he was running away in a public area and was thus the centre of attention. This experience of euphoria evokes images of a roller coaster, an analogy researchers have also used when exploring abusive intimate relationships (Horely, 2002). Crime may provide opportunities for experiencing intense highs, which may counter the more intense lows which many young offenders may have experienced over their life course (Jacobson, Bhardwa, Gyateng, Hunter and Hough, 2010). This statement also substantiates Cushman’s (1990) concept of the empty self, which instead of being fulfilled with more long lasting accomplishments, is periodically satisfied by the type of immediate

thrills described by Craig. More worthwhile activities can reduce the need for such instant gratification, such as those provided by PYOP to develop young people's interests, talents and education. These activities appeared to expand the young people's horizons by engaging them in new and constructive activities, which in turn builds relationships between them and responsible adults based on earned trust and respect. Subsequently, new opportunities develop for alternative lifestyles and thus both *Relatedness* and *Competence* can be achieved (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ward and Stewart, 2003). Martin highlights the change in his behaviour since PYOP:

"I've got better things to do. You can't be bothered with it. Don't need the same buzz cos you've got something else"

Martin can confidently say he has reached a part of his life where the requirement for a "buzz" is not overwhelming, and can be replaced by a whole range of other activities, from the mundane to the exciting. He now experiences and is in control of a more fulfilled life, which he does not jeopardise. Similarly, Craig says:

"most criminals do it for the excitement and it's not really an excitement"

This generalised statement is important as it signifies the shift Craig has made from an offender to a non-offender identity. When Craig was offending, short-term gratification was satisfying and he sees this as a characteristic of most offenders. He is now looking at this characteristic with hindsight and a new perspective; one which has developed as part of his new identity as a non-offender.

Nonetheless, it is a concern that within PYOP, individuals are given the choice of which activity to pursue and for how long. This approach misses opportunities to achieve more difficult targets, and therefore enhance self-efficacy through psychologically rewarding activities, such as counselling. Here, Andy (age 18) talks about anger management:

“I only kept that up for 2 or 3 weeks cos I found it wasn’t at all of an interest”

The potential of PYOP to impact on young people’s futures was discussed by Martin who felt that in areas where the advantages of gainful employment are not obvious, there is little motivation to learn and develop. Martin recommends the opening of ‘little factories’ to give young people direction and drive by making them think about their futures:

“They might think, I like doing that... Then they might think yeah I’ll go to college and do something on it”

Prior to PYOP, interviewees were predominantly ‘bored’ and seeking entertainment. As a consequence of this, crime seemed inviting and something they could retain some control over. PYOP provides its participants with activities in which they can gain skills and a sense of *Competence*, the second basic human need advocated in the Self-Determination Theory and one of the 11 primary goods outlined in the GLM. For the most part, these activities diverted attention from criminality. This was more than a situational method of crime prevention, however, as it opened opportunity and aspirations for the future. Maruna (2001) found that the active offender group he interviewed saw little hope for change in their lives, differing drastically from the more optimistic desisters. Having a sense of purpose is now examined.

SELF-HOPE

Over a century ago, William James (1890; cited in Oyserman and James, 2011) wrote how future orientation helps to focus motivational attention and guide behaviour, as well as allowing the individual to respect him or herself. Therefore, Martin's suggestion of supplying young people at PYOP with 'little factories' (as seen in the previous theme) to support their ambitions seems worth exploring. While PYOP does not actually provide such facilities, it has undoubtedly assisted the young people in our sample to construct a vision for their future. This is in contrast to their lives prior to PYOP, which is demonstrated by Andy's pessimistic view of his future before the intervention.

“Well, when I was younger, I never thought I would achieve any G.C.S.E.s [General Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications]”

Andy's previously bleak outlook of his academic potential stands in remarkable contrast to interviewees' present stance regarding their goals and ambitions. Three interviewees had a career in mind, a conceptualisation of their possible self, and were determined in this pursuit. Liam had the ambition to be a coach driver, while Craig had set the goal of joining the military police. It was interesting to see that both had chosen careers containing an element of power and control, illustrated in the following quotations:

“Cos they're big and long and heavy” (Liam)

“They've got more power than the normal police” (Craig)

Craig's comment about becoming more powerful than the "normal" police represents the extent of his changed identity, in that he will no longer be under the control of the police, but can potentially be in control of them. In addition to these, Ben had made a career choice and was pursuing a college course to become a plumber. When talking about the financial advantages of plumbing, he admits:

"Yeah that's why I thought I'd do it..."

Money is a form of social power within the developed world and thus Ben has also embarked on a quest for a powerful role. Although a very different choice, when asked what he wanted to be, Dave answered *"a career criminal; a career associated with negative power*. Maruna (2001) would argue that Dave is protecting his ego by not striving for a target he may not achieve, thought to be less damaging to the self concept than an experience of trying without success. Offending behaviour was not a part of the future possible selves most individuals had created. They implied the use of a psychological balance sheet in comparing a life of crime with their new identity:

"It's not worth it to me really. It's a waste of time" (Craig)

"I just didn't feel like stealing was worth....it wasn't worth the trouble with the police and that" (Andy)

Craig demonstrates that he has come full circle, in that previously he would commit crime *"to waste the time"*, he now considers it a *"waste of time"*. He now understands that time can be used productively and is valuable to him in preparing for his future self. Andy's balance sheet is also in favour of a non-offending future. Liam holds a different view,

arguing that despite his life seeming 'better before' PYOP, he recognised that this was not ultimately going to lead to a happy life and therefore he was prepared to sacrifice some degree of entertainment for the advantages of not committing crime.

In line with the findings of Oyserman *et al* (2006), participants seemed motivated to take part in activity which would assist in the fulfilment of their future self, but anxious to avoid activity which might harm it. Young people are keen to emphasise their own role in desisting from crime, rather than allowing PYOP the credit, an important theme found by Lyon *et al* (2000) when interviewing young people in custody;

"I don't think that PYOP had any impact anyway" (John, age 10)

Young people in this study support a finding by Maruna (2001) that people who have desisted from crime demonstrate an almost exaggerated sense of control over their lives, which is remarkable given the total lack of control many offenders feel whilst offending. Indeed, narratives of persisting offenders were noted as being five times more likely than desisting offenders to ignore any 'language of agency' (Larson, 2000). Andy shows a belief that he is in control of his own behaviour and that is his personal choice to not steal, rather than an imposed choice:

"I just stopped and I've not gone back into a shop to steal since"

This realisation is likely to be life changing for a young person who will experience a sense of empowerment with this control. It is perhaps the time when the need *Autonomy* is fulfilled to the same extent as *Relatedness* and *Competence* (Deci and Ryan 2000). The acceptance of

personal responsibility or the development of an internal locus of control, seems to be a crucial part of any rehabilitation process. Without such a responsibility, offenders will continue to see themselves as having no control and as a passive observer in the events which shape their lives. Active offenders in Maruna's (2001) sample were more likely to suggest 'winning the lottery' as a personal striving, demonstrating a more external locus of control and less internal responsibility. At present, Dave has not developed an internal locus of control, giving this response when asked to define himself:

D: *Coiled spring*

I: *What sets you off?*

D: *Anything*

I: *What holds you down, doesn't let you spring?*

D: *Nothing*

His reference to a coiled spring implies he is out of control. He can react in anyway, to anyone or anything. He feels that under no circumstances can he do anything to predict his behaviour.

Overall in this section, six of the seven young people appear to have made a journey from a self with no prospects to a self with some ambition and direction. This developing sense of *Autonomy* is the third need in the Self-Determination Theory and an important primary good within the GLM (Ward and Stewart, 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

We set out to understand more about young people's experience of PYOP and how this may or may not contribute towards desistance from offending. From the results, we propose that the experience of PYOP aids in a cycle of desistance, which consists of three key stages: improving social awareness, achieving some sense of self-development and consequently establishing self-hope. At each of these stages, one or more of the fundamental needs highlighted by Deci and Ryan (2000) is also fulfilled, which buffers against criminality (Ward and Stewart, 2003). Importantly, all three stages also contribute to the construction of a positive future identity for the young person involved. Having gained a sense of responsibility, as well as the necessary skills and supportive relationships with PYOP, this future identity is seen as achievable and motivating.

The theoretical principles of the GLM are increasingly being incorporated into interventions for incarcerated adult offenders in the UK (Riddy and Harris, 2010) and across the rest of the world (Laws and Ward, 2011; McGrath, Cumming, Burchard, Zeoli and Ellerby 2010). However, our evidence suggests that there is potential for this rehabilitative model to be utilised within preventative practice or early interventions. A future step would be for researchers to build on these exploratory findings with larger samples of young offenders to understand the importance of *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy* in their experiences of offending and where appropriate, desistance.

Sadly, however, enhancing the lives of disruptive young people is something that provokes fierce public reaction, certainly in the UK. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) hosted an online message board on 17th August 2011, several days after riots erupted in

major English cities and punitive conservatism dominated. These selected comments were representative of many:

“the do-gooders want to go easy on wrong-doers. Sometimes I could scream with indignation”

“Let the people vent their anger and exact their revenge by unleashing a hoard of rotten vegetables in their faces, thereby, humiliating these thugs, murderers, looters and rioters”

As political debates ensue regarding the role of poverty and limited opportunity, the proposals we make are as necessary as ever. Results from a large scale study using a cross-sectional sample of young people in the USA indicated that economic and neighbourhood variables were actually less strong predictors of future delinquency than feelings of future certainty and supportive family functioning (Caldwell, Wiebe and Cleveland, 2006). When all they see is a bleak future, some young people have little to lose through offending.

Rather than simply criticising schemes like PYOP and believing them to reward bad behaviour, it is surely a priority to encourage the following in all children, regardless of whether they satisfy a list of ‘risk and need’ criteria:

- a strong sense of self
- secure and trusting social relationships
- purposeful activity and ambition

Perhaps this is idealistic, but the fact remains that enhancing young people's lives will have a positive impact on their choices and opportunities as an adult as well as a positive impact on society. Ward and Marshall (2007) make a poignant statement; "*Offenders are psychological agents who want what most of us want, a chance at a life that expresses their fundamental commitments and hopes, an opportunity to live a meaningful and rewarding life*" (p. 296). If the public are keener on retribution for our established offending population, then providing these opportunities to children before offending has become established must surely be a less resisted, less expensive and yet more rewarding answer.

NEXT STEPS IN MY PHD

In Study 1, it was proposed that children benefit from *Relatedness, Competence and Autonomy* when at risk of criminality, in line with findings from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Good Lives Model (GLM). Study 2 considers one area of *Competence* in more detail, that of Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) skills. ICPS skills have repeatedly been found to relate to delinquency and offending, hence their relevance to this work.

ICPS skills may form only a small part of what makes up ‘individual’ risk factors for delinquency, but they feature heavily within interventions for adult offenders. Empirical evidence is very mixed on the efficacy of these interventions, but they remain popular within custodial settings across England and Wales (and indeed many other countries across the world).

The purpose of my PhD as a whole was to learn more about ‘What Works’ for children who are offending. Therefore it seems sensible to consider whether popular models of adult intervention such as those addressing ICPS skills might equally be applicable to children. Importantly, and in keeping with the GLM approach, the next study seeks to understand the relevance and significance of ICPS skills to the lives of early adolescents whether offending or not.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 2

INTERPERSONAL COGNITIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND DELINQUENCY IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

STUDY 2 - INTERPERSONAL COGNITIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND DELINQUENCY IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

ABSTRACT

Although Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) skills are a popular component of cognitive skills interventions for adult offenders, there is discussion over the relevance, and therefore future application, of such skills within offenders' lives. Given the calls for more preventative intervention with young people at risk of offending, the present study assumes a developmental position in exploring the link between ICPS deficits and delinquency. With a sample of 126 male school children (aged 11 – 13), the study also considers the meaning and significance ICPS skills have in the lives of young people today. Initial correlations indicated a significant and negative relationship between ICPS skill and delinquency, in line with previous research. However, when criminogenic risk was controlled, no correlation was found. Delinquent participants were making as much effort as non-delinquent participants to problem solve and rated their responses to be just as effective. We conclude that problem solving ability needs to be assessed in a way that reflects the offenders' background as anti-social responses are not necessarily an indicator of poor ability, rather an indicator of background and perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Offending young people are often confronted with a higher number of interpersonal problems than their non-offending peers. Alongside the typical factors noted in the opening chapter, they are often forced to manage difficulties such as living in Local Authority Care, high instances of family bereavement, mental health issues and special educational needs (Jacobson, Bhardwa, Gyateng, Hunter and Hough, 2010). Not only do these troubled

circumstances represent criminogenic risks for the young people who experience them, they can also restrict opportunities for them to learn adaptive, pro-social options for solving such problems (Andrews and Bonta, 2006). Young people in these situations therefore have the dual criminogenic risks of leading complex, problematic lives without the resources to manage these effectively (McGuire, 2008).

Substantial empirical evidence has accumulated over four decades linking Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) deficits with offending behaviour in adults (Antonowicz and Ross, 2005), in adolescents (Palmer and Hollin, 1999) and in children (Spivack, Platt and Shure, 1976). Based on the principles of the RNR Model (Andrews, Bonta and Hoge, 1990), many convicted offenders found to lack ICPS skills have had the opportunity to learn them through cognitive skills interventions (McGuire, 2005), which target a variety of cognitive deficits associated with offending, such as social perspective taking and impulsivity. The ‘Cognitive Model of Offender Rehabilitation’ (Ross and Fabiano, 1985), proposed that interventions should challenge an offender’s thinking as a means of changing their behaviour, and this approach has been hugely influential across the English speaking world and beyond (McGuire and Hatcher, 2001). However, cognitive skills interventions have mixed reviews in terms of their effectiveness (Robinson, 1995; Falshaw, Friendship, Travers and Nugent, 2003, Tong and Farrington, 2006). To continue improving provision for the offending population, it is important to assess different aspects of the original programme rationale, such as ICPS skill, to continue to improve efficacy. This is especially the case during the current period of increasing sophistication and development in offender programmes.

Importantly for cognitive skills interventions, recent research suggests that compared to static risk factors, the impact of dynamic risk factors like ICPS skills actually decrease as an

individual matures through adolescence (Van der Put, Deković, Stams, Van der Laan, Hoeve and Van Amelsfort, 2010). The effect of interventions targeting these skills will also therefore decrease with age (Van der Put, Stams, Hoeve, Dekovic, Spanjaard, Van der Laan and Barnoski, 2012). This finding contributes to a growing acknowledgement that early intervention with children at risk of offending is crucial in any serious fight against criminality (Piquero, Farrington, Nagin and Moffitt, 2010). Evidence suggests that without intervention prior to age 13, those who are already showing anti-social behaviour are two to three times more likely to become a serious offender in adulthood (Farrington, 2000). As ICPS skill training is a standard method of offender rehabilitation, we hope to understand more about how this element of intervention might work for much younger individuals, just prior to the sharp rise in the age-crime curve, when behaviour is most malleable and when dynamic risks are of highest importance (Van der Put *et al*, 2010).

Much of the research influencing Ross and Fabiano's choice to include a problem solving component in their original cognitive model was actually developmental in nature. Spivack and Levine (1963) compared adolescent boys from a behavioural reform school with boys from a regular state school and found reform boys were less able to detail a course of action bridging the start of a story with the end. They labelled this ability 'Means End Problem Solving' and proposed that it may have an influence on other areas of social functioning, such as emotional instability, ability to delay gratification, over-emotionality, difficulty making friends and reduced empathy. Therefore interventions targeting Means End Problem Solving are likely to benefit these areas too. Subsequent studies emphasised other cognitive skills as important for behavioural adjustment, including 'Alternative Solution Thinking' and 'Consequential Thinking' (Spivack *et al*, 1976). Nearly thirty years later, these skills still feature significantly in cognitive skills interventions for adults (McGuire, 2005).

Cognitive skills interventions exist for much younger offenders, again with mixed reviews. Curran and Bull (2011) found the Ross Programme (Ross and Hilborn, 2003), based on the original Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R; Ross and Fabiano, 1985) programme, to be effective in terms of reducing immediate behavioural difficulties and reducing participants' risk of future offending. However, Pullen (1996) found the opposite and that following the original R&R programme young people actually had 15% higher recidivism rates than a control group. Pullen (1996) did emphasise the poor implementation procedures of the R&R programme however, which were held responsible to a large extent for this finding.

Perhaps one of the reasons that problem solving skill training is not always having the desired effect is that it is not as straightforward as having ICPS skills or not. Brezina (2000) proposed that delinquency by young people is *not* a consequence of poor problem solving ability per se, but is instead an active method of problem solving, adapted within their often complex lives. He argued that delinquency allows young people to exercise some control and experience the self-actualisation they crave during a time in their development where this is still relatively rare (Wood, Wilson and Cochran, 1997). Further, given the importance of peer relationships in adolescence (Harris, 1998), connecting with a deviant peer group can have social rewards. This is especially the case since antisocial behaviour is considered 'cool' by many young people (Warden and Mackinnon, 2003).

Research suggests that even when an individual possesses ICPS skills, his or her beliefs about the usefulness of the skills can hinder positive change (Kuperminc and Allen, 2001). Kuperminc and Allen (2001) noted that many problematic adolescents found the skills to be irrelevant to their lives and thus did not use them. Lending further support to this finding is a naturalistic study exploring the playground behaviour of school children with the use of

video-cameras (Pepler, Craig and Roberts, 1995). Pepler *et al* (1995) demonstrated that problem solving skills training can be ineffective unless others within the child's social world are also given the same training and actively apply the skills. Following an intervention, Pepler *et al* found that teachers would rate previously aggressive children as improved within the classroom, but video footage revealed sustained aggression and poor social skills in the playground. This study highlights potential difficulties involved when transferring skills from the learned environment to the real world. This concern is echoed in research with adult offenders undergoing cognitive skills interventions in custody, since offenders are expected to learn the skills in an environment wholly dissimilar to the one in which they are expected to apply them (Clarke, Simmonds and Wydall, 2004; McMurrin and McCulloch, 2007).

Pepler *et al* (1995) study casts doubt over the suitability of the assessment process used to measure social skill, since it did not accurately reflect what was happening in the playground. Additionally, Curran and Bull (2011) found that following the Ross Programme, no improvements were shown using the assessment tool yet improvements in actual behaviour were noted. Psychologists have assessed problem solving ability using either *process* or *outcome* measures but the concerns of the two previous studies suggest that neither process nor outcome can be considered alone but must be jointly considered.

Critiquing the risk paradigm from which these programmes and measures originate (see Study 1 for more information), Armstrong (2004) noted a need for change in the way researchers approach risk and offending in young people. He proposed six recommendations to enable better engagement with the perspectives of young people, one of which is to prioritise “*the meaning and significance of ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors to both children and their families*” (p. 110). Given the fact that offenders disengage from cognitive skills

interventions due to their irrelevance to real life, this is important in terms of how ICPS might work in early intervention strategies.

The first aim of the current study was to explore the link between ICPS ability and emerging criminality from a developmental perspective using both outcome and process measures. This will contribute to a growing but still relatively small empirical literature on ‘what works’ with early adolescent and child offenders. We re-examined three established deficits: Means End Problem Solving, Consequential Thinking and Alternative Thinking, which have been found to affect antisocial behaviour in early adolescence (Spivack *et al*, 1976) and which are still targeted in cognitive skills interventions today (McGuire, 2005). We hypothesise that we will find correlations between ICPS skill deficits and delinquency.

The second aim of the current study is to consider the *meaning and significance* of this risk factor in line with Amstrong’s (2004) recommendations. It has been recently proposed that it is just as important to prioritise young people’s opinions towards skills training interventions as their actual ability (Kuperminc and Allen, 2001), and this study attempts to give some consideration to what these opinions are.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 126 male school children from South East England, aged between 11 and 13 ($M = 11.73$, $SD = 0.73$). Participants were recruited from five sources within a 16-mile radius in an effort to gain a representative sample across a diverse section of society, including children who were offending, children at risk of offending and children not offending. Most participants attended school and did not have extensive criminal

involvement, as would be expected in a group of children this age. The majority of participants attended the same inner city comprehensive school, which caters for young people with mixed academic ability, mixed behavioural history and relatively low socioeconomic status (n = 71; 57%). However, participants were also recruited from a boys' grammar school (for those with high academic ability; n = 24; 19%), an a suburban academy school (for those living in different social contexts; n = 12; 10%), a pupil referral unit (for those excluded from school; n = 14; 11%) and a Youth Inclusion Project (for young people in trouble with the law; n = 4; 3%). All schools were secondary level, senior schools.

Information was collected regarding participants ethnicity and criminogenic risk (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, most participants described themselves as 'white' (42%), with 31% describing themselves as 'black', 12% 'mixed', 8% 'Asian', and 7% feeling none of these categories were right for them.

Information on six criminogenic risk factors was gathered for each participant, listed here with percentages of participants who had experienced this risk factor:

- *school discipline problems, determined by having been on a behavioural 'report' or due to temporary/permanent exclusion from school (21%)*
- *parental unemployment/low socioeconomic status (48%)*
- *familial criminality (restricted to parents, step-parents and siblings; 21%)*
- *living in a high crime area according to police data (10%)*
- *living with 6 or more others, i.e. a large family (9%)*
- *having ADHD (8.5%).*

Socioeconomic status was assessed through gathering information about the work status of each participant's parents or carers. The crime rate in the participants' local area was gleaned from obtaining a postal code from the participant and where possible using www.police.uk to identify how the rate of crime in that area compares with other locations across the UK.

Overall, this was a low-risk sample and the mean number of criminogenic risks was 1.47 (SD = 1.43). However, the full range of 0-6 risks had been experienced by participants in this sample and where information was provided on all six risk factors, participants were categorised into two groups (lower or higher exposure to criminogenic risks). Given that the more risks a child is exposed to, the higher their likelihood of offending in future, it was determined that anyone who was exposed to multiple (i.e. two or more) of these risk factors could be considered to be in the higher risk group (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott and Catalano, 2000). Additionally, being exposed to two or more risks would mean that the participant has a higher than average exposure within this particular sample and therefore should be considered as being in the higher risk category. While this is a slightly crude measure, it does clearly differentiate those who have no risk factors at all, or only one (n=64, 53%), with those who have multiple (n=57, 47%).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

All data were collected over one session with the researcher, predominantly within school settings. Where the participant was not attending any form of education, the data collection was undertaken at the premises of the organisations involved in the care of these particular young people. The data were collected in small-group settings, apart from with the participants who were deemed too disruptive and distractible to work in groups (n = 12). In these cases, the measures were administered individually. The researcher explained the

measures to each group (or individual) and they were then asked to complete the task on their own. There were times when participants asked for assistance, but help given was limited to general comprehension and spelling. All measures used can be found in Appendix 1.

Means-End Problem Solving procedure (MEPS; Platt and Spivack, 1975)

The MEPS procedure presents participants with both the beginning of a story about an interpersonal problem and an optimal end. The participant's task is to devise a step-by-step strategy for achieving this end. The MEPS has been shown to have internal consistency (range: 0.80–0.84; Marx, Williams and Claridge, 1992) and construct validity where a significant difference in performance between behavioural groups has been found (Marx *et al*, 1992). For this study, participants were presented with three problem scenarios selected from six, chosen due to their relevance to the age group being investigated: resolving a confrontational situation, making friends in a new neighbourhood; and securing the chance to be a leader of a club. Minor amendments were made to the scenarios to ensure they were age appropriate and scenarios which related to employment or intimate relationships were discounted. Participants were given the following instructions, very slightly adjusted from the Marx *et al* (1992) procedures:

“In this procedure we are interested in how you solve problems. You will be given three stories to complete. For each story you will be given the beginning of the story and how the story ends. We'd like you to provide the ideal strategy that will link the beginning and end of the story. We would like you to describe this strategy in very specific terms so that it would be possible for anyone to follow your plan of action.”

The researcher read each problem aloud and participants were also provided with the scenario in written form. The MEPS was scored as originally intended, for the numbers of "relevant means" (or steps; Platt and Spivack, 1975), for the number of obstacles identified and for the length of time the participant felt it would take to solve the problem in the way they describe. On a 7 point Likert scale, participants were asked how effective they considered their answers to be (1 = not at all effective, 7 = very effective). The researcher also rated the effectiveness of the means, with merit being given if the means: would sensibly lead to the given end; were pro-social in nature; were well considered and structured; and if some context was provided to the process.

Total scores were calculated by summing across the three problems, although a MEPS mean score was also employed as it was considered a more representative marker of assessment given that several participants failed to complete all three MEPS scenarios due to fatigue or boredom ($n = 7$). In those cases, a total score would not reflect their ability appropriately. A second independent rater coded 25% of responses. Correlation coefficients were $r = 0.91$ for relevant means and $r = 0.90$ for effectiveness.

The MEPS test is known as an outcome rather than a process measure, able to provide a global indicator of social problem-solving ability. By using the following 'process' tests, it was possible to assess both effectively.

Children's Interpersonal Problem Solving test (ChIPS; Shure and Spivack, 1985) and Multiple Consequences test (M-CONS; Shure and Spivack, 1985).

The ChIPS test assesses participant's ability to generate alternatives to a given problem situation, whereas the M-CONS is an assessment of ability to conceptualise consequences

(both positive and negative) to a given action. Tests, instructions for implementation and scoring methods for both tests were gained from the original author, Myrna Shure on commencing this research. Since the tests were initially devised in the United States in the 1970s, changes were deemed necessary for characters' names and games to ensure they were appropriate for a UK based audience in 2011. No further changes were made.

The researcher read each problem aloud (three for each test) and participants were also provided with the scenario in written form. Consistent with the manual, the number of distinct alternative solutions was added to generate a total ChIPS score, and the number of consequences given were also added for a total M-CONS score. In both cases, mean scores were calculated to establish ability, due to a total score being inappropriate for those not completing all tests ($n = 9$).

Overall Problem Solving Ability

A standardised score using the Z function on SPSS was generated to assess overall problem solving ability. This was to allow for the different ICPS measures to be combined and considered for more general analysis of problem solving ability and delinquency. Following all three measures, participants were also asked *'Where have you learnt the problem solving skills you have just been using?'* Answers were coded into five categories based on responses: *'Don't know'*; *'gut instinct'*, *friends and family'*, *'have been taught'* and *'other'*. Responses which were coded as *'other'* included turning to religion or visual media for guidance.

Self-Reported Delinquency Scale

Participants were asked to fill in a scale asking how often they had engaged in a number of anti-social acts in the previous six months. The scale was derived from one used in a

government study exploring problem behaviours in UK children as young as eight (Bowen, Heron and Steer, 2008). Participants in the current study were questioned on twelve anti-socials acts which included being disruptive in class, theft, substance misuse, fire-setting, cruelty to animals, damaging property and fighting. They were asked to state how frequently they had engaged in each of the acts, with possible answers ranging from Never, Sometimes, Often and Everyday. Participants were scored on their responses for each act (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and their *total delinquency score* was calculated by summing the twelve scores they had obtained across the different acts. Three participants did not complete this section, but the remaining 123 were placed into delinquency categories dependent on this score. The low delinquency group consisted of those who had committed no delinquent acts and those who had *sometimes* been disruptive in class, i.e. a score of 0 or 1 (n = 48 [39%]). The other groups were roughly equal in number, with those scoring between 2, 3 or 4 in the medium delinquency group (n = 39 [32%]), and those scoring over 5 being classified as high delinquency (n = 36 [29%]).

Due to the anonymity of participants' responses, it was not feasible to gain teacher ratings on participant's behaviour. However, it was still deemed important to gauge how often their behaviour was seen as inappropriate by adult authority figures. Therefore, participants were also asked to rate how frequently they were "in trouble" with their parents/carers, the school and/or police. Participants' *total trouble score* was calculated by quantifying their responses for each type of trouble (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and totalling the score. There was a significant correlation between participants' *total trouble score* and *total delinquency score*, $r(121) = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$, although this is not as high as anticipated. Therefore, ICPS skill was correlated with both measures in case of any discrepancy. But for clarity, only the *total delinquency scores* are included here.

Following data collection at the first school and informal discussions with the participants during the procedure, it was decided that a further question should be added to capture potentially interesting data. Following the third MEPS question in the assessment, participants were asked; '*would you personally use the strategy you have just outlined?*'. This question was chosen because it was the most delinquent in nature. Only 51 of the 126 participants were asked this additional question, but the results are deemed interesting enough to report in this paper.

RESULTS

THE EXTENT OF RISK AND DELINQUENCY

Looking at the group as a whole, anti-social behaviour was generally infrequent, which was to be expected given the age of the participants. Most anti-social behaviour was rare, with only three behaviours being ticked as occurring daily by anyone; disruptive behaviour (11%), skipping school (3%) and smoking cigarettes (3%).

However, when adding those who stated that they had engaged in certain acts 'sometimes' and 'regularly' to those who responded 'every day', many more have been involved. This may represent the onset of more pervasive anti-social behaviour. This is particularly true for being disruptive at school, where as many as 64% of the sample said they had done this 'sometimes', 'regularly' or 'every day'. Though smaller in terms of number, it was perhaps more concerning to see that by using the same criteria, 40% of the sample had deliberately hurt another person, and that 17% had threatened someone with a weapon, bunked school or damaged property to the same extent. Further, 13% reported being cruel to an animal.

In line with well-established findings (Farrington, 2000), the number of criminogenic risks experienced by participants and their level of delinquency were found to be significantly, positively correlated; $r(123) = 0.597, p < 0.01$. Additionally, age and delinquency were also found to be significantly, positively correlated; $r(119) = 0.242, p < 0.01$, with younger participants engaging in less anti-social behaviour.

ICPS SKILL AND DELINQUENCY

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the link between each of the ICPS test scores and delinquency (see table 2) and the results were negative in direction and significant, supporting our first hypothesis and concurring with previous findings.

		Total score for delinquent acts	Mean MEPS Score	Mean MCONS Score	Mean CHIPS Score	Mean Overall Problem Solving Score
Total score for delinquent acts	Correlation Coefficient	.	-.218*	-.243**	-.322**	-.320**
	R-Squared	-	0.047 (4.7%)	0.059 (5.9%)	0.103 (10.3%)	0.102 (10.2%)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.016	.008	.000	.000
	N	123	122	119	120	122
Mean MEPS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.218*	1.000	.521**	.587**	.821**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	122	123	120	121	123
Mean MCONS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.243**	.521**	1.000	.610**	.835**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	119	120	120	119	120
Mean CHIPS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.322**	.587**	.610**	1.000	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	120	121	119	121	121
Mean Overall Problem Solving Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.320**	.821**	.835**	.869**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	122	123	120	121	123

Table 2 - Correlations between mean problem solving for each of the tests and delinquency scores

However, there are some participants who demonstrate very low ICPS skill but have either absolutely no delinquency ($n = 7$) or very low levels ($n = 24$). Additionally, there were others who have very high ICPS skill and yet engage in moderate to high delinquency ($n = 18$). When those with very low delinquency (i.e. those scoring 0 or 1 on the delinquency scale) were removed from the analysis, the correlation between ICPS skill and delinquency is reduced: $r(74) = -0.237, p < 0.05$.

Comparing Spearman Rank Correlation coefficients, it appears ICPS skills were more strongly correlated with criminogenic risk than with delinquency (see table 3).

		Total number of risks	Mean MEPS Score	Mean MCONS Score	Mean CHIPS Score	Mean Overall Problem Solving Score
Total number of risks	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.330**	-.246**	-.437**	-.397**
	R-Squared	-	0.108 (10.8%)	0.06 (6%)	0.19 (19%)	0.157 (15.7%)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.007	.000	.000
	N	125	122	119	120	122
Mean MEPS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.330**	1.000	.521**	.587**	.821**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	122	123	120	121	123
Mean MCONS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.246**	.521**	1.000	.610**	.835**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	119	120	120	119	120
Mean CHIPS Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.437**	.587**	.610**	1.000	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	120	121	119	121	121
Mean Overall Problem Solving Score	Correlation Coefficient	-.397**	.821**	.835**	.869**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	122	123	120	121	123

Table 3 - Correlations between mean problem solving for each of the tests and number of criminogenic risks

Subsequently, we carried out a partial correlation using ranked variables, to explore the relationship between ICPS skill and delinquency when controlling for criminogenic risk. This indicated that when criminogenic risk is controlled for, there was no correlation between ICPS skill and delinquency, $r(117) = 0.079, p > 0.05$.

In terms of where participants felt they had learnt to problem solve, the most popular category was '*friends and family*' ($n = 39, 32\%$), although almost as many ($n = 37, 30\%$) responded they solved problems based on '*gut instinct*'. As figure 1 illustrates, the most popular answer for the high delinquency group was '*gut instinct*', whereas the most popular answer for the low delinquency group was '*family and friends*'. No one in the high delinquency group commented that they were taught these skills. However, a Chi-Squared analysis indicated that the difference according to delinquency group was not significant, $\chi^2(4) = 8.644 (p > 0.05)$.

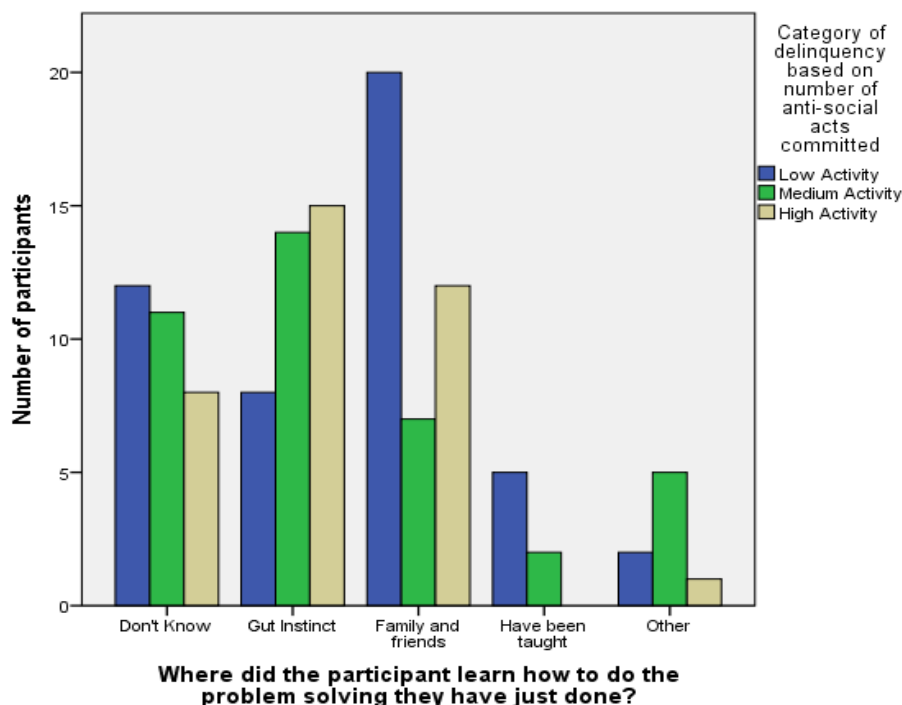


Figure 1 - Where participants had learnt to problem solve, according to their delinquency group

MEANS END PROBLEM SOLVING ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

A series of one-way independent groups ANOVAs were used to test for differences in the perceived effectiveness of participants' strategies depending on their delinquency group, both from the perspective of the researcher and of the participant.

There was a significant difference in the way researchers rated the strategies of these groups in terms of their effectiveness; $F(2, 117) = 5.902$, $p < 0.05$, with post-hoc Tukey HSD tests showing that the mean effectiveness rating given to low delinquency ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.99$) and medium delinquency groups ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.94$) were both significantly higher than the mean rating given to the high delinquency group ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.04$). In contrast, there was no statistical difference between the participants' own effectiveness ratings, $F(2, 117) = 0.517$, $p < 0.05$. The high delinquency group did not recognise that their answers were any less likely to reach the desired outcome.

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE

In an effort to explore the meaning and significance of ICPS skill to young people and its role in preventative practice, 51 participants were asked whether they would personally use the strategy they gave as their answer to MEPS 3 if they were faced with this problem in real life. Of these, 61% said that they would not, and this was most frequent for the high delinquency group (see figure 2). Although Chi-Square analysis suggests there was not a significant difference in the answers of the low and high delinquency groups, $\chi^2(2) = 2.690$ ($p > 0.05$), this still represents a potential problem with the assessment process where hypothetical problems are used to establish ability.

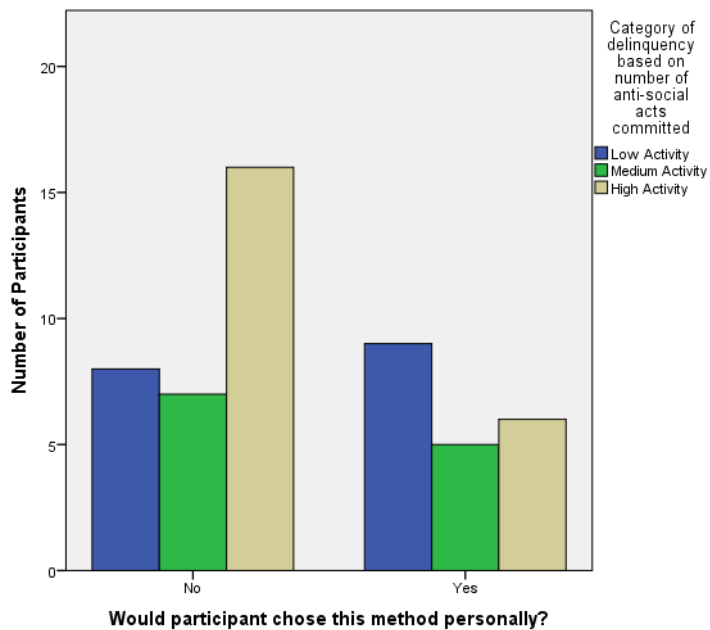


Figure 2 - Number of participants who would or would not chose their stated method of solving MEPS3, according to their delinquency group

DISCUSSION

Results show that ICPS skill deficits are related to delinquency, as has been found in previous research (Antonowicz and Ross, 2005; Palmer and Hollin, 1999; Spivack *et al*, 1976). Within social research, it is rare that one variable should explain much of the variation in another, and Knoke, Bohrnstedt and Mee (2002) comment that a contribution of 2% - 5% of the variance is therefore considered reasonably important. Given that overall problem solving ability accounts for 10% in this analysis, this is quite meaningful. However, this relationship is unclear not straightforward.

One of the important findings from this study is the number of participants who had exceptionally low ICPS skill but no delinquency, and also the group who have high ICPS skill but high delinquency. This challenges the notion that ICPS skills constitute a criminogenic risk because there appears to be a mediating factor protecting against the criminogenic implications of low skill for some. Perhaps this mediating factor is absent in the

lives of those who have high skill yet engage in delinquency. Indeed, a concern by Ward and Maruna (2007) when considering interventions is the way individuals are all too often considered as simply laden with a collection of risk factors (such as ICPS skill) without sufficient consideration of the complex interplay between these risks and the social environment. Our finding adds to the growing belief that interventions should incorporate a wider variety of potential contributory and protective factors. We encourage ongoing efforts to better understand protective factors for young people, some of which may account for this localised interest in our group of low skill, low offending participants but also contribute to the more global concern of ‘what works’ with young offenders in practice (Resnick, Ireland and Borowsky, 2004).

In line with substantial previous research (Farrington and Welsh, 2007), we found that exposure to other criminogenic risks was highly predictive of delinquency. This came as no surprise, nor did the related finding that exposure to criminogenic risk is highly correlated with ICPS skill, given the extent of social learning which occurs during childhood. It is important to establish at this point that not all high risk participants suffer from ICPS skill deficits, nor did all low risk participants in this study have high ICPS skill. Yet the relationship between ICPS skill and criminogenic risks has some important implications regarding the content of preventative interventions as well as the timing of these interventions. This lends support to Van der Put *et al*'s (2010) recommendations of targeting those under 14 as a priority.

Support for preventative intervention in early adolescence has been accruing from neuroimaging studies, which demonstrate how the prefrontal cortex (responsible for ‘executive functions’ such as problem solving and impulsivity) does not fully mature until

early adulthood (Giedd, 2008; Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). It seems very appropriate that efforts are targeted at this point in time, given that early adolescence is a crucial time for developing such skills. It could be that while the disadvantaged (risk) environment impacts on the level of skill developing, it is not yet resulting in actual delinquency. By the time adult offenders are enrolled onto cognitive skills interventions in prison or probation settings, problem solving schemas have been formed through social experience (Dodge and Rabiner, 2004) and facilitators are thus faced with the difficult task of both undoing old habits and instilling new ones.

Interestingly, the low delinquency group in this study showed a tendency to apply ICPS skills learnt from significant others, while the high delinquency group appeared to have relied more on their own initiative. It is possible that the high delinquency group may consider that their parents and peers are not good examples of ICPS skill, but it is also possible that ‘fending for themselves’ is a common and accepted part of their world. This has strong implications for young people growing up in risk environments, where they do not have access to appropriate role models (Bandura and McDonald, 1994). When conventional opportunities are unavailable, it has been said that established offenders find adaptive ways of meeting their needs (Padfield and Maruna, 2006). It makes sense therefore that the same applies for those who are just beginning to experiment with offending.

Brezina (2000) asserted that adolescents attempt to problem solve in a way which is appropriate to their lives, even if it is not considered pro-social and conventional in the eyes of psychological researchers. There was certainly some support for Brezina’s theory within the current study, where the high delinquency group were assessed by the researcher as having significantly fewer effective strategies, but who personally saw their strategies as just

as effective as anyone else's. Assessments of intervention effectiveness have evolved to not only consider 'what works' but to also consider 'for whom and under what circumstances' (McGuire, 2000). An assessment of problem solving effectiveness should surely therefore follow a similar pattern and researchers must attempt to explore how problem solving might differ for different ages in different social environments. To illustrate this point, the following two answers from the third MEPS question have been included. This question presents a situation where a boy says something nasty to another boy, upsetting him and making him angry. The given end to this story is that the upset boy feels happy because he has "got even";

"the only thing that would work here would be to teach him a lesson so he don't do it again. I'd smack him in the gob [mouth]. Alright, I might leave it for 30 seconds of calm [before hitting him] so I caught him unawares but that's it, BAM"

"Well the first thing you could do is to tell your Mum because she could then tell a teacher and then my mum and the teacher could then can sort it out between them"

Technically, both participants would have scored the same for their answers, despite them being qualitatively very different to each other. It will not come as a surprise that the former was in the high delinquency group and the latter in the low delinquency group. However, in terms of their approach to the problem, it could be argued that the antisocial boy was more independent and pro-active than the other participant, albeit not pro-social. This perhaps reflects the need once again for some young people to '*fight their own battles*', in a way

which is contextually (rather than conventionally) appropriate in their environment (Brezina, 2000).

It could be argued then that the potential benefits of interventions for early adolescents are twofold, to formally teach them the ICPS (and other cognitive) skills but also to increase their exposure to pro-social, non-criminogenic interactions (thus enabling positive schemas to develop). However, as Pepler *et al* (1995) suggested, teaching the skills in a formal environment does not necessarily mean that they will be applied in less formal environments. Certainly, the finding that over half of participants in this study stated that they would not personally use the strategy they had given as their answer during a MEPS task strengthens Pepler *et al*'s (1995) case. Ward and Stewart (2003) emphasise the need for interventions to consider the contexts under which offenders (and presumably at-risk adolescents) are expected to function in a social manner.

A problem may exist in the way ICPS skills are assessed, especially given the fact that the researchers appear to have judged effectiveness on a different scale to the participants in this study. It is also difficult to assess whether the number of strategies an individual gives is more important than the conventionality of their responses. For example, a popular response to all MEPS scenarios was "*asking my parents to help me*". This seems a relatively effective strategy for a twelve year old, but yet it is not evidence of developed ICPS skill. Further difficulties were identified with the assessment process. As mentioned, the honesty of participants regarding the use of their given strategy in their own life was noteworthy. Participants were either seeing the task as a school based exercise, rather than considering the actions they would take in a real life situation. Or they were answering honestly, but then

considering the social implications of answering in that way and attempting to cover the truth.

There are a number of important implications which come from this research. Firstly, it is crucial to continue investigating the role of protective factors in early adolescence. Understanding more about the relationship between risk and protective factors will help to strengthen preventative work with young people, especially those at risk of criminality. Further, focusing upon the environment within which young people are attempting to problem solve will motivate offending young people to engage with interventions (McMurrin and McCulloch, 2007) and also more effectively differentiate those with ICPS skill (albeit applied antisocially) from those without. It is of paramount importance that we do not just see offenders as lacking ICPS skills solely on the basis of applying these skills in the way we feel is inappropriate. Many of the young people assessed were actively attempting to solve problems in their lives, based on what they thought was effective. This does not necessarily represent a deficit in skill, but rather a lack of appropriate role models or even a lack of situations where conventional problem solving is seen to work. Finally, if offending young people are identified to have competent ICPS skills, this should be recognised as a strength and energies focussed on helping the individual to seek more pro-social ways of living for his or her future, as advocated by the Good Lives Model (Purvis, Ward and Willis, 2011).

Certainly, in terms of Armstrong's (2004) recommendation for exploring the 'meaning and significance' of risk factors, this research highlights the differential relevance of ICPS skills to different groups of young people.

NEXT STEPS IN MY PHD

While simple correlations supported existing research on the link between ICPS skills and delinquency, Study 2 showed that exploring ICPS skill deficits without due consideration of participants' backgrounds was inadequate. Ironically, such skills are often judged in a way that reflects the psychologists' backgrounds, or at least those who devise the assessment process. Further, looking solely at risk factors and criminogenic need (such as ICPS skill), without attention to protective factors and non-criminogenic needs, generates a skewed picture of the individual and their needs (Ward and Maruna, 2007).

It could be argued that in relation to the fundamental psychological needs raised in Study 1, Study 2 is simply an exploration of *Competence* in early adolescents' ICPS skills. However, it is evident that development of these skills depends on *Relatedness* and the application of them requires a degree of *Autonomy*. Study 2 therefore provided further weight to the suggestions made in Study 1, in that all three fundamental needs should be considered within preventative strategies.

One of the key findings from Study 2 was that one group of participants who had ICPS skill deficits did not engage in delinquent behaviour. I am not suggesting that this in itself is a surprise, rather that it inspired investigation into what protected these young people against the consequences of poor ICPS skills. Study 3 aims to redress the balance again and consider an under-researched non-criminogenic factor, which may have some protective properties: *hope*. Study 3 describes the potential for developing hopeful thinking in early adolescents and questions whether this is useful for those beginning to engage in delinquency.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 3

HOPE THEORY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO EMERGING DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR

STUDY 3 - HOPE THEORY AND ITS RELEVANCE TO EMERGING DELINQUENT**BEHAVIOUR****ABSTRACT**

Snyder's cognitive model of hope has mainly been applied within health settings, although more recently its role in corrective settings has been considered. The findings have indicated that hope may be a protective factor against further criminality and a useful construct to encourage in adult offenders. The current research explored delinquency and hope scores with an all-male sample of 126 early adolescents (aged 11–13) in South-East England, taking into account their exposure to criminogenic risk. The results suggested that exposure to certain criminogenic risks affects the development of hope, and that low levels of hope affects participants' propensity for delinquency. The positive impact of having high hope on delinquency was most pronounced for those with high criminogenic risks. A discriminant analysis showed hope to be a more useful predictor variable for delinquency than another well established variable, Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) skill. This has implications for interventions, especially so given the extent to which ICPS skills are targeted in preventative and corrective treatments across the world.

INTRODUCTION

The human costs associated with offending behaviour for the perpetrators, the victims and families involved are both palpable and devastating. This is reason enough for continued attention to the efficacy of youth intervention programmes but the economic benefits of early prevention are also considerable (Welsh and Farrington, 2011). Undeniably, preventing offending at an early age can save costs associated with security, insurance, stolen/damaged property, physical injury and policing in the long term (Brand and Price, 2000), as well as

related costs such as unemployment, accommodation needs and substance misuse/addiction problems (Farrington, Coid, Harnett, Jolliffe, Soteriou, Turner and West, 2006).

We know from extensive empirical study that it is before offending behaviour becomes ingrained that the biggest impression on individuals (and the public purse) can be made through intervention (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). The broad aim of the present study is to continue researching ‘what works’ for children who are at risk of offending behaviour, so that offending can be prevented in the most effective way.

Much is already known about the criminogenic risk factors which place children at higher risk of later offending, and some of this information is outlined in the introductory chapter and in Study 2 (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott and Catalano, 2000). Interventions which are inspired by this ‘risk factor paradigm’ tend to assess criminogenic risks and mitigate them, in a similar way to medical models (Farrington, 2000). However, O’Mahony (2009) warns that the risk factor paradigm can be one-dimensional and that identifying those who might be prone to offending in later years is actually of limited use in designing interventions. Indeed, the ‘risk factor paradigm’ does not explain resilience and why some children are exposed to multiple risk factors but go on to lead pro-social, conventional lives (Howard and Johnson, 2000). So the more specific aim of this research study is to understand more about resilience and protective factors in relation to ‘what works’ for children at risk of offending behaviour.

Literature pertaining to risk factors has historically dominated the ‘what works’ evidence base, but in recent years the literature regarding protective factors has been making an impact (Nee, Ellis, Wilson and Morris, 2012). Importantly, protective factors are more than simply

the 'absence of risk' in a child's life (e.g. NOT having criminal parents and NOT living in a high crime area), but include internal attitudes and the active application of skills or resources (Gilgun, 2005; Murray, 2009). This makes them relevant to the study of 'what works' for child offenders. Further, interventions concentrating on offenders' (or 'at-risk' adolescents') deficits have been described as less inspiring and motivating than interventions which also look at the potential for a better life following intervention (Ward and Stewart, 2003; Ward and Maruna, 2007).

The current research focuses on the function of 'hope' as a potential protective factor in a sample of early adolescents. Until recently, the empirical testing of the concept of hope has taken place primarily within the health psychology literature, but has now been considered in relation to offending behaviour with adults (LeBel, Burnett, Maruna and Bushway, 2008; Marshall, Ward, Mann, Moulden, Fernandez, Serran and Marshall, 2005; Martin and Stermac, 2010). However, to understand the role of hope in *preventing* crime, this also needs to be explored with a sample of young people before the age when criminality peaks, at approximately 12 years old (Gottfredson and Hirshi, 1990). This study utilises Snyder's cognitive model (Snyder, 2002), which has also been used in research on adult offenders (Martin and Stermac, 2010) and is described below.

Snyder (2002) proposes that three interrelated cognitive components make up hope: *goals*, *agency* and *pathways thought*. *Goals* are considered to be the foundation element of hope. It could be argued that all action (such as getting up in the morning) is a response to a goal, but Snyder argues that the goals referred to within hope theory must not be purely habitual but need to be of sufficient value to carry some weight. Further, goals must be attainable but also contain some uncertainty, as goals with 100% certainty do not necessitate hope.

If a particular goal is important enough to force prolonged cognitive processing, an individual is said to initiate *agentic* and *pathways thought*. *Agency* reflects the motivational element of hope and is the perceived capacity to utilise strategies to reach individual goals. *Pathways thought* is the ability to actually generate these strategies or produce alternative strategies when initial routes are blocked (Snyder, 2002). Hope is therefore ‘*the sum of the mental willpower and waypower that you have for your goals*’ (Snyder, Irving and Anderson, 1991, p 254). For example, an adolescent may have a goal of becoming more popular at school, but may not actively think of viable routes to reaching that goal (poor *pathways thinking*), nor does he have the belief in his abilities to achieve it (poor *agentic thinking*). This individual would be considered to have low hope.

Snyder (1994) has paid attention to how hope develops in children and it is possible to draw some parallels between this and the development of criminality. Snyder posits that unless three basic elements of the parent-child relationship are fulfilled (*attachment, modelling and discipline*) hope will not flourish. Hope is said to be learned in a trusting, supportive atmosphere where adults attend to children who are attempting to achieve their goals (Rodriguez-Hanley and Snyder, 2000). Speaking retrospectively, high-hope adults are said to recall strong *attachments* with their parents (Snyder, 1994; Hodgkins, 2001). Parents and caregivers have a substantial role in *modelling* hopeful thinking to their children. If children witness parents with *agentic* and *pathways thought*, they are more likely to understand and internalise these qualities themselves (Snyder, 2000). Finally, consistent *discipline* in the family home is said to produce an order and predictability in the child, whereas inconsistent discipline can cause confusion regarding boundaries and how behaviours might lead to certain goals (Snyder, 2000). All three of these elements also feature in literature pertaining

to childhood criminality (McCord, 1997). We would expect therefore that those with higher exposure to criminogenic risks would have lower levels of hope, since factors in their lives could have hindered development of hope (Burnett and Maruna, 2004). This is the first of three hypotheses developed for this study.

Continuing our focus on the relationship between hope and offending, there have been some empirical studies in recent years of hope in offending adults, using Snyder's model. This research suggests promising outcomes for those with increased hope (Irving, Seinder, Burling, Pagliarini and Robbins-Sisco, 1998; Marshall, Champagne, Brown and Miller, 1997). In a study of adult prisoners in Canada, Martin and Stermac (2010) investigated whether hope can be a protective factor against recidivism. They found that those with lower hope have increased recidivism, particularly if they also have lower *agentic* thinking. This is in keeping with research literature from a criminological perspective, such as Maruna's finding that a substantial part of the desistance process is acquiring a sense of agency (Maruna, 2001). Research across both psychological and criminological disciplines has shown that when faced with so many of the risk factors associated with criminality, hope can protect offenders as it helps them to accept that they have the potential for change and can manage the difficulties they may encounter in pursuing their goals (Martin and Stermac, 2010; LeBel *et al*, 2008). Similarly, we hypothesise that those who have lower hope (particularly *agentic* thinking) in early adolescence will exhibit more delinquent behaviour.

It is worth reiterating here where the idea for this study originated. In Study 2, it was highlighted that while Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) skills are taught to offenders routinely in UK prisons, it is still possible to have ICPS skill deficits but no delinquency. While this is not a remarkable finding in itself, it does suggest there may be

protective factors preventing some participants from suffering negative effects of ICPS skill deficits. And if these mediating factors are identified, they may enhance ICPS skill training interventions. The final hypothesis for this study therefore is that hope has a mediating role between ICPS skills and delinquency.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 126 male school children from South East England, aged between 11 and 13 ($M = 11.73$, $SD = 0.73$). Participants were recruited from five sources within a 16-mile radius in an effort to gain a representative sample across a diverse section of society, including children who were offending, children at risk of offending and children not offending. Most participants attended school and did not have extensive criminal involvement, as would be expected in a group of children this age. The majority of participants attended the same inner city comprehensive school, which caters for young people with mixed academic ability, mixed behavioural history and relatively low socioeconomic status ($n = 71$; 57%). However, participants were also recruited from a boys' grammar school (for those with high academic ability; $n = 24$; 19%), an a suburban academy school (for those living in different social contexts; $n = 12$; 10%), a pupil referral unit (for those excluded from school; $n = 14$; 11%) and a Youth Inclusion Project (for young people in trouble with the law; $n = 4$; 3%). All schools were secondary level, senior schools.

Information was collected regarding participants' ethnicity and criminogenic risk (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, most participants described themselves as 'white' (42%), with 31% describing themselves as 'black', 12% 'mixed', 8% 'Asian', and 7% feeling none of these categories were right for them.

Information on six criminogenic risk factors was gathered for each participant, listed here with percentages of participants who had experienced this risk factor:

- *school discipline problems, determined by having been on a behavioural 'report' or due to temporary/permanent exclusion from school (21%)*
- *parental unemployment/low socioeconomic status (48%)*
- *familial criminality (restricted to parents, step-parents and siblings; 21%)*
- *living in a high crime area according to police data (10%)*
- *living with 6 or more others, i.e. a large family (9%)*
- *having ADHD (8.5%).*

Socioeconomic status was assessed through gathering information about the work status of each participant's parents or carers. The crime rate in the participants' local area was gleaned from obtaining a postal code from the participant and where possible using www.police.uk to identify how the rate of crime in that area compares with other locations across the UK.

Overall, this was a low-risk sample and the mean number of criminogenic risks was 1.47 (SD = 1.43). However, the full range of 0-6 risks had been experienced by participants in this sample and where information was provided on all six risk factors, participants were categorised into two groups (lower or higher exposure to criminogenic risks). Given that the more risks a child is exposed to, the higher their likelihood of offending in future, it was determined that anyone who was exposed to multiple (i.e. two or more) of these risk factors could be considered to be in the higher risk group (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott and Catalano, 2000). Additionally, being exposed to two or more risks would mean that the participant has a higher than average exposure within this particular sample and

therefore should be considered as being in the higher risk category. While this is a slightly crude measure, it does clearly differentiate those who have no risk factors at all, or only one (n=64, 53%), with those who have multiple (n=57, 47%).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

All the data were collected over one session with the researchers, predominantly within school settings. Where the participant was not attending any form of education, the data collection was undertaken at the premises of the organisations involved in the care of these particular young people. Data was collected in small-group settings, apart from with the participants who were deemed too disruptive and distractible to work in groups (n = 12). In these cases, the measures were administered individually. The researcher explained the measures to each group (or individual) and they were then asked to complete the task on their own. There were times when participants asked for assistance, but help given was limited to general comprehension and spelling. All measures used can be found in Appendix 1.

Children's Hope Scale

A six-item dispositional self-report index called the Children's Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder, Hoza, Pelham, Rapoff, Ware, Danovsky, Highberger, Rubinstein and Stahl, 1997) was used with all participants. The CHS was designed for children aged 8-16. Three of the items relate to the *agency* component of hope and the other three items relate to the *pathways* component. Individually, these create the *agency* and *pathways* subscale scores and collectively they create the total hope score. Each question can yield a score of 6, with 1 being the least hopeful answer possible and 6 being the most hopeful. Therefore, across the full scale, a maximum score of 36 is possible.

According to Snyder *et al* (1997), scores on the CHS tend to be skewed towards the higher end of the range, with a score of 25 (out of a possible 36) marking the average. Within the present sample, the mean hope score for the sample was 22.92 (SD = 5.375), significantly lower than Snyder *et al's* (1997) standardised norms of 25, ($t_{(121)} = -4.279$, $p=0.000$, $d=0.778$). According to standardised norms, the most hopeful 15% should have a score of 29 or higher while the least hopeful 15% should have a score of 21 or lower. In fact, while 17% of participants' hope scores were 29 or higher, as many as 39% has scored 21 or lower. Snyder *et al's* (1997) norms were established in the US, however, whereas the current study was conducted in the UK so a cultural anomaly may exist.

Given that a norm did not exist for UK based samples, it was not possible to determine whether individuals had high or low hope based on any secure evidence. Therefore, in order to compare groups, a median split was conducted to separate those who had completed the CHS into two groups. The low hope group consisted of 62 participants, while the high hope group consisted of 60. While this means that the results cannot be generalised easily to broader populations, it does allow for some useful comparisons to take place. A one-way ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between the hope scores across the three different ages of participants; 11, 12 and 13, $F_{(2,115)} = 1.613$, $p = 0.204$.

Self-Reported Delinquency Scale

Participants were asked to fill in a scale asking how often they had engaged in a number of anti-social acts in the previous six months. The scale was derived from one used in a government study exploring problem behaviours in UK children as young as eight (Bowen, Heron and Steer, 2008). Participants in the current study were questioned on twelve anti-socials acts which included being disruptive in class, theft, substance misuse, fire-setting,

cruelty to animals, damaging property and fighting. They were asked to state how frequently they had engaged in each of the acts, with possible answers ranging from Never, Sometimes, Often and Everyday. Participants were scored on their responses for each act (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and their *total delinquency score* was calculated by summing the twelve scores they had obtained across the different acts. Three participants did not complete this section, but the remaining 123 were placed into delinquency categories dependent on this score. The low delinquency group consisted of those who had committed no delinquent acts and those who had *sometimes* been disruptive in class, i.e. a score of 0 or 1 (n = 48 [39%]). The other groups were roughly equal in number, with those scoring between 2, 3 or 4 in the medium delinquency group (n = 39 [32%]), and those scoring over 5 being classified as high delinquency (n = 36 [29%]).

Due to the anonymity of participants' responses, it was not feasible to gain teacher ratings on participant's behaviour. However, it was still deemed important to gauge how often their behaviour was seen as inappropriate by adult authority figures. Therefore, participants were also asked to rate how frequently they were "in trouble" with their parents/carers, the school and/or police. Participants' *total trouble score* was calculated by quantifying their responses for each type of trouble (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and totalling the score. There was a significant correlation between participants' *total trouble score* and *total delinquency score*, $r(121) = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$, although this is not as high as anticipated. Therefore, ICPS skill was correlated with both measures in case of any discrepancy. But for clarity, only the *total delinquency scores* are included here.

Means-End Problem Solving procedure (MEPS; Platt and Spivack, 1975)

The MEPS procedure presents participants with both the beginning of a story about an interpersonal problem and an optimal end. The participant's task is to devise a step-by-step strategy for achieving this end. The MEPS has been shown to have internal consistency (range: 0.80–0.84; Marx, Williams and Claridge, 1992) and construct validity where a significant difference in performance between behavioural groups has been found (Marx *et al*, 1992). For this study, participants were presented with three problem scenarios selected from six, chosen due to their relevance to the age group being investigated: resolving a confrontational situation, making friends in a new neighbourhood; and securing the chance to be a leader of a club. Minor amendments were made to the scenarios to ensure they were age appropriate and scenarios which related to employment or intimate relationships were discounted. Participants were given the following instructions, very slightly adjusted from the Marx *et al* (1992) procedures:

“In this procedure we are interested in how you solve problems. You will be given three stories to complete. For each story you will be given the beginning of the story and how the story ends. We'd like you to provide the ideal strategy that will link the beginning and end of the story. We would like you to describe this strategy in very specific terms so that it would be possible for anyone to follow your plan of action.”

The researcher read each problem aloud and participants were also provided with the scenario in written form. The MEPS was scored as originally intended, for the numbers of "relevant means" (or steps; Platt and Spivack, 1975), for the number of obstacles identified and for the length of time the participant felt it would take to solve the problem in the way they describe.

On a 7 point Likert scale, participants were asked how effective they considered their answers to be (1 = not at all effective, 7 = very effective). The researcher also rated the effectiveness of the means, with merit being given if the means: would sensibly lead to the given end; were pro-social in nature; were well considered and structured; and if some context was provided to the process.

Total scores were calculated by summing across the three problems, although a MEPS mean score was also employed as it was considered a more representative marker of assessment given that several participants failed to complete all three MEPS scenarios due to fatigue or boredom ($n = 7$). In those cases, a total score would not reflect their ability appropriately. A second independent rater coded 25% of responses. Correlation coefficients were $r = 0.91$ for relevant means and $r = 0.90$ for effectiveness.

The MEPS test is known as an outcome rather than a process measure, able to provide a global indicator of social problem-solving ability. By using the following ‘process’ tests, it was possible to assess both effectively.

Children’s Interpersonal Problem Solving test (ChIPS; Shure and Spivack, 1985) and Multiple Consequences test (M-CONS; Shure and Spivack, 1985).

The ChIPS test assesses participant’s ability to generate alternatives to a given problem situation, whereas the M-CONS is an assessment of ability to conceptualise consequences (both positive and negative) to a given action. Tests, instructions for implementation and scoring methods for both tests were gained from the original author, Myrna Shure on commencing this research. Since the tests were initially devised in the United States in the

1970s, changes were deemed necessary for characters' names and games to ensure they were appropriate for a UK based audience in 2011. No further changes were made.

The researcher read each problem aloud (three for each test) and participants were also provided with the scenario in written form. Consistent with the manual, the number of distinct alternative solutions was added to generate a total ChIPS score, and the number of consequences given were also added for a total M-CONS score. In both cases, mean scores were calculated to establish ability, due to a total score being inappropriate for those not completing all tests ($n = 9$).

Overall Problem Solving Ability

A standardised score using the Z function on SPSS was generated to assess overall problem solving ability. This was to allow for the different ICPS measures to be combined and considered for more general analysis of problem solving ability and delinquency.

RESULTS

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS ON DELINQUENCY AND RISK

Looking at the group as a whole, anti-social behaviour was generally infrequent, which was to be expected given the age of the participants. Most anti-social behaviour was rare, with only three behaviours being ticked as occurring daily by anyone; disruptive behaviour (11%), skipping school (3%) and smoking cigarettes (3%). As would be expected, age and delinquency were also found to be significantly, positively correlated; $r(119) = 0.242$, $p = 0.004$, with younger participants engaging in less anti-social behaviour than the older participants.

In line with well-established findings (Farrington, 1995; 2000), the number of criminogenic risks experienced by participants and their level of delinquency were found to be highly positively correlated; $r(123) = 0.504, p < 0.01$.

**HYPOTHESIS 1 - THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO MORE
CRIMINOGENIC RISKS WILL HAVE THE LOWEST LEVELS OF HOPE.**

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to examine our hypothesis that more criminogenic risk would result in lower hope scores. This was supported, with a significant correlation, $r(121) = 0.394, p < 0.001$.

We explored each criminogenic risk factor independently to examine whether there were any significant differences in the hope scores of those participants who were exposed to them. The presence (or not) of each of the six risk factors in the lives of each individual participant was recorded. A series of independent t-tests was then carried out.

The t-tests showed that there was no significant difference in the hope scores of those who had a large family size despite it being a criminogenic risk ($t(118) = 1.968, p = 0.051, ns, d = 0.36$), nor was there any difference in the scores of those living in a high crime area ($t(114) = -0.414, p = 0.680, ns, d = -0.07$). It was found however, that those who have ADHD had significantly lower hope scores ($t(112) = 2.130, p = 0.035, d = 0.4$). Further, hope scores were shown to be increased for those no familial criminality ($t(117) = 3.494, p = 0.001, d = 0.65$), those without school discipline problems ($t(119) = 5.373, p = 0.001, d = 0.98$) and for those with higher socio-economic status ($t(114) = 3.279, p = 0.001, d = 0.61$).

HYPOTHESIS 2 – THOSE WITH LOWER HOPE WILL HAVE HIGHER DELINQUENCY, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE AGENCY SUBSCALE

Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated to examine our hypothesis that lower hope scores would be linked with delinquency, $r(122) = -0.430, p < 0.001$. Results supported the hypothesis, with the total hope score, as well as the individual *pathways* and *agency* subscale scores being negatively and significantly correlated with delinquency scores. This indicated a medium effect and accounts for 18.4% of the covariance in this analysis. The *agency* subscale score was more related to delinquency than the *pathways* subscale score, corresponding with previous findings with adult offenders (Martin and Stermac, 2010).

FURTHER EXPLORATION OF HYPOTHESES 1 and 2 - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOPE, RISK AND DELINQUENCY

Figure 3 indicates there is a relationship between hope, criminogenic risk and delinquency. It is evident that hope is making a difference for those with higher exposure to criminogenic risk.

A Mann Whitney U test revealed that for those with low exposure to criminogenic risks, there is no significant difference in delinquency scores between high and low hoppers, $U = 418, z = -1.134, p = .257, r = 0.14$. In contrast, the same test showed that having high as opposed to low hope scores made a difference to the delinquency scores of those with higher exposure to criminogenic risk, $U = 195, z = -2.380, p = .017, r = 0.32$, with those in the 'high risk-high hope' group reporting less delinquency than those in the 'high risk-low hope' group.

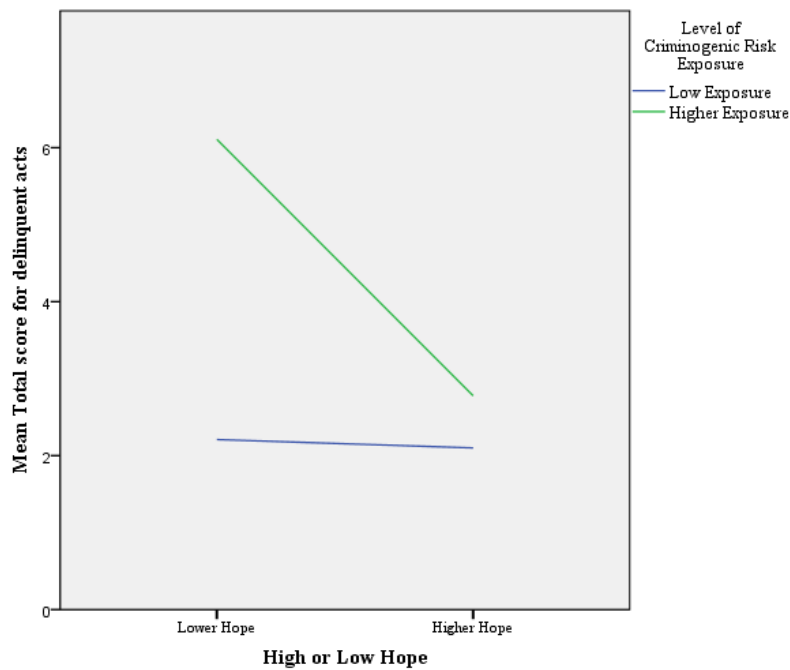


Figure 3 - Delinquency scores according to levels of criminogenic risk and hope

The high risk participants on average always have a higher level of delinquency than the low risk groups. It is pertinent that there are fewer participants who had both high exposure to risks and a high hope score ($n = 18$) in comparison to those who had high exposure to risks but a low hope score ($n = 40$).

HYPOTHESIS 3 – HOPE HAS A MEDIATING ROLE BETWEEN ICPS SKILLS AND DELINQUENCY

To test the third hypothesis, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to consider whether hope and ICPS skills impact delinquency. It was expected, and found again, that main effects existed between hope and delinquency with the low hope group having higher delinquency than the high hope group ($F_{(1, 114)} = 10.978, p = 0.001$). Main effects also existed between ICPS skill and delinquency ($F_{(2, 114)} = 3.224, p = 0.043$), with Tukey HSD tests highlighting that the delinquency scores of those with high problem solving ability were significantly

different to both those in the medium and low ability groups ($p = 0.036$ and $p = 0.015$ respectively). The delinquency scores of those in the medium and low ability groups did not significantly differ from each other ($p = 0.921$).

The interaction graph following the two-way ANOVA (see figure 4) looked interesting, with the effect of hope on delinquency appearing to be most pronounced for those with weaker ICPS skills. However, this interaction was not significant, ($F(2, 114) = 2.399, p = 0.095$).

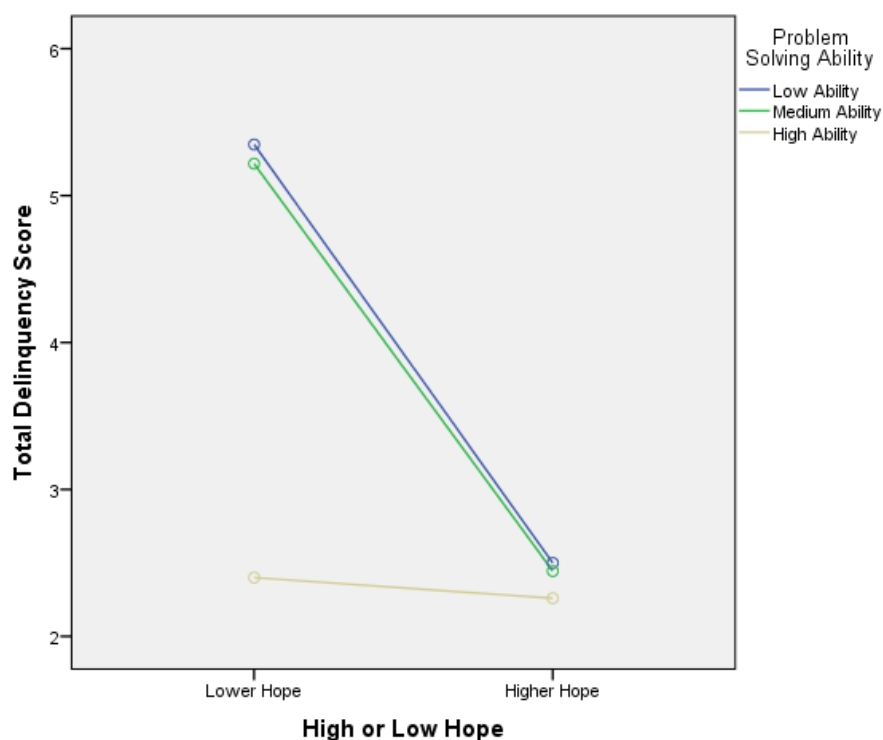


Figure 4 - Effect of hope on the delinquency score of participants with varying problem solving abilities

A discriminant analysis was conducted to predict whether a participant had high or low delinquency or not, based on the predictor variables; Hope Score, Number of Criminogenic Risks and Mean Problem Solving Scores. Log determinants were quite similar and Box's M indicated that the assumption of equality of covariance matrices was not violated. Tables 4 and 5 give the eigenvalues and results of the Wilks' Lambda test.

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	0.504	100	100	0.579

Table 4 - Eigenvalues in discriminant analysis

Test of Function	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-Squared	df	Sig.
1	0.665	47.531	3	0.000

Table 5 - Wilks' Lambda Test

The canonical correlation (the multiple correlation between the predictors and the discriminant function) was 0.579, meaning the discriminant function accounts for 33.5% of between group variability. Closer analysis of the structure matrix revealed only two significant predictors, predominantly exposure to criminogenic risk (0.949), and also total hope score (-0.565). This method of analysis identified ICPS skills as a poorer predictor of delinquency in comparison (-0.330). The cross validated classification showed that overall 74.2% were correctly classified into low or high delinquent groups based on Hope Score, Number of Criminogenic Risks and Mean Problem Solving Scores (see table 6).

		Delinquency categories for Predicted Group Membership discriminant analysis			
		Low Delinquent			Total
		Low Delinquent	High Delinquent		
Original Count	Low Delinquent	47	12	59	
	High Delinquent	19	42	61	
%	Low Delinquent	79.7	20.3	100.0	
	High Delinquent	31.1	68.9	100.0	

a. 74.2% of original grouped cases correctly classified.

Table 6 - Classification results for discriminant analysis based on measures of criminogenic risk, hope and ICPS skill

DISCUSSION

Although Snyder *et al* (1997) claim that childhood and hope ‘go together’, the hope scores within this sample were relatively low and significantly lower than Snyder *et al*’s (1997) standardised norms. Moreover, 39% of the present sample had scores which are comparable to just 15% of the US sample (Snyder *et al*, 1997). There was a naïve assumption at the onset of this study that participants drawn from the capital city of a developed country would at least match the means derived from the results of over 200 studies in the US (Snyder, 1994). Aside from what this means in terms of protection from delinquency and criminality, this is a worrying finding which warrants further exploration.

There is potential for the economic recession in the UK to have made an impact on the young people at the time of data collection. However, the lower than expected hope scores mirror concerns raised in a UNICEF report conducted prior to the impact of the financial crisis in 2007. This report attempted to measure and compare child well-being under six different headings or dimensions: *material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks* and *young people’s own subjective sense of well-being*. Disappointingly, the UK was ranked at the bottom of 21 developed countries across all six dimensions, scoring particularly poorly on relationships, behaviour and children’s sense of well-being. Interestingly, relationships and behaviour map onto the requirements for the development of hope, in the form of attachment, discipline and modelling.

The support for our first hypothesis was not surprising. Early adolescents who are exposed to criminogenic risks had lower hope scores. When exploring the impact of each individual risk factor on hope through t-tests, it was found that the risks with the highest effect sizes were low socio-economic status, familial criminality and having past school discipline problems.

The finding that low socioeconomic status correlates with hope is in contrast to Snyder *et al*'s (1997) finding that it had no impact. They found that it was not a family's financial situation that itself led to a child not developing hope, but the dynamics within that home. It is unknown how Snyder *et al* (1997) measured socioeconomic status, but we explored parental employment as the basis for our measure. On reflection, it could be argued that our measure of low socioeconomic status could be seen to relate as much to the third part of the developmental trilogy, modelling, as actual financial status. If children do not witness their parents holding agentic beliefs regarding pro-social employment ambitions and/or modelling pro-social pathways to reaching their goals, then this will affect the development of hope in these young people. This last point is reinforced further by the finding that familial criminality was negatively correlated with hope scores for our participants. In no way is this meant to suggest that all families living within financial constraints are not hopeful, motivated and purposeful in their approaches to tasks. Indeed, in these cases we might expect that children will also take on these attributes and therefore develop hopeful thinking. It was certainly not the case that all participants with low socioeconomic status had low hope. Independently we examined how living in a high crime area (often associated with low socioeconomic status) might affect children's hope. Surprisingly, this did not appear to have any impact. This implies that the community is less important in the development of hope than the family is, which is understandable given the young age of our participants.

Our second hypothesis that participants' hope scores were correlated with their delinquency scores was also supported. This concurs with the findings of Martin and Stermac (2010) who explored hope as a protective factor in adult offenders. Lending further support to this

proposal is our finding that the relationship between hope and delinquency is most pronounced for the participants with the highest exposure to criminogenic risk.

When exploring the third hypothesis, that hope would be a mediating factor between poor ICPS skill and delinquency, we were surprised to find our findings were non-significant. The graph certainly indicated that something interesting was going on, where those with the weakest skill seemed to have less delinquency if they also had higher hope. While it would be imprudent to attempt to draw firm conclusions from non-significant data, it is an interesting area to consider for future research using larger and more delinquent samples.

It could be surmised that hope therefore affects the delinquency rate (or is affected by the delinquency rate) of those with the most exposure to criminogenic risks and the greatest need in terms of ICPS skill deficit. This brings attention back to an ongoing debate concerning the way offenders are currently rehabilitated in the UK and across the English-speaking world. In adult populations, the RNR model of offender rehabilitation (Andrews and Bonta, 1990) has become one of the most influential models for the assessment and treatment of offenders (Blanchette and Brown, 2006). Practitioners using the model will focus on those who present the biggest risk to the public and assesses them to identify which criminogenic needs should be addressed to reduce this public risk. In the present study, it has been found that those with high risk and high need *could* benefit from an intervention designed to build hope. However, hope is a non-criminogenic need and as such, is likely to be circumvented by therapists abiding by RNR principles (Ashford, Sales and Reid, 2001). The finding in the present study that a non-criminogenic need, i.e. lack of hope, appeared to reduce delinquency supports the arguments of Ward *et al* (2007) that there is a need for a wider scope within rehabilitation.

This is evidenced by the results of the discriminant analysis which highlighted lack of hope as a better predictor variable than ICPS skill deficit.

Offender rehabilitation for adults is altering in accordance with this understanding and Ward's (2002) GLM is an excellent example of this in practice. Like hope theory, the GLM incorporates the specific goals of a good life, the opportunities to get there, and the capability to achieve these goals (Moulden and Marshall, 2005). A strengths-based approach has also been shown to work well with pre-adolescent and early adolescent young people with high criminogenic risk (Nee, Ellis, Morris and Wilson, 2012).

From the results, it could be proposed that facilitating hope in young people at risk of criminality is a worthwhile step in the fight to reduce criminality. Having both the willpower and waypower to negotiate difficulties in life alongside having desirable goals to achieve them seems to be a highly advantageous position to be in. This is especially the case given the number of challenges facing young people who are 'at risk' of criminality. Enhancing hope will also help to buffer young people against negative outcomes such as depression and suicidality (Grewal and Porter, 2007), which are both prevalent in the criminal justice system and are more likely in young people who have suffered adversity in life. Further benefits of bolstering hope in young people relate to their physical health, problem solving and well-being (Magaletta and Oliver, 1999; Snyder, Cheavens, and Michael, 1999; Sumerlin, 1997).

Working with 'at-risk' young people before they engage in criminality is an ideal time to instil a sense of hope for the future. Without doing so, there is little motivation for them to avoid offending. Ward (2002) has found adult offenders who persisted in their criminal enterprise to perceive "*little possibility for change for the better and an impoverished sense of personal agency*" (pg 522).

We are aware that there are many other factors which may relate to the development of criminality than those explored within this study. However, taking just a few risk indicators for children and considering them within the hope framework demonstrates the potential power of this concept in the fight against criminality.

NEXT STEPS IN MY PHD

Results in Study 3 suggest that hope mediates between exposure to criminogenic risk and delinquency, which is important to consider in terms of intervention strategy. Especially since the discriminant analysis showed hope to be a more useful predictor variable for delinquency than ICPS skill. Yet in comparison to ICPS skill, hope has not been considered as a target within delinquency intervention strategies. It does however correspond with recent efforts to build on positives rather than negatives in corrective treatment.

Turning once again to Study 1 and the fundamental needs raised by Self Determination Theory, it might be considered that due to its components of pathways thought and agency, hope is a reflection of *Competence* and *Agency* only. However, the origins of hope were actually social in nature and therefore pertinent to the *Relatedness* element of the Self-Determination Theory. Indeed, Snyder (2002) remarks that hope can only thrive where there is *attachment, modelling* and *discipline*, in other words, *Relatedness*. This demonstrates once more the usefulness of considering all three fundamental needs in intervention.

Despite hope appearing to be a useful predictor variable and indeed intervention target for those living in risky or adverse conditions, questions remain. Having looked at the willpower and waypower of our sample through looking at agency and pathways thought, it was next important to look at young people's 'whatpower'; what are the goals they are developing and applying these skills to? Study 4 therefore explores the future aspirations and conceptualisations of self for the sample.

CHAPTER 5

STUDY 4

**“I WANNA BE RICH, I DON’T KNOW HOW, BUT I’LL GET
THERE SOMEHOW”- FUTURE POSSIBLE SELVES AND
DELINQUENCY IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE**

**STUDY 4 - "I WANNA BE RICH, I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT I'LL GET THERE
SOMEHOW". FUTURE POSSIBLE SELVES AND DELINQUENCY IN EARLY
ADOLESCENCE**

ABSTRACT

A positive orientation to the future has been found to motivate adolescents towards pro-social behaviour. Interventions in North America have been effective in helping young people in deprived communities develop positive possible selves along with the strategies they need to achieve them. However, similar research is limited in the UK. The present study explored the short-term hoped-for and feared selves of 11-13 year old boys (n=126) in London, as well as their longer-term aims for adulthood. The results show that there were few differences between the quantity and content of short-term possible selves articulated by high and low delinquency groups. However, the more delinquent participants articulated fewer and less realistic strategies for reaching their goals, and were more likely to give longer-term aspirations associated with celebrity and wealth. There are strong indications that these differences are also linked with participants' exposure to criminogenic risk. These findings have implications for the content and timing of early interventions to help prevent delinquency with a UK population.

INTRODUCTION

During adolescence, individuals are tasked with developing a sense of self that reflects their personal interests, knowledge and experiences (Erikson, 1968; Call, Reidel, Hein, McLoyd, Peterson, and Kipke, 2002). This self-identity remains largely stable throughout life, providing meaning to action and guiding behaviour. However, if a self-identity is not successfully achieved, it can leave a person confused and susceptible to negative outside influences, and this can result in delinquency.

The purpose of the present study was to understand more about this period of self-identity exploration and its relationship with delinquency, which is especially interesting given the fact that both these developmental trajectories appear to start at a similar time. Indeed, the well-established age-crime curve has repeatedly shown how delinquency accelerates rapidly in early adolescence before slowing in adulthood (Gottfredson and Hirshi, 1990). This appears to correspond well with the rapid exploration of possible identities in early adolescence and later reduction (Erikson, 1968). It was hoped that further understanding of any existing relationship between these two trajectories might help to expand the ‘what works’ literature and assist in efforts to prevent criminality in young people.

Interventions exist in the US which attempt to assist adolescents in the development of a strong sense of identity, to consider appropriate role models, devise realistic strategies to reaching personalised goals and prepare for obstacles (Oyserman, Terry and Bybee, 2002; Clark, Miller, Nagy, Avery, Roth, Liddon, and Mukherjee, 2005). Evaluations have shown such programmes to reduce negative outcomes such as sexually risky behaviour or academic failure. To our knowledge, no similar interventions exist in the UK, especially not in relation to offending. When considering preceding studies, especially Studies 1 and 2, this does seem to be an attractive and potentially effective method of intervention to prevent offending behaviour. However, in order to better understand whether this is plausible, it is crucial to first explore whether the aforementioned findings ring true with an early adolescent sample with a full spectrum of behavioural needs in the UK. This will gauge a baseline for future research and practice.

Disappointingly, research in this domain is limited in the UK when compared to research in North America and this study is a step to rectifying this. It is important to note however, that

most studies in the US have investigated adolescents aged roughly 13-14 (Newberry and Duncan, 2001; Oyserman and Markus, 1990), whereas the present study focuses on a slightly younger age group. In the US, children move from Junior High School to High School at the age of 13, which may explain the focus on this age group for American researchers. It is at transition points like this that children begin to consider their adult lives. We therefore felt that the transition to secondary school at the age of 11 in the UK marked a similarly important age to research.

Indeed, increased abstract reasoning ability in early adolescence allows young people to start considering 'possible selves' for the future (Oyserman, 2001). The future aspect of the self-concept has been extensively researched in the past two decades under various designations including; *Possible Selves* (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Oyserman and Markus, 1990), *Future Orientation* (Nurmi 1987) and *Ought or Expected Selves* (Higgins, 1987). Whatever name is chosen, research in this domain ultimately concerns the cognitive structures relating to individuals' potential for the future. Such possible selves have been described as the ideal selves that we would very much like to become (hoped-for selves) or the selves we expect to become (expected selves).

In terms of the self-regulatory role of self-identity, possible selves have been found to influence various behavioural outcomes including educational attainment (Destin and Oyserman, 2009), employment (Lee and Oyserman, 2009) and risky sexual behaviours (Clark *et al*, 2005). In the present study we are most interested in the influence of possible selves on delinquency (Oyserman and Markus, 1990).

POSSIBLE SELVES AND DELINQUENCY

The relationship between possible selves and delinquency has been well researched, primarily in the United States, and findings generally concur that the possible selves can distinguish between delinquent and non-delinquent young people (Oyserman and Markus, 1990; Bolland, 2003; Newberry and Duncan, 2001; Robbins and Bryan, 2004). Delinquent groups have been shown to report less hoped-for selves than non-delinquent groups (Newberry and Duncan, 2001). Delinquent groups also appear to differ more in the content of their expected selves than their hoped-for selves, with hoped-for selves generally being more positive and homogenous (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). The expected selves reported by delinquent participants were less academic and involved more negative options such as becoming a junkie or depressed (Oyserman and Markus, 1990).

As well as hoped-for and expected selves, possible selves also include the selves we are afraid of becoming: feared selves (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). These feared selves are formed from past experiences of failure, humiliation and guilt (Ogilvie, 1987) and thus have an intense emotional potency. Interestingly, delinquent participants have typically elicited more feared selves than their less delinquent peers (Newberry and Duncan, 2001). Research with established adult offenders has shown that having an aversion to a feared self can be a more powerful catalyst for change than holding a hoped-for self, in part because a feared self only really emerges when the individual begins to recognise the costs and disadvantages of a life of crime (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

With a UK based sample in 2010, we would expect similarities with these early, seminal findings. The first hypothesis of our study therefore is that the more delinquent the participants, the less hoped-for selves and more feared selves they will have. The second

hypothesis is that there will be a difference in the qualitative content of both hoped-for selves and feared selves according to levels of delinquency, with less delinquent groups articulating more academic possible selves.

Nonetheless, it has been found on both sides of the Atlantic, that most children and early adolescents articulate very positive hoped-for selves (Oyserman, Johnson and James, 2010; Atherton, Cymbir, Roberts, Page and Remedios, 2009). However, despite being positive about their possible selves, many do not go on to reach these aspirations. It has been proposed that this is because some young people are not able to conceptualise strategies to reach goals and therefore they make decisions detracting them from their adolescent inspired goals (Oyserman *et al*, 2006). In a rare UK based study, Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) found that students with school conduct problems failed to consider the difficulties they may face in achieving their hoped-for selves, and it is therefore assumed they did not plan for these accordingly. A further reason why delinquent youth may not contemplate strategies is that they have not witnessed positive role models achieving their goals. Positive role models are not always available, especially in some deprived communities. Oyserman *et al* (2006) suggested that assisting young people to devise strategies in the form of ‘roadmaps’ improves goal attainment in adolescents, especially those with fewer positive role models in their lives. We therefore hypothesise that the more delinquent participants in our sample will have less developed strategies than the less delinquent participants.

According to ‘possible selves theory’, strategies help young people to reach their hoped-for selves and avoid their feared selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986). But when a feared self does not exist to ‘balance’ the hoped-for self (i.e. in the same domain), it is harder for adolescents to appreciate the longer term consequences of certain behaviours and the need for strategies

to help avoid it (Oyserman and Saltz, 1993; Routledge and Arndt, 2005). We predict that the same would be true for our sample, that a balance between hoped for selves and feared selves will occur more often in non-delinquent group.

Finally, little evidence exists for the role of longer term possible selves in protecting against delinquency. Oyserman and James (2011) found that adult possible selves are unlikely to initiate action due to them being less vivid. However, if adolescence is a time when individuals plan for adulthood (Erikson, 1968), then this seems another area of crucial exploration. Indeed, van Gelder, Hershfield and Nordgren (2012) found that by manipulating the strength and vividness of young people's future selves (by asking participants to write letters to themselves in the future and by using digital imagery to 'age' their photographs), participants' delinquent decisions were reduced. Supporting this further are the findings of Brezina, Tekin and Topalli (2009) who posited that when young people feel they have no long-term future, they have little to lose by engaging in crime or violence.

Exploring longer-term possible selves aligns with the overarching research aims of this PhD, to identify potential intervention targets for at-risk youth and warrants some investigation. We expect that the more delinquent participants will have less positive future aspirations due to an internalisation of what their current behaviour may prohibit in the future.

POSSIBLE SELVES AND CRIMINOGENIC RISK

It has been found that by late adolescence, individuals are starting to allow others' assumptions about their future paths to affect their possible selves (Hemsley-Brown, 1999). Atherton *et al* (2007) claim that this leads young people to outcomes which reflect the nature of their class, gender and ethnic background, rather than reflect their own youthful

aspirations. The impact of individuals' social worlds and the collective impact of criminogenic risk (Farrington and Welsh, 2007) on possible selves have not been empirically researched as yet and therefore remains an area for investigation. However, it is expected that exposure to criminogenic risks should affect the number and content of possible selves, both long-term and short-term, as well as the number of strategies articulated.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 126 male school children from South East England, aged between 11 and 13 ($M = 11.73$, $SD = 0.73$). Participants were recruited from five sources within a 16-mile radius in an effort to gain a representative sample across a diverse section of society, including children who were offending, children at risk of offending and children not offending. Most participants attended school and did not have extensive criminal involvement, as would be expected in a group of children this age. The majority of participants attended the same inner city comprehensive school, which caters for young people with mixed academic ability, mixed behavioural history and relatively low socioeconomic status ($n = 71$; 57%). However, participants were also recruited from a boys' grammar school (for those with high academic ability; $n = 24$; 19%), an a suburban academy school (for those living in different social contexts; $n = 12$; 10%), a pupil referral unit (for those excluded from school; $n = 14$; 11%) and a Youth Inclusion Project (for young people in trouble with the law; $n = 4$; 3%). All schools were secondary level, senior schools.

Information was collected regarding participants ethnicity and criminogenic risk (Farrington and Welsh, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, most participants described themselves as 'white'

(42%), with 31% describing themselves as 'black', 12% 'mixed', 8% 'Asian', and 7% feeling none of these categories were right for them.

Information on six criminogenic risk factors was gathered for each participant, listed here with percentages of participants who had experienced this risk factor:

- *school discipline problems, determined by having been on a behavioural 'report' or due to temporary/permanent exclusion from school (21%)*
- *parental unemployment/low socioeconomic status (48%)*
- *familial criminality (restricted to parents, step-parents and siblings; 21%)*
- *living in a high crime area according to police data (10%)*
- *living with 6 or more others, i.e. a large family (9%)*
- *having ADHD (8.5%).*

Socioeconomic status was assessed through gathering information about the work status of each participant's parents or carers. The crime rate in the participants' local area was gleaned from obtaining a postal code from the participant and where possible using www.police.uk to identify how the rate of crime in that area compares with other locations across the UK.

Overall, this was a low-risk sample and the mean number of criminogenic risks was 1.47 (SD = 1.43). However, the full range of 0-6 risks had been experienced by participants in this sample and where information was provided on all six risk factors, participants were categorised into two groups (lower or higher exposure to criminogenic risks). Given that the more risks a child is exposed to, the higher their likelihood of offending in future, it was determined that anyone who was exposed to multiple (i.e. two or more) of these risk factors could be considered to be in the higher risk group (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins,

Abbott and Catalano, 2000). Additionally, being exposed to two or more risks would mean that the participant has a higher than average exposure within this particular sample and therefore should be considered as being in the higher risk category. While this is a slightly crude measure, it does clearly differentiate those who have no risk factors at all, or only one (n=64, 53%), with those who have multiple (n=57, 47%).

MATERIALS AND PROCEDURE

All data were collected over one session with the researchers, predominantly within school settings. Where the participant was not attending any form of education, the data collection was undertaken at the premises of the organisations involved in the care of these particular young people. Data was collected in small-group settings, apart from with the participants who were deemed too disruptive and distractible to work in groups (n = 12). In these cases, the measures were administered individually. The researcher explained the measures to each group (or individual) and they were then asked to complete the task on their own. There were times when participants asked for assistance, but help given was limited to general comprehension and spelling. All measures used can be found in Appendix 1.

Possible Selves Questionnaire

The Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ; Oyserman, 2004) was utilised because it specifically measures the variables we are interested in, through asking participants to openly verbalise their hoped-for selves and feared selves along with their strategies for achieving/avoiding them. It also allows some comparison with other research which has favoured this method (for a full list, see Oyserman, 2004). It was chosen ahead of a close-ended measure (Markus and Nurius, 1986) due to the younger age of our sample and because

it enabled more qualitative analysis into the content of the chosen possible selves of each participant (Oyserman and Fryberg, 2006).

Furthermore, the PSQ has been used repeatedly as a means of measuring identity during life transitions. Given that participants in this study had recently experienced the transition of leaving primary school and starting secondary school as well as experiencing physical, biological changes, this was deemed a viable and relevant research tool for this study.

The PSQ asks participants to list three hoped-for selves and three feared selves for the next year. The following standardised instructions were given to each participant;

Hoped-for selves: “Many people have in mind some things they would like in the future regardless of how likely it is that they will actually be that way or do those things. These are the kinds of selves that you would hope to be like. Please list below three possible selves that you most hope to describe you in the next year”.

Feared selves; “Please list below three possible selves that you most fear or worry about being in the next year”

Administration of questionnaires was counterbalanced with half the participants receiving the hoped-for selves questions first and the other half of participants receiving feared selves first. This was to stop any biases or influencing of the types of possible selves generated in the results. The number of hoped-for selves and feared selves given were simply counted to test hypothesis 1.

The existing coding scheme used by Oyserman and Markus (1990) was employed which categorised the content of participants' responses for each hoped-for self for hypothesis 2. Oyserman and Markus did have an alternative coding scheme for feared selves, but we found that our responses fitted well within the same codes as the hoped-for selves which we found to be more useful in considering balance and comparing responses. We therefore coded feared selves in the same way as hoped-for selves. Coding categories are listed in table 7 and an example taken from our participants' responses is given to further illustrate the codes.

Category / Content Code	Example
Achievement	Hoped-for self – “Be the best in the class” Feared self – “getting dropped from the football academy”
Interpersonal Relationships	Hoped-for self – “Be a good friend to my friends” Feared self – “Don’t want to be hated”
Personality Traits	Hoped-for self – “get more outgoing” Feared self – “Not be as childish”
Physical/Health related	Hoped-for self – “more fitter and faster” Feared self – “ugly”
Material/lifestyle	Hoped-for self – “start a band” Feared self – “having to do household chores all the time”
Negative	Hoped-for self – “Prove that I’m a good scrapper” [fighter] Feared self – “Being addicted to smoking, it killed my aunt”

Table 7 - Examples from participants to illustrate the Oyserman (2004) coding scheme for both hoped-for selves and feared selves

Although instructed to generate three hoped-for selves and three feared selves, and the range was 0 – 6, many participants did not adhere to this instruction and gave only one or two. In

fact, only 30.2% completed all three hoped-for selves and as few as 9.5% completed all three feared selves. It is unknown why this might be. The mean number of hoped-for selves was 1.97 and the mean number of feared selves was 1.16. However, all of Oyserman and Markus's (1990) content codes were represented in the data.

In order to test hypothesis 3, strategies were assessed by simply asking young people if they are doing anything to work towards any of the possible identities they had written down (Oyserman, 2004). The number of distinct strategies was then counted for each hoped-for self and feared self. A total was calculated as well as a mean number of strategies to account for those who gave fewer hoped-for or feared selves. The mean score was then used in subsequent analysis. To give some added weight to any findings relating to strategies, each strategy was rated by the researchers on its plausibility. For example, a strategy to become popular by giving out lavish gifts after winning the lottery could not sensibly be given the same credit as one which involved helping people with their work and being kind in nature.

Hypothesis 4 was tested through coding the responses given and counting the number of times a participant gave a hoped-for and feared self in the same domain (with a maximum score of 3). An example of a balanced pair of possible selves given in this study is;

Hoped-for self – *“To start get better grades”*

Feared self – *“To be moved down a year”*

For hypothesis 5, we were interested in the longer-term aims of participants as well as the shorter term aims (as per the PSQ). We asked participants to write down a Long Term Expected Self (LTES) for the future. They were given the following instructions;

Long Term Aims: “Now have a think about what you expect to be like or expect to be doing when you leave school. Please write this down in the space you have below”.

The same coding scheme was applied but three changes needed to be made. Because it was so heavily represented, a further code of ‘Glamour/Celebrity’ was added, while the categories of ‘Physical Health’ and ‘Negative’ were not used at all. The following codes were used and examples are included from the participants within table 8.

LTES Category / Content Code	Example
Achievement	“to be a premiership footballer”
Interpersonal Relationships	“To be a good dad to my children”
Personality Traits	“Be a really kind person, not like some adults who don’t care about anyone”
Material/lifestyle	“Return to Slovakia to live”
Glamour/Celebrity	“Be on TV with the celebrities cos I am rich”

Table 8 – Examples of LTES given by participants according to coding scheme

For the PSQ and the LTES question, coders were blind to the level of delinquency of each participant. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the first 30 PSQs, LTES questions and plausibility of strategy were coded jointly by two of the researchers. Where any contention existed (20%), these researchers discussed the difference and made agreements as to how they should be coded which alleviated further problems. For the remainder of the sample, the primary researcher continued alone, however the second researcher coded a further 15 sets of PSQs, LTES questions and strategies randomly and agreement occurred in all cases.

Self-Reported Delinquency Scale

Participants were asked to fill in a scale asking how often they had engaged in a number of anti-social acts listed in the previous six months. The scale was derived from one used in a government study exploring problem behaviours in UK children as young as eight (Bowen, Heron and Steer, 2008). Participants in the current study were questioned on twelve anti-socials acts which included theft, substance misuse, fire-setting, cruelty to animals, damaging property and fighting. They were asked to state how frequently they had engaged in each of the acts, with possible answers ranging from Never, Sometimes, Often and Everyday. Participants were scored on their responses for each act (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and their *Total Delinquency Score* was calculated by summing the twelve scores they had obtained across the different acts.

In general, delinquency remained a continuous variable within this particular study. However, for one graph it was decided to separate participants into one of two groups based on their scores. This was based on a subjective but educated judgement that those who scored 0, 1 or 2 on the scale were not reporting a lot of delinquent behaviour. Those scoring 3 or above were either reporting repeated engagement in one activity, 4 different delinquent acts that they were engaging in 'sometimes' or a combination of both. It was felt that these could rightly be categorised into the high delinquency group, with the understanding that delinquency was relatively minor for the whole sample.

Due to the anonymity of participants' responses, it was not possible to gain teacher ratings on participant's behaviour. However, it was still deemed important to gauge how often their behaviour was seen as inappropriate by adult authority figures to determine how much their

responses could be relied upon. Therefore, participants were also asked to rate how frequently they were “in trouble” with their parents/carers, the school and/or police. Participants’ *Total Trouble Score* was calculated by quantifying their responses for each type of trouble (Never = 0, Sometimes = 1, Often = 2, Everyday = 3) and totalling the score. There was a significant correlation between participants’ ‘*total trouble score*’ and ‘*total delinquency score*’, $r(121) = 0.549, p < 0.01$, although this was not as high as anticipated. Both measures were used in preliminary analysis, but there were no differences in the outcomes of the tests used in this study between the two measures. For conciseness, only analysis using ‘*total delinquency score*’ has been reported here.

RESULTS

Due to there being five hypotheses for this study and each hypothesis requiring multiple methods of analysis, the results section is divided into five parts to correspond with each hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS 1 - THE MORE DELINQUENCY PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE LESS HOPED-FOR SELVES AND MORE FEARED SELVES.

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found no correlation between delinquency and the number of hoped-for selves articulated; $r(123) = 0.068, p = 0.235$. However, we did find a significant correlation between higher delinquency scores and the number of feared selves expressed; $r(115) = 0.198, p = 0.017$, which supported part of our hypothesis. There was no significant relationship between exposure to criminogenic risk and the number of hoped-for selves given; $r(115) = 0.146, p = 0.06$, or number of feared selves given; $r(116) = 0.011, p = 0.455$.

HYPOTHESIS 2 - THERE WILL BE A QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALITATIVE CONTENT OF BOTH HOPED-FOR SELVES AND FEARED SELVES ACCORDING TO LEVELS OF DELINQUENCY

The most popular hoped-for self across all participants was related to achievement in some way, as high as 43%, which is in accordance with other studies (Oyserman and James, 2011). The most well represented category of feared self overall related to negative or anti-social behaviour, such as “*being in a gang*” or “*being even worse behaved than I am now*”. Tables 9 and 10 show the frequencies for each of the choices across all 3 hoped-for and feared selves, with the most popular responses (excluding those which were left blank) in bolded text. Hoped-for self 1 reflects the first answer they gave, hoped-for self 2 the second answer and hoped-for self 3 reflects the third.

Code	Hoped-for self 1	Hoped-for self 2	Hoped-for self 3
Achievement	43% (n=53)	25.6%	12.7%
Interpersonal Relationships	19.0% (n=23)	14.4%	6.3%
Personality Traits	17.5% (n=22)	15.2%	4.0%
Physical/Health related	5.6% (n=7)	6.4%	2.4%
Material/Lifestyles	5.6% (n=7)	5.6%	4.8%
Negative	-	4.8%	-
Left Blank	9.5% (n=11)	28.0%	69.8%

Table 9 - Frequency of each category of hoped-for self given

Code	Feared Self 1	Feared Self 2	Feared Self 3
Achievement	20.3%	4.8%	0.8%
Interpersonal Relationships	16.3%	2.4%	3.2%

Code	Feared Self 1	Feared Self 2	Feared Self 3
Personality Traits	4.9%	8.7%	0.8%
Physical/Health related	5.7%	5.6%	2.4%
Material/Lifestyles	0.8%	0.8%	0%
Negative	22%	12.7%	2.4%
Left Blank	30.1%	65.1%	90.5%

Table 10 -Frequency of each category of feared self given

In order to explore how the content of hoped-for and feared selves differs according to delinquency group, we chose to look further into the first of those given for each participant. This was because these would have represented a primary vision of the future for participants. They were also the most populated of the six, with the least missing data so more representative of the whole sample. Figure 5 gives us an overall picture of how the categories chosen differ according to delinquency group.

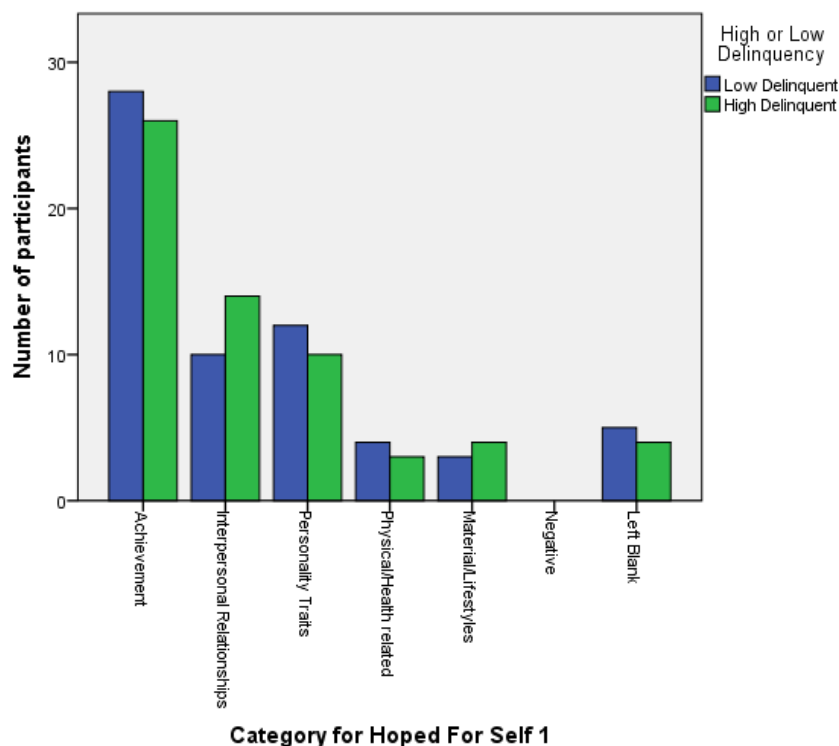


Figure 5 - Categories of hoped-for self 1 chosen by delinquency group

It can be seen (see figure 5) that more of the low delinquency group chose hoped-for selves based on achievement than the high delinquency group and they chose hoped-for selves based on interpersonal relationship less often. However, a Chi Squared analysis demonstrated this was not significant; $\chi^2 (1) = 0.690$ ($p = 0.690$).

Yet, when looking at levels of criminogenic risk, we found a significant difference between these two content codes: achievement related or interpersonal relationship hoped-for selves, according to the number of risk factors participants' experienced ($\chi^2 (1) = 5.380$ ($p = 0.020$)).

We also used Chi-Squared analysis to explore differences in the category of feared self 1 between delinquency groups (see figure 6). We firstly looked at the number of young people who referred to anti-social behaviour within feared self 1 and this was not seen to differ according to delinquency; $\chi^2 (1) = 0.026$ ($p=0.871$).

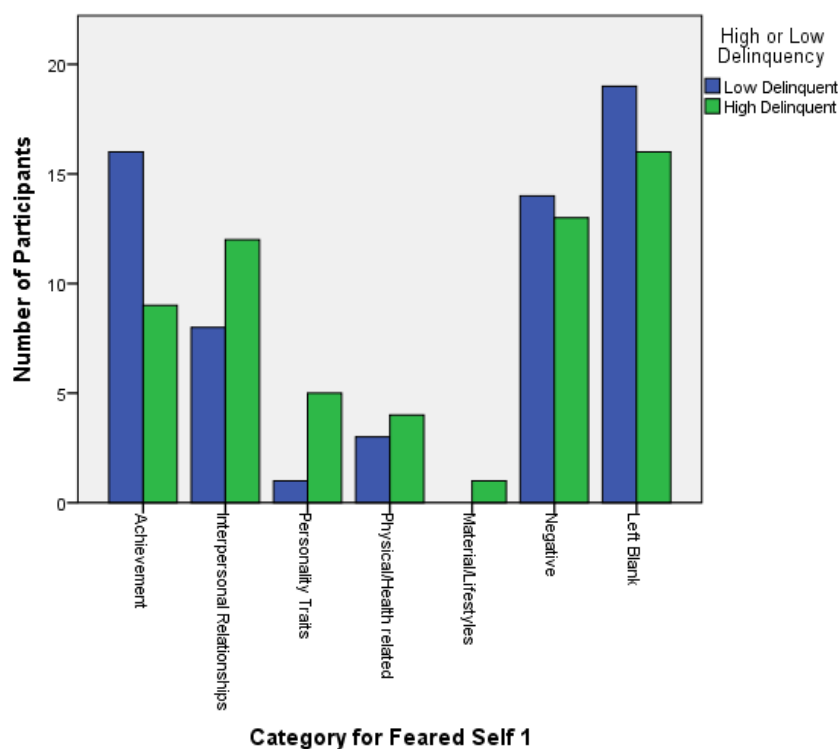


Figure 6 – Number of participants who chose each category for feared self 1

We then looked to see whether there was a difference in the number of participants in the different delinquency groups referring to either achievement based or interpersonal relationship based feared selves. There was no significant difference between the groups for either achievement based ($\chi^2 (1) = 2.571, p = 0.109$) or interpersonal relationship based feared selves ($\chi^2 (1) = 0.773, p = 0.379$). This was also the case when comparing low and high risk groups in terms of both achievement based ($\chi^2 (1) = 0.633, p = 0.426$) and interpersonal relationship based feared selves ($\chi^2 (1) = 2.779, p = 0.095$).

HYPOTHESIS 3 – DELINQUENT PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE LESS WELL DEVELOPED STRATEGIES TO REACHING (OR AVOIDING) THEIR HOPED-FOR (OR FEARED) SELVES.

Spearman correlations supported this hypothesis and the more delinquent participants had fewer strategies to reach their hoped-for and avoid their feared selves. Those with higher exposure to criminogenic risks were found (through Spearman correlations) to have less strategies to avoid their feared selves (see table 11). According to Chi-Squared analysis, there was also no difference in how realistic the strategies were according to delinquency or risk category $\chi^2 (1) = 2.285, p = 0.131$ or risk $\chi^2 (1) = 0.356, p = 0.551$.

		Delinquency	Criminogenic risk
Mean No. of Hoped-for self strategies	Correlation Coefficient	-.201	-0.154
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.018	0.055
	N	110	109
Mean No. of Feared Self strategies	Correlation Coefficient	-.298	-0.310
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.004	0.003
	N	79	79

Table 11 - Results of correlations exploring the relationship between number of strategies generated by participants and their delinquency and criminogenic risk

HYPOTHESIS 4 – DELINQUENT PARTICIPANTS WILL ARTICULATE LESS BALANCE BETWEEN THEIR HOPED-FOR AND FEARED SELVES THAN LESS DELINQUENT PARTICIPANTS

Most participants in our sample (58%) did not articulate any ‘balance’ between hoped-for selves and feared selves at all, although 29% had one set of balanced possible selves and a further 13% had two balanced sets.

Although we noted little balance overall, we used Chi-Squared analysis to explore whether more of the low delinquency group had balance than the high delinquency group. Contrary to our hypothesis, we found no significant difference between the delinquency groups, $\chi^2 (1) = 1.899, p > 0.05$.

HYPOTHESIS 5 – LONG TERM EXPECTED SELVES OF DELINQUENT PARTICIPANTS WILL BE DIFFERENT TO THOSE OF LESS DELINQUENT PARTICIPANTS

This hypothesis was not supported statistically, as explained below, but results were in the expected direction and are worthy of exploration, especially as they are complemented with qualitative data.

Firstly, nearly one third of participants chose a long term expected self which related to some form of celebrity or glamorous status ($n = 36; 29\%$). A distinction was evident (in figure 7) with the high delinquency group seeming to be more interested in the material/celebrity

lifestyle than the low delinquency group who look for personal achievement more often. This difference was explored using Chi squared analysis; $\chi^2 (1) = 3.790, p = 0.052$. While the result is only approaching statistical significance, it does suggest this is worth further investigation, perhaps with a more delinquent sample than ours.

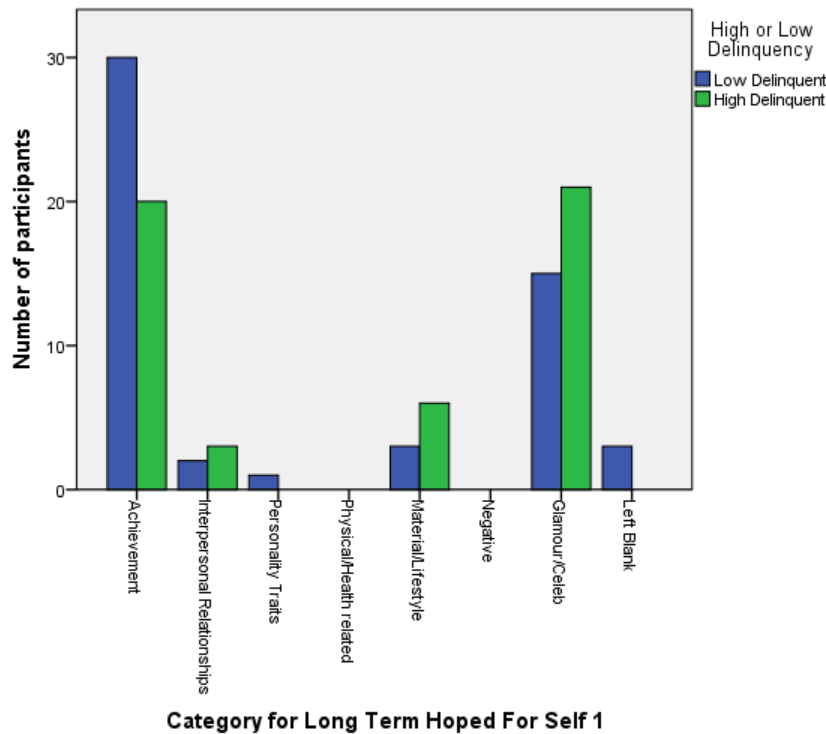


Figure 7 – Categories of LTES chosen according to delinquency group

When looking at risk rather than delinquency categories, there was also a statistically significant difference with those who have been exposed to more criminogenic risks expecting a glamorous/celebrity lifestyle more than those with fewer risks $\chi^2 (1) = 7.068, p = 0.008$.

DISCUSSION

In this sample, participants with higher delinquency and/or higher exposure to criminogenic risks were just as likely to articulate positive hoped-for selves as those with low delinquency and/or low criminogenic risks. This is perhaps due to the instruction to all participants that

they should all complete three hoped-for and feared selves for the future. Not all participants did complete all three, but this may have accounted for the similarity. This finding is contrary to existing findings (Newberry and Duncan, 2001) and, in part, contrary to the first hypothesis in this study. However, in most prominent studies in this area, participants were further along in adolescence (Newberry and Duncan, 2001; Oyserman and Markus, 1990). This could potentially be a very important disparity to be considered in larger samples in the future. It implies that at the onset of adolescence, young people from different backgrounds have not yet developed an appreciation of how their current behaviour (i.e. early delinquency) may affect their desired outcomes. Perhaps more importantly, it implies that they may not have internalised the potential barriers which are known to face young people from backgrounds with high criminogenic risks (Hemsley-Brown, 1999). This corresponds well with findings by Mello (2009) that, when asked, low income children in USA expect to do just as well at school as high income children, although actual adult outcomes can be quite different. This is also regardless of how they have previously performed at school and their reduced opportunities.

Although the participants seemed to have equally positive hoped-for selves, the high delinquency group had significantly more feared selves than their less delinquent peers even though all were asked to give three. It is unknown why this might be, but it might be that they have some experience of negative outcomes either personally or vicariously. However if this experience had affected their construction of feared selves, then we might have expected the same finding for those with higher exposure to criminogenic risk, which was not the case. The fact that less than 10% completed all three feared selves however has led to some trepidation over the reliability of these particular findings.

In terms of the content of the hoped-for and feared selves (hypothesis 2), the most hoped-for selves in our sample were found to be related to personal achievement in some way, regardless of delinquency or risk group.

However, despite the majority of participants in the current study expressing achievement-based for hoped-for selves, there were some differences worth highlighting. For example, one participant who scored highly on the self-reported delinquency scale had the achievement goal of: “*I want to get back on track with my homework*”. This stands in contrast to another whose goal was: “*I want to be sitting my GCSEs [General Certificate of Secondary Education] a year early*”. Although both relate to achievement, they are qualitatively very different since one relates to an over-achiever, whereas the other appears to be an under-achiever. This would not be elicited from the research method if simply coded as ‘achievement’.

The high delinquency group were able to discuss fewer strategies to reach goals than their less delinquent peers, which supports hypothesis 3 within this study. This is important since, pragmatically speaking, those who engage in delinquency the earliest are also likely to have the most obstacles to overcome in order to reach their goals (Jacobson, Bhardwa, Gyateng, Hunter and Hough, 2010). Parallels can be drawn here with other theories of delinquency, notably those of Spivack, Platt and Shure (1976) relating to Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) Skills. They found that the more deprived and more delinquent children could think of fewer *means* to reach a given hypothetical end. This finding was also supported by the results reported in Study 2 in this thesis.

Offending behaviour interventions have continued to build on these findings where juvenile and adult offenders across the English-speaking world have been attending group-work sessions in order to learn how to reach goals more effectively. There is a notable difference in research method between ICPS researchers (Spivack *at al*, 1976) and Possible Selves researchers (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). The strategies (or means) the participants were asked to generate for reaching their hoped-for selves or avoiding their feared selves are more personal than the more hypothetical problem solving tasks utilised by ICPS researchers. Nonetheless, both approaches require the cognitive capacity to say “how can that happen”? Cognitive skills interventions have been criticised for being impersonal and disconnected with offenders’ lives (McMurran and McCulloch, 2007); however, relating the skills taught to offenders’ (or in this case, delinquent adolescents’) possible selves might well prove more effective.

There was no support at all for hypothesis 4, which proposed that the delinquent groups would have less balance between their hoped-for and feared selves. In fact, balance was minimal for all groups. It is possible that participants did not want to reiterate themes they had already raised, i.e. they had already said they wanted to do well at school, therefore it was unnecessary to state they did not want to fail at school. However, this is unknown. Given the importance attributed to this in previous studies, especially related to the self-regulatory role of balance, this may require further investigation.

Of all the hypotheses, the final one relating to longer-term expected selves feels the most interesting and contributes the most unique findings to the existing literature. Of interest was the high number of young people who were aiming for a glamorous or very wealthy lifestyle. Such long term possible selves included:

- *To be in a band and have a concert at Wembley*
- *Live in Barbados in a house like Simon Cowell's*
- *Win the lottery and drive a Lamborghini and 'pull' the girls*

Long-term aims relating to glamour, wealth and celebrity were statistically more likely to be articulated by those with higher exposure to criminogenic risks. This was an interesting finding, as despite having a greater awareness of negative outcomes, those with higher exposure to criminogenic risks were still optimistic about their own potential at this age. There was also a difference, although not quite significant, in the number of participants in the high delinquency group who gave this as a long-term aim compared to those who were less delinquent.

Markus and Nurius (1986) claimed that possible selves are important as they foster hope that the self is not unchangeable, and in the present study, the future certainly appears wide open to participants. This could be an incredibly useful finding when considering appropriate methods of intervention for young people. Of course, it is unlikely that all the participants who expressed a desire to 'make it' in Hollywood or in the Football Premiership will indeed 'make it'. In no way does this imply that these young people should be dissuaded from aspiring so highly. A report by the Prince's Trust (2004) stated that disadvantaged young people's ambitions only begin to seem remote when they reach the age of 18 and start to notice barriers as they leave school. What is imperative, therefore, is that these young people leave school with the skills they need to manage expectations, cope with failure, seek alternatives and develop suitable strategies.

Interventions designed to assist young people in forming achievable goals along with the strategies needed to reach them could certainly prove beneficial when looking at the longer-term expected selves of our participants. Hemsley-Brown (1999) suggests that in early adolescence, children are in the ‘development’ phase of constructing career aspirations and are looking heavily to their family and peer group for an understanding of whether this is acceptable or not. If the family cannot provide the role models necessary, then schools or alternative organisations could take this responsibility. This is particularly the case for those with high exposure to criminogenic risks, where personally known role models may be less prevalent than those from the media. An impoverished council estate (where approximately half the sample was recruited from) is less likely to invoke aspirations than the dizzy heights of stardom displayed within the media. But it has also been previously found that those who have essentially materialistic aspirations and values ultimately have less satisfying lives than those who do not (Nickerson, Schwarz, Diener and Kahneman, 2003). This is an important consideration given the number of participants who had materialistic goals in the present study.

A collection of criminological theories known as ‘strain theories’ suggest that Westernised (namely American) cultures pressure individuals to seek economic and material success over any other form of success (Merton, 1938; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994). Yet, we are not all equal in terms of the means available to achieving monetary goals. Thompson and Holland (2002) claimed that young people’s future aspirations are mediated by class, race, locality and normative ideals and although not specifically related to strain theories, these theories are certainly relevant. Perhaps, participants from more deprived communities see alternative routes to financial success (such as university) as simply closed to them as they are not regularly accessed by members of their community. However, through intervention it is

possible to alter this. Destin and Oyserman (2009) demonstrated that low-income children as young as 12-years-old plan to work more on their homework when they are primed to consider that higher education is actually an option for them, by discussing financial aid rather than emphasising the high costs.

Although Oyserman and James (2011) have suggested that distal possible selves are unlikely to influence current behaviour, the results in our study challenge this. Young people with possible (or indeed expected) selves to become a rap-star may not invest the time and energy necessary to finish secondary school with good grades as it is simply not part of a strategy to become a rap-star. Unfortunately, if the individual then fails, there is little to fall back onto. One 12-year-old boy stated for his long term aim 'Just to be rich'. He had no plans or strategies, saying simply "I don't know how but I'll figure it out somehow". Without the guidance to achieve his goal pro-socially and the opportunities to learn and develop, it is possible that this void might be filled by delinquency in time.

Further longitudinal research is needed, to discover at what point lofty ambitions change, how they change and what triggers this. This would help us to appreciate the way that offending can replace other goals. There were some subtle differences in the observed categories of hoped-for and feared selves but these were not significant. In future, this could be looked at with a much bigger and more inclusive sample, particularly where delinquency was more entrenched. Delinquency levels were low in our sample, reflecting the age range, so consequently it was more difficult to determine relationships between these factors.

In the introduction to this study, we stated that most adolescents view the adult world as full of possibility (Seginer, 2009). We close it with renewed support of this statement, but with

the caveat that sadly, the reality of possible opportunities can be quite different to the perception. Approaching child and adolescent delinquency from a possible selves perspective may not be a magic bullet which solves all delinquent behaviour. However, it does assign individuals some personal agency, which is strongly advocated in the adult desistence literature (Laws and Ward, 2010) and it may be an effective tool in keeping the very young on a pro-social path. Interventions, mostly in the United States, have been shown to assist in mediating negative behaviour and increasing goal attainment. We propose that similar efforts are made in the UK in order to give children the very best chances of achieving non-criminal possible selves for the future as simply increasing penalties for offending behaviour may be ineffective with these young people, once they have already discounted their future (Brezina *et al*, 2009).

The important message from our research is that it suggests for the first time that the future hopes and dreams of children up to the age of 12 are plentiful and positive, whatever their background. Given our knowledge about the potentially protective influence this may have for a whole range of outcomes including the reduction of criminal behaviour, this could have considerable implications for the timing of interventions and support for vulnerable children.

CHAPTER 6

LIMITATIONS

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations to this programme of research which should be highlighted.

GENDER

The first noteworthy limitation is that this research only focuses on boys. One rationale for this was because the number of males in the criminal justice system far exceeds the number of females. Looking at the prison population on the week of January 4th 2013, there were 79,750 males compared with 3,882 females in custody (Ministry of Justice, 2012) which highlights the importance of preventative practice with males. Another rationale was to limit the number of variables. So many were out of our control, such as participants' home environment, that it was sensible to control at least some.

Importantly, there is evidence that while boys and girls have different needs, successful interventions targeting criminogenic risks are largely transferable between males and females (Harper and Chitty, 2005). However, there is clearly a need to replicate these findings with girls and this is an area for further research. On a positive note, girls' data were collected alongside the boys and will be explored following completion of this PhD.

ETHNICITY

Another variable which appears absent from this research was participants' ethnic background. This is certainly relevant to the study of delinquency due to the over-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups in the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales. In 2011, around 17% of the general population compared to 26% of the prison population were BME (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

This research was undertaken in the London Borough of Lambeth and in North West Kent, where communities are culturally very diverse. And information on every participants' ethnicity was recorded and incorporated into early analysis for this PhD.

However, it was decided not to include references to ethnicity, primarily because relying on a measure of ethnic identity, rather than unpacking this into its component parts (such as the higher rates of poverty for BME groups and associated consequences) felt inadequate and biased.

COMPLEXITY OF CHILD OFFENDING

As stated in the introduction, risk factors associated with childhood delinquency are varied and interact over time. Recent empirical studies continue to provide improved understanding of the biological underpinnings of delinquency, although the influence of contextual and social factors is indisputable. Therefore, the study of only ICPS skills, hope and possible selves felt at times to be too narrow. While it would have been impressive to include more, it would also have been beyond the scope of a PhD to have summarised everything available. I worried daily in the last few months that I should include more theory or more details. However, when attempting to do this, the work became cluttered and complicated. In some ways this is disappointing, in others it leaves the door open to future research which is exciting.

Further, only measuring 6 criminogenic risks resulted in what felt like a relatively crude assessment of participants' exposure to risk factors. But it was difficult to ask anymore of the participants as they were only 11-13 years old and were already completing a lot of tasks. Due to anonymity, it was also impossible to gather any background information on

participants which may have helped towards a more comprehensive measure of risk. Nonetheless, the risks which were measured did cover four domains from which risk factors have been identified: family, community, school, and individual.

It was debated whether the risk factors should be allocated different weightings, for example, criminal parents might be more of a risk than living in a high crime area. However, it was very difficult to judge which is more important to which person, as it is often the interaction between risks which contributes to anti-social outcomes.

SAMPLE SIZE

In the initial proposal to the ESRC, it was anticipated that this research should work towards recruiting a sample of 100 non-offending, 100 'at-risk' and 100 offending children. However, the final sample was less than half of that expected, at only 126. It was surprisingly difficult to recruit participants for this study. A total of 78 letters were sent to head teachers or project leaders in the area, all of which were followed up with numerous emails and telephone calls. Contact was gained with only ten schools or organisations over a ten-month period and five of these resulted in data collection. Of the other five, two organisations were forced to close prior to data collection due to funding cuts and three ceased to maintain contact with no explanation.

Further, actual delinquent behaviour was relatively low for the vast majority of this sample and yet interesting and innovative results were found. Our distribution of delinquent behaviour is reflective of the age group as a whole (Bowen, Heron and Steer, 2008). Future research might consider including disproportionate number of high level delinquents

(compared to the general population) to address this issue. It is likely that results would be even stronger if investigated with a sample including a wider range of delinquency levels.

ACCURACY OF MEASURES

Self-Reported Delinquency

Throughout this research project, participants' delinquency was assessed using a self-report measure designed specifically for this PhD. Self-report questionnaires have been used extensively since the 1950s, despite concerns over reliability and validity. One reason for using such a method is that it would be impossible to observe, code and assess the delinquency of all participants first hand. Furthermore, due to the promise of anonymity, it was not possible to link teacher ratings with the participants' completed questionnaires. Therefore, self-report data seemed the most appropriate. We did cross-reference this with the trouble they admitted to being in with adult authority figures and this was strongly correlated, suggesting good validation. We did anticipate that some participants might not tell the truth on their questionnaires and as such, included a question "*How honest have you been in this questionnaire?*" Despite needing to boost our sample size, we did not include the responses of any participant who scored lower than 5 on the scale of 1-9 ($n = 21$). The mean honesty score was 9.12 ($SD = 1.45$). Thornberry and Krohn (2003) state that self-report respondents are prepared to admit to delinquency and offending within questionnaires, and that the content validity construct validity and the criterion validity appears to be in the moderate-to-strong range.

Criminogenic risks

Throughout this research project, attention has been drawn to the potential limitations of this measure of criminogenic risk. The primary problem was the extent of known criminogenic risks and the limited time available with participants. Without background history or access

to parents, we relied on the participants to provide information about their criminogenic risk exposure. Therefore we were limited in terms of what we could ask. Even within these few questions, problems remained.

For example, participants were asked for their postcode, so that the crime rate for that area could be established. However, the website used to determine the crime rate, www.police.uk, has been criticised for listing quiet, relatively crime-free streets as having high crime rates, simply due to sharing a postcode with more criminal streets. However, this felt like the most appropriate way of measuring 'living in a high crime area' accessible at the time.

Additionally, participants were asked whether their families had been in trouble with the law in the past, to help assess for 'familial criminality', although it was not asked whether the participant had any direct contact with these family members which would have been useful.

Overall, this was a low-risk sample and the mean number of criminogenic risks was 1.47 (SD = 1.43). However, the full range of 0-6 risks had been experienced by participants in this sample and where information was provided on all six risk factors, participants were categorised into two groups (lower or higher exposure to criminogenic risks). Given that the more risks a child is exposed to, the higher their likelihood of them offending in future, it was determined that anyone who was exposed to multiple (i.e. two or more) of these risk factors should be considered to be in the higher risk group (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott and Catalano, 2000). Having a higher than average exposure to risks within this particular sample also contributed to this decision. While this is a slightly crude measure, it does differentiate those who have no risk factors at all, or only one (n=64, 53%), with those who have multiple (n=57, 47%).

ICPS skill measures

ICPS skills were assessed using the MEPS, ChIPS and M-CONS tests. Since these were used in the 1970s, it could be argued that these tests are outdated, especially when other tools are available to assess ICPS ability. However, the stories involve basic problem-solving scenarios which apply equally well to today's young people and we felt it was important to utilise the original tests used in Spivack *et al's* (1976) research given the extent to which they have influenced cognitive skills interventions all over the world. Additionally, by using all three tests, both outcome and process measures have been tested. One criticism previously made of the MEPS test was that the anti-social scenario was irrelevant to many and therefore the responses may not be reflective of habitual problem solving (D'Zurilla and Maydeu-Olivares, 1995). However, for some of our participants, the more pro-social scenarios were described as trivial, making the inclusion of both antisocial and pro-social scenarios highly appropriate within this study.

Possible Selves Questionnaire

The Possible Selves Questionnaire (PSQ; Oyserman, 2004) was utilised for Study 4 to allow participants to openly verbalise their hoped-for selves and feared selves along with their strategies for achieving/avoiding them. While this seemed the best measure at the outset, and certainly still has plenty of merit, issues with this measure were identified.

The primary problem is that participants were asked to give three hoped for and three feared selves so it is possible that the dependent variable for our first hypothesis (i.e. the number of hoped-for and feared selves) has been confounded. If participants were given the freedom to outline as many hoped-for and feared selves as they wanted, the results could have been quite

different. Further, the dependent variable for hypothesis 4 (i.e. matched domains for pairs of hoped for and feared selves) may have been confounded by this initial instruction.

Many participants did not complete three of each possible self, indeed less than 10% completed all three feared selves. It is possible that since this was the last task for the participants, they were experiencing fatigue or restlessness. This is something to be addressed in any further study relating to possible selves.

Nonetheless, using the PSQ does allow us to compare our research with other international work and due to the fact it has been well used in empirical studies (for a full list of publications, see Oyserman, 2004), it remains the most rational choice of data collection for this sample.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

A MODEL FOR THE PREVENTION OF DELINQUENCY IN EARLY ADOLESCENTS?

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT? A MODEL FOR THE PREVENTION OF DELINQUENCY IN EARLY ADOLESCENTS

The purpose of this penultimate chapter is to briefly summarise the preceding chapters and to draw some theoretical conclusions based on the main findings from each. It starts therefore with a summary of the work so far.

SUMMARY OF PHD RESEARCH

Study 1 – The Good Lives Model – New directions for preventative practice with children?

By analysing the interviews of seven young people who had been participating in an early intervention programme, it was evident that links could be made between their individual processes of desistance and the Self-Determination Theory of Needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Prominent themes emerging from interviews mapped well onto those raised by the theory as being fundamental to psychological well-being and optimal functioning: *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy*. It was apparent that the intervention programme assisted the young people involved by helping to fulfil these three basic needs.

The Good Lives Model (GLM, Ward, 2002) emphasises the importance of fundamental needs (or goods) when rehabilitating established adult offenders, and *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy* also feature within this model. Therefore it stands to reason that they would be important to consider when preventing offending as well, and the findings from this study support this reasoning.

Study 2 – Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving and delinquency in early adolescence

Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving Skill (ICPS) deficits have been empirically associated with delinquent and offending behaviour for decades. However, teaching these skills (to both adults and adolescents) through structured interventions has not been consistently effective.

Early adolescents aged 11-13 were tested on three ICPS skills shown empirically to be relevant to the age group. These were Means-End Problem Solving, Consequential and Alternative Thinking. Results indicated correlations existed between deficits in each of these ICPS skills and self-reported delinquency, in line with previous research.

Yet, more importantly, the delinquent participants were found to be making as much effort in problem solving as the non-delinquent participants. And they felt that they were offering effective responses, despite them seeming inappropriate at times to the researchers. It became clear that the participants were all offering responses which reflected their backgrounds and how they had been taught to problem solve (or the lack of teaching in some cases). Indeed, when criminogenic risk was controlled for, this correlation was no longer present. It was unsurprising to find that exposure to criminogenic risk in childhood was correlated with delinquency with our sample. It was also unsurprising that such exposure was correlated with ICPS skills deficits.

Further, some participants had low ICPS skill but also low delinquency which was interesting. Mediating factors were clearly present which protected young people from this potential risk factor. It was felt that attention should be drawn to protective factors in general,

but specifically to a less well researched variable, hope, to explore whether it have protective qualities.

Study 3 – Hope Theory and its relevance to emerging delinquent behaviour

Using the same sample of early adolescent boys, the potential role of hope (Snyder, 1994) as a protective factor against offending was explored. This had already been proposed following research with offending adults but research with an early adolescent sample was necessary in order to explore its role in preventative practice.

It was found that those with higher hope were less likely to have high delinquency, which corresponds well to findings with adults (Martin and Stermac, 2010). Further, early adolescents who are exposed to criminogenic risks had lower hope scores. The risk factors in our research most closely related to reduced hope were found to be low socio-economic status, familial criminality and having past school discipline problems.

A discriminant analysis showed hope to be a better predictor of delinquency than ICPS skills in our sample, which was an important finding given the emphasis on ICPS skills in both adult and child interventions.

A hopeful outlook may therefore benefit children who have both a high number of criminogenic risks and low ICPS skills, but it unknown as yet what this means in practice.

What are these young people looking for out of life? This was the focus of the next chapter.

Study 4 -“I wanna be rich, I don’t know how, but I’ll get there somehow”: Future possible selves and delinquency in early adolescence

The hoped-for and feared selves of the boys in our sample were explored, in terms of the number articulated, the content of these selves and the strategies proposed by participants for reaching them.

For the first time in the current research, little difference was noted between high and low delinquency groups. Those with high delinquency were articulating the same amount and type of hoped for selves for the short-term future (i.e. over one year) as those with low delinquency. The same was true of those who were exposed to criminogenic risks. This, in itself, may be an important finding and deserves replication with large samples. All participants, no matter what their background, were still of an age where they felt the future was unrestricted and not affected by any social inequality or criminogenic risk. It may therefore be a crucial and more effective time for early interventions that might prevent the onset of criminality or reverse its progression.

The high delinquency group were able to discuss fewer strategies to reach their hoped-for goals than their less delinquent peers, in line with previous research (Oyserman and Saltz, 1993). But, unlike previous studies, it was not found that having balance between hoped-for and feared selves made any difference to an individual's propensity to be involved in delinquency.

In terms of their longer-term futures, many participants (especially the more delinquent), were shown to seek possible selves that reflected a media obsession with celebrity culture, such as being world famous rappers or owning "*blacked out range-rovers*". Implications for interventions were discussed as well as the potential for possible selves theory to be more integral to interventions with young people who are considered 'at risk' of offending.

THE WAY FORWARD

Integrating the Good Lives Model, ICPS Skills, Hope and Possible Selves as facets of early intervention models.

Two threads have run through this thesis, neither of which was even considered at the onset of the PhD. These are both considered explicitly here.

The first thread relates to the Self-Determination Theory. Inadvertently, the development of this PhD has led to further exploration of each of the basic psychological needs outlined in this theory (and in study 1), as all subsequent studies have incorporated *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy* in some way.

ICPS skills represent clear *Competencies*, yet their application requires a degree of *Autonomy*. Snyder's model of hope also directly incorporates *Competence* and *Autonomy* through pathways and agentic thought. Similarly, possible selves require both *Competence* (through strategy) and *Autonomy* (through longer term application). It could be that *Relatedness* may be more fundamental, with the development of all three factors (ICPS skills, hope and possible selves) depending, to some extent, on social relationships. This corresponds well with Maslow's (1943) well-established and oft-quoted Hierarchy of Needs, where love and belonging are the next to be fulfilled after physiological and safety needs. Maslow (1943) believed this need for love and belongingness (i.e. *Relatedness*) is particularly strong in childhood. It is felt that ICPS skills, hope and possible selves are all therefore potentially important in preventative practice, as well as each being useful in their own right.

The second of the two threads connecting the studies is the concept of step-by-step planning which is central to each:

- ICPS skill; Means End Problem Solving (MEPS)
- Hope; Pathways Thinking
- Possible Selves; Ability to develop strategy

An ability to plan is important, since pragmatically speaking, those who engage in delinquency are also likely to have the most obstacles to overcome in order to reach their goals (Jacobson, Bhardwa, Gyateng, Hunter and Hough, 2010). It has also recently been found that cognitive impulsivity at the age of 12 or 13 predicted later involvement in criminality (Loeber, Menting, Lynam, Moffitt, Stouthamer-Loeber, Stallings, Farrington and Pardini, 2012). Therefore, it could be argued that ‘planning’ forms the central component of a model for intervention, which has evolved over this PhD and which could be applied to preventative practice. The remaining components of the model are the other ICPS skills, the agency element of hope [self-belief] and hoped-for selves [aspirations]. Metaphorically speaking, these other components could be considered to be like the legs of a stool which enable and support this planning to take place. If any of the legs (or components) is removed, then the planning loses some strength and becomes unstable.

Current and potential interventions

As stated previously, ICPS skills, hope and possible selves have all been independently targeted in early interventions for young people ‘in need’.

In terms of ICPS skills, interventions include The Ross Programme (Ross and Hilborn, 2003) and Offending Is Not The Only Choice (OINTOC; Cognitive Centre Foundation; *nd*). The

well established Canadian programme STOP NOW AND PLAN (SNAP; Augimeri, Farrington, Koegl and Day, 2007) has been running for 25 years and teaches children to ‘stop, think and plan’ to prevent impulsivity (Augimeri, Walsh and Slater, 2011). All three of the above programmes (and others with a similar premise) have yielded positive results, but are largely adhering to a deficit model. There is also no specific attention paid to the emerging self-identity of the young people these programmes recruit.

In contrast, an innovative programme in the US, Project AIM, used the theory of possible selves to deter adolescents from risky sexual behaviour (Clark, Miller, Nagy, Avery, Roth, Liddon, and Mukherjee, 2005). Project AIM used a structured programme and targeted 12 – 14 year old high school students in deprived areas. The programme encouraged participants to develop positive adult identities and the strategies necessary for reaching these goals. By verbalising these, participants were able to see how their ideal strategies would frequently clash with partaking in risky behaviours such as unprotected sex at a young age. Results were initially positive, yet unfortunately participants were found to be resuming sexually risky behaviour after one year. However, Project AIM does not challenge delinquency directly, nor does it specifically feature ICPS skills unlike more delinquency-focussed programmes such as SNAP or the Ross Programme.

Hope has also been targeted in schools-based programmes, though not with intent to discourage negative outcomes per se. One example is the Making Hope Happen intervention (MHH; see Pedrotti, Edward and Lopez, 2008). Before and after five interactive group sessions designed to build pathways and agentic thought, students were tested using the Children’s Hope Scale (see Study 3). Increases in hope scores were found to be significantly larger in the treatment group, as compared to a control group. Increases in hope were still

found six months after the completion of the programme. Other examples of hope building interventions exist; see Pedrotti, Edward and Lopez (2008) for more information. These other interventions also saw improvements in hope, but did not assess behavioural outcomes as part of their evaluation so it is unclear what this means to participants' life successes. Nonetheless, all proponents of these programmes concluded that hope could (and should) be taught in school settings.

The previous three paragraphs lend further support to the three-legged stool model proposed above, whereby all components should to be enhanced within an intervention to prevent the onset or escalation of offending. An example of who might benefit from such an intervention might be the individual with a highly ambitious possible self, but with limited ability to conceptualise other options in case this does not materialise. Another individual who may benefit could be someone with highly developed ICPS skills and some self-motivation, but with only anti-social peers and family to turn to when developing possible future identities. Ultimately, by applying the three-legged stool model to interventions, it is envisaged that children will develop positive and realistic future selves, offset by a balanced feared self. Their hope will be nurtured so that they are able to find the ways to achieve this goal and feel capable of doing it. They will also develop the necessary cognitive skills to help them to overcome obstacles and consider the consequences of their actions in relation to their hoped for and feared selves.

Such an intervention would be a *primary* prevention method defined as; “*Stop the bad before it happens*” (Snyder, Lopez and Pedrotti, 2010, pg 354). Working with school children during regular scheduled classes would avoid stigmatisation and also avoid positive discrimination,

aiding all children, rather than “rewarding” those who misbehave (a problem raised by the British public, see study 1).

There are additional benefits to developing these skills before criminality occurs, beyond the prevention of offending. For example, poor ICPS skills (particularly MEPS), reduced hope and negative possible selves have all been associated with suicidal ideation (Pollock and Williams, 2004; Schotte and Clum, 1982), depression and mental health issues (Kwon, 2000; Watkins and Baracaia, 2002), poorer academic performance (Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2005) and deal with physical health complications (Snyder, 2002). These are all key facets of quality of life and healthy functioning throughout the life course, not solely related to forensic literature.

TIMING AND CONTEXT OF INTERVENING WITH CHILDREN WHO OFFEND

In August 2011, riots took place in London and other major cities in the UK causing physical destruction, economic loss and personal injury. Inevitably, questions were asked about the root cause of these riots, and a joint study by London School of Economics and the Guardian newspaper was commissioned to explore the motivations of hundreds of those who took part (Lewis, Newburn, Taylor and Ball, 2011). Lewis *et al* (2011) found that many referred to a sense of economic inequality (such as lack of money, jobs or opportunity) as their primary motivation, while others pointed to broader social injustice (such as over-policing of marginalised communities). Although a large number of rioters also accepted that their participation was simply opportunistic behaviour, the sense of inequality felt within deprived communities should not be ignored.

Indeed, Camila Batmanghelidjh, CEO of the children's charity Kids Company who sponsored this PhD, feels that without adequate opportunity, inspiration may be fruitless. Speaking in the euphoria of the London 2012 Olympic Games, she states; *"We may have scored high in sports but we're bottom of the league of the wealthy world for the wellbeing of children. Let's take those original Olympic pledges and be passionate, brave and willing to do the hard slog, the marathon, to transform children's social care"* (Batmanghelidjh, 2012). Batmanghelidjh is referring to the same UNICEF report that was mentioned earlier in Study 3 in relation to the wellbeing of children, showing that the UK ranks poorly on measures of wellbeing in childhood compared to other developed nations.

The global measure of wellbeing used in the UNICEF report has since been plotted against 'Income Inequality' measures in the UK by the Equality Trust. The resulting graph (see figure 8) shows a significant, negative correlation between income inequality and child wellbeing ($r = -0.64$, $p = 0.001$; Pickett and Wilkinson, 2007). Income inequality is high in the UK as a whole, although it has reduced a little since 2010 (Cribb, Joyce and Phillips, 2012). It is most pronounced in London (Brewer, Sibieta and Wren-Lewis, 2008), where this PhD research was conducted. This adds further support to the findings in Study 4, which considers how early adolescents can be exposed to images of wealth and glamour, potentially right on their doorstep, without the means of achieving them.

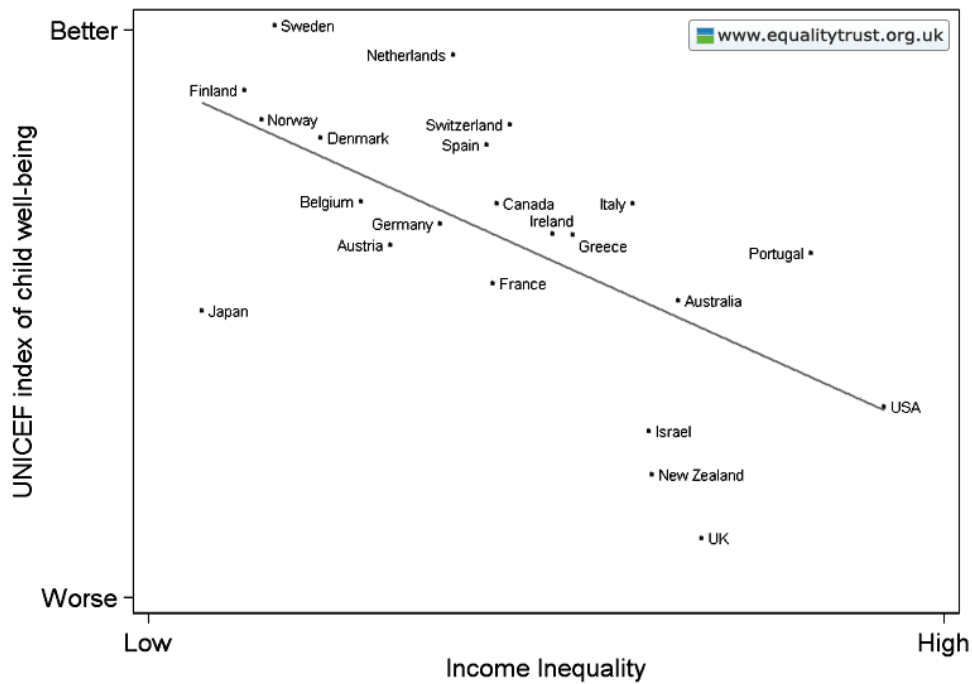


Figure 8 – Childhood well-being plotted against Income Inequality measures

The London Child Poverty Commission published a report in 2010 which claimed four in ten children were living in poverty (after accounting for living costs) in London. Figures such as this are worrying and draw attention once again to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943). At the very bottom of the hierarchy are physical needs, needs which are fundamental to human survival such as food and safety. Kids Company have found that 68% of those who referred themselves for help described themselves as regularly going to bed hungry and 39% have been the sole carer of a parent or a sibling, rather than being cared for themselves. Importantly in relation to offending behaviour, 81% of the Kids Company clients who have been imprisoned have also experienced childhood trauma first hand (Kids Company, 2011). Thus it is fair to say that not all children are starting from the same baseline in terms of needing *Relatedness*, *Competence* and *Autonomy*.

However, it has been argued that the actual impact of social inequality on an individual's likelihood to offend depends largely on their subjective characteristics (LeBel *et al*, 2008). For example, LeBel *et al* (2008) identified that mindsets were “*at least marginally significant*” (pg 154) in protecting against recidivism in adults released from custody, referring specifically to feelings of stigmatization, family connectedness and hope. Therefore, it follows that by facilitating and supporting a resilient mindset in early adolescence, young people have a better chance of success regardless of their social circumstances. Nonetheless, at this point, research remains ambiguous as to whether internal or external changes are more powerful in encouraging and maintaining change in offenders (LeBel *et al*, 2008). Therefore, the conclusions drawn regarding the enhancement of ICPS skills, self belief and aspirations through a preventative intervention must be considered in relation to problematic social contexts. Impact can be made at the individual level and preventative interventions should absolutely be encouraged. But continued effort in tackling wider societal issues, such as inequality and poverty, remain crucial if children from deprived communities are to believe that planning for the future is worthwhile.

Non-academic, but particularly poignant words from Scottish Orator, Jimmy Reid, have been chosen to close this PhD as they encapsulate its very spirit while also highlighting the difficulties in turning inspirations into realities for the next generation. I only became aware of them at the funeral of Jimmy Reid in 2010, but he is said to have made these comments when looking at a high-rise block of council flats in Scotland, suggesting he was looking at deprivation:

'Behind every window is someone who might have been a horse jumping champion or a winning yachtsman but they will never know because they will never step on a yacht, or get on a horse'.

CHAPTER 8

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS

I started this PhD with some background information regarding my early career in forensic psychology. It seems fitting therefore to end it with some mention of the future. Undertaking this PhD has allowed me to immerse myself in a literature of which I was only marginally aware beforehand. As such, I was able to make sense of the work I had been doing in the prison and the reason for its popularity across the globe. I was subsequently able to personally critique this work and feel reassured in my decision to leave it.

From a professional perspective, I have embraced the freedom of academia in terms of finding my own direction. I also greatly appreciate the fact that through academia, there is potential for me to have some influence over how child offenders are dealt with in the future. I have had the opportunity to share my ideas with international audiences and with academics I have respected from a distance for many years. I will relish this forever.

I do anticipate some resistance to my suggestions amongst non-academic populations. Recruiting participants was by far the bleakest stage of my PhD experience, with many teachers and administrators not responding to initial emails and letters, or not maintaining contact once it was established. It was very difficult to break through the 'red tape' surrounding schools and youth organisations, especially since the school would receive little in return for its effort in helping me collect my PhD data. The pressure on school staff in their daily work meant that accepting further work (i.e. assisting with my PhD) was not attractive. Wherever possible, I did offer something in return for their participation, such as a talk to school pupils about careers in

psychology, motivational talks about the benefits of working hard and problem solving workshops. This was a very frustrating and worrying time for me as a researcher, and I was so lucky to have my supervisors to continually encourage me to persevere. Eventually, several schools did agree to take part and have actively enquired as to how the results might be useful to them.

Not only because of the difficulties faced in data collection, I admit I did question my ability to reach the end of this PhD. A project like this lasting three years required a level of personal determination and self-motivation I did not know I possessed. It has been a challenge and one I can finally reflect on with a whisper of a smile.

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