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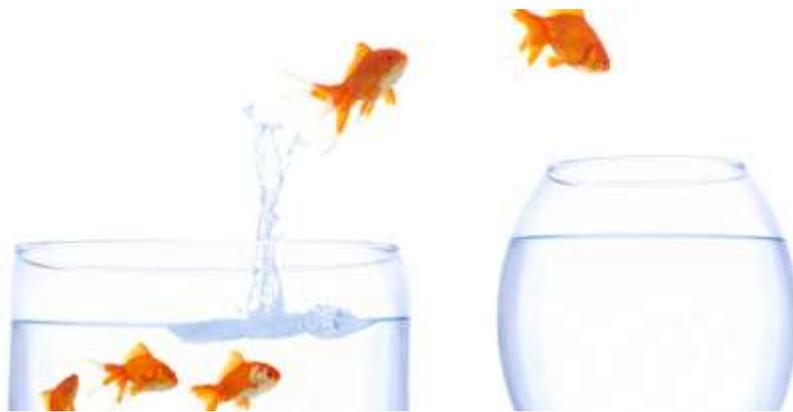
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Insider Accounts of the Move to the  
Outside:  
An Interpretative Phenomenological  
Analysis of Three Young People's  
Perceptions of Their Transition from  
the Secure Estate (Custody) into  
Education, Training or Employment

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## **Abstract**

Young people who have experienced the secure estate as a result of being involved in offending behaviour are particularly vulnerable to poor life outcomes (unemployment, poor education, mental health difficulties, social exclusion etc.). This research project focusses on three young people's perspectives of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment in order to contribute to the growing knowledge base around this population of young people. This contribution is in the form of an interpretation by the author of these idiographic accounts of transition.

The young people were identified by professionals within the Youth Justice System. Each young person was interviewed about their experience of transition twice in the secure estate and once following release. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Converging themes emerged from all three participants around their experiences of social exclusion as young people involved in offending behaviour, and the challenge they perceived in separating from offending behaviour. Diverging themes emerged between the young people in terms of one young person's experience of institutionalisation, and two young people's goal directed approaches to transition.

This research contextualises its findings in relation to existing literature and draws out recommendations for future research and educational psychology practice in relation to young people leaving the secure estate. This has implications for how young people are understood and supported through transition.

Volume 1 ContentsTable of Contents

<u>Content</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Critical Literature Review</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1: Transition and the role of the EP within transition	<u>13</u>
2.2: Young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group during transition	<u>15</u>
2.3: Transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour	<u>17</u>
2.4: The voice of young people in offending behaviour	<u>20</u>
2.5: The voice of young people in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment	<u>23</u>
2.6: Phenomenological approaches to investigating young people's perceptions of their experience of the process of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment	<u>26</u>
Conclusion of critical literature review	<u>30</u>
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology</b>	<b>32</b>
3.1: Overview	<u>32</u>
3.1.1: Ontology	<u>36</u>
3.1.2: Epistemology	<u>36</u>
3.1.3: Myself as a research-practitioner	<u>38</u>
Summary of ontology, epistemology and myself as a research-practitioner	<u>41</u>
3.2: Research Question	<u>42</u>
3.3: Choice of methodology	<u>43</u>
3.3.1: Grounded Theory	<u>44</u>
3.3.2: Discourse Analysis	<u>45</u>
3.3.3: Narrative research	<u>46</u>

3.3.4: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	<u>47</u>
3.4: My chosen methodology IPA	<u>48</u>
3.4.1: Phenomenology	<u>48</u>
3.4.2: Hermeneutics	<u>49</u>
3.4.3: Idiography	<u>51</u>
3.4.4: Critique of IPA	<u>52</u>
Summary of my chosen methodology IPA	<u>54</u>
3.5: Quality in research: reliability, validity, and generalisation/transferability of findings	<u>55</u>
3.5.1: Reliability	<u>55</u>
3.5.2: Validity	<u>55</u>
3.5.3: Generalisability/transferability	<u>57</u>
3.6: Design	<u>59</u>
3.6.1: Sample	<u>59</u>
3.6.2: Ethical considerations	<u>60</u>
3.6.3: Methodological considerations following the pilot study	<u>64</u>
3.6.3.1: Decision point 1: written or verbal data collection	<u>65</u>
3.6.3.2: Decision point 2: unstructured or semi-structured interviews	<u>65</u>
3.6.3.3: Decision point 3: use of additional strategies to enable my sample to give rich, thick descriptions of their experiences of their own transition.	<u>66</u>
3.6.3.4: Decision point 4: Multiple interviews as the young people experience the process of transition.	<u>68</u>
3.7.1: Methods/Procedures	<u>71</u>
3.7.2: Analysis	<u>72</u>
Summary of methodology chapter	<u>80</u>
<b>Chapter 4: Results</b>	<b>82</b>
Overview of results	<u>82</u>
4.1: Introduction to results chapter	<u>83</u>

4.2: Converging perceptions of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment	<u>85</u>
4.2.1: Experiencing social exclusion as a young offender	<u>86</u>
4.2.2: The challenge of separating from offending behaviour	<u>92</u>
Summary of converging perceptions of transition	<u>102</u>
4.3: Diverging perceptions of the transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment	<u>103</u>
4.3.1: Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.	<u>104</u>
4.3.2: Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition.	<u>108</u>
Summary of diverging perceptions of transition	<u>119</u>
Summary of results chapter	<u>120</u>
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion</b>	<b>121</b>
Introduction	<u>121</u>
5.1: Dialogue between my research results and existing literature	<u>122</u>
5.1.1: Experiencing social exclusion as an offender	<u>122</u>
5.1.2: Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community	<u>126</u>
5.1.3: The challenge of separating from offending behaviour	<u>129</u>
5.1.4: Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition	<u>135</u>
5.1.5: Summary and further dialogue between my results and existing literature	<u>141</u>
5.2: Strengths and limitations of this study	<u>148</u>
5.2.1: Strengths	<u>148</u>
5.2.2: Limitations	<u>151</u>
5.3: Recommendations for further research	<u>154</u>
Summary of discussion chapter	<u>156</u>
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions</b>	<b>158</b>

6.1.1: Conclusions	<u>158</u>
6.1.2: Recommendations for practice	<u>159</u>
6.2: Reflections on my experience of researching transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment	<u>163</u>
6.2.1: How do I feel about this?	<u>163</u>
6.2.2: What do I think about this?	<u>164</u>
6.2.3: What have I learnt from this?	<u>165</u>
6.2.4: What action will I take as a result of my lessons learned?	<u>167</u>
Summary of conclusion chapter	<u>168</u>
<b>References</b>	<b>169</b>

**See CD for Volume 2 Appendices.**

<b>List of figures</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1: Overview of methodology	<u>32</u>
Figure 2: The hermeneutic circle (reproduced from Bontekoe, 1996, p.4)	<u>48</u>
Figure 3: The Double Hermeneutic (reproduced from Norreklit, 2006, p.5)	<u>49</u>
Figure 4: Overview of analysis	<u>69</u>
Figure 5: Overview of results	<u>79</u>

<b>List of tables</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Results of individual analyses	<u>74</u>
Table 2: Themes which converge across all three interviews for all participants	<u>82</u>
Table 3: Themes which diverge between participants across all three interviews	<u>100</u>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

My review of the literature currently available relating to young people's perceptions of their experience of the secure estate has indicated that young people leaving the secure estate (custody) are particularly vulnerable to both poor life outcomes (such as mental health difficulties, unemployment and poor education) and social exclusion (Ryrie, 2006). Research focussing on the direct experiences of these young people often refers to the fact that their voices are rarely elicited (Tam *et al.*, 2007, Lane *et al.*, 2002), and that they are seen as powerless as a group (Freed & Smith, 2004). Therefore research which contributes to facilitating their voice to be heard can be regarded as socially justified.

As a researcher and as an Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training (EPiT) with a prior interest in young people with behavioural, social and emotional needs, I felt drawn towards investigating the experience of transition for this group of people from the secure estate into education, training or employment. This is an area which appears to be relatively neglected in the existing knowledge base, particularly in the United Kingdom. Further understanding of the phenomenon of transition, in particular the challenges faced by the young people involved, may elucidate the potential role that might be played by an educational psychology service as part of the service provided to vulnerable young people.

This thesis begins in chapter 2 with a critical discussion of research and publications that form the background and rationale for the investigation. The key areas investigated are; transition and the role of the EP within transition, young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group for transition, the transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour, the voice of young people involved in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate into education training or employment, and phenomenological approaches to researching this phenomenon.

I adopted an interpretative phenomenological position in this research, and therefore investigated the phenomenon of transition through my interpretation of the perspectives of individual young people leaving the secure estate (see chapter 3). These perspectives were gathered using individual semi-structured interviews. Chapter 3 explains my choice of research methodology (IPA) with respect to the perceived advantages of this over other considered methodologies. The procedures used to obtain and analyse the data are described in some detail.

Chapter 4 reports the findings from my analysis. This analysis focusses on converging and diverging themes in the data. Additional material to support this analysis can be found in the appendices in volume 2. This provides an audit trail of my data collection and interpretation with interviews extracts, and an analysis of temporal convergence and divergence (see contents list, volume 2).

Dialogue between my research results and existing literature is then set out in chapter 5, together with a discussion of the considered strengths and limitations of the study. This discussion is designed to aid the reader to engage with my interpretation of three young people's perceptions of their transition.

Recommendations for further research are also suggested here.

Finally, the concluding chapter 6 notes possible recommendations for EP practice and my reflections on the experience of undertaking this research project.

## Chapter 2: Critical Literature Review

The rationale for researching this topic is underpinned by the following critical literature review, which focusses on literature relating to:

2.1: Transition and the role of the EP within transition

2.2: Young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group for transition

2.3: The transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour

2.4: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour

2.5: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate to education, training or employment

2.6: Phenomenological approaches to investigating young people's perceptions of their experience of the process of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment.

My interest in researching the transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour was sparked by my previous experience with this population, discussion within my employing service about how to negotiate the remit of Educational Psychologists (EPs) with Young Offenders Institutes, and the finding that “England and Wales have the second highest rate of incarceration in Europe” (House of Commons, 2011, p.7). Whilst this thesis was completed, the number of young people in the secure estate was 2,106 (Youth Justice Board, 2011).

### **2.1: Transition and the role of the EP within transition**

The role of the EP can be defined as

“to promote child development and learning through the application of psychology by working with individuals and groups of children, teachers and other adults in schools, families, other LEA officers, health and social services and other agencies” (DFEE 2000, p.5).

Key mechanisms for an EP include Annual Reviews for children with statements for whom a change in provision is suggested. An equivalent process to this for children at risk of permanent exclusion is called a ‘managed move’ (DFEE, 1999). This process involves the movement of a child from one provision to another, to prevent the sanction of permanent exclusion being applied (Abdelnoor, 2007). Guidance around managed moves indicates the need for an assessment of needs and careful provision planning (Abdelnoor, 2007). I would argue that children involved in offending behaviour require equivalent transition planning and the involvement of an EP, as they transfer from the provision of the secure estate to the provision of education. Research into this

transition focuses on the recommendation that an integrated multi-agency approach should be adopted, in order to plan appropriate packages of support for the complex and changing needs of this population (Anthony *et al.*, 2010; Hurry & Moriarty, 2008; Youth Justice Board, 2008; ██████<sup>1</sup> Youth Offending Service, 2007a, b; Bullis *et al.* 2004).

For this population transition is referred to as ‘reentry’ (Mears & Travis, 2004) and ‘reintegration’ (Altshuler & Brash, 2004). Common definitions state that “reentry refers to the process and experience of reentering society after a term of incarceration” (Mears & Travis, 2004, p.5), whilst reintegration is viewed as “encompassing what occurs during and after confinement” (Altshuler & Brash, 2004, p.73). I would challenge both of these terms on the basis of the underlying implicit assumption that these young people had previously ‘entered’ education and been ‘integrated’. This challenge is based on evidence of young people involved in offending behaviour as having disrupted school histories (Hurry & Moriarty, 2004) and being described as a marginalised group (Tam *et al.*, 2007). Therefore I will use the term ‘transition’ to describe the process of moving from the secure estate into education and the local community (Youth Justice Board, 2008).

As introduced above, a central part of the role of the EP is work with adults to “promote child development and learning” (DFEE, *op. cit.*). This often involves

1. Local Authority references have been anonymised to protect the anonymity of the participants. All documents referenced from the Local Authority can be found in a separate section at the end of the reference section so that they cannot be identified by their position in the alphabet.

collaborative work to remove barriers to development and learning, for example the DfES Code of Practice outlines the fact that a transition plan must be produced for Year 9 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (DfES, 2001). However, this recognition of the importance of transition for young people involved in offending behaviour is less prevalent in UK research literature. A limited number of studies focus on the transition experiences of young people moving from the secure estate into education (Bullis *et al.*, 2002). This would indicate an opportunity for further research into the transition experiences of young people leaving the secure estate into education, training and employment in the UK.

## **2.2: Young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group during transition**

“Young people involved in crime tend to bear many of the characteristics- and have many of the needs- that are typical of young people with special needs or who are vulnerable to disadvantage and social exclusion” (Ryrie, 2006, p.9).

Although Ryrie wrote this predominantly on the basis of his own experience (working as an EP within a multi-agency team for young offenders), I think it is supported by a large volume of research documenting the specific vulnerabilities of young people involved in offending behaviour as a group, and their similarity to other vulnerable groups. For example these young people could be perceived as vulnerable because of the following:

- They have experienced the poor outcome of criminal activity (█ Youth Offending Service, 2007a).

- They are more likely to be from poor and minority communities and return to these (Sullivan, 2004).
- They are more likely to have mental health problems (Harrington *et al.*, 2005).
- They are less likely to be engaged in education or employment (Bullis *et al.*, 2002).
- They are more likely to have be described as having learning difficulties, low attainment and persistent absenteeism (Altshuler & Brash, 2004).
- They are more likely to have a history of substance abuse (Youth Justice Board, 2008).
- They are more likely to have been in care or had experience of care (Hurry & Moriarty, 2004).
- They are more likely to have had a brain injury (Williams *et al.*, 2010).

It is further argued that within the vulnerable group of young people involved in offending behaviour, there is an even more vulnerable group; those who have experienced custodial sentences. This is because the experience of custody is thought to prohibit psychosocial maturation (Steinberg *et al.*, 2004), decrease resiliency (Stephenson, 2005), interrupt the development of an attachment and engagement with education (Youth Justice Board, 2006) and dissociate them from their families and prosocial peers (Sullivan, 2004). These descriptors of enhanced vulnerability and marginalisation provide a social justice motivation to research this specific group (Hurry & Moriarty, 2004). In addition to this, in my role as an EPiT, I am motivated by a professional obligation to “promote the welfare of this vulnerable group” (████ Youth Offending Service, 2007a, p.2).

Within the UK this vulnerable group would be defined by the following Youth Offending Service legal criteria for children experiencing custodial sentences (in the UK custody for young people is referred to as the secure estate):

- “A young person leaving the secure estate may have been secured;
- Under section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989 i.e. on welfare grounds
  - By a court ordered remand to a secure facility as a result of suspected criminal activity
  - Having received a Detention and Training Order (DTO) under the powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000
  - Having received a section 90/91 custodial sentence under the powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000
  - Having received a section 228 custodial sentence under the powers of the Criminal Justice Act 2003” (██████ Youth Offending Service, 2007b, p.3).

Further, for this thesis, only those children who meet the above criteria could be in the secure estate and therefore potentially contribute as a participant. My perception is that the apparent increased vulnerability of this subsection of the population of young people involved in offending behaviour provides an impetus for focussing on their perceptions of their transition from the secure estate, rather than focussing on the transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour as a whole.

### **2.3: Transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour**

A significant literature review conducted by Spencer and Jones-Walker in America concluded that “relatively little of this research has critically examined the process of reentry...” (2004, p.89). This indicates that transition as a process may be a gap in the research knowledge base about young people involved in

offending behaviour. Abrams *et al.* (2008) similarly comment on the limited research on transition within child welfare research. Contemporary reviews such as Anthony *et al.*'s 2010 paper, comment on the lack of recent research focussing on needs pre- and post-transition. They also comment on the need for holistic support to meet these complex and changing needs. Anthony *et al.* are explicit in the limitations of their claims for integrated support for young people involved in offending behaviour to make successful transitions from custody to the community and education, and their use of outcome measures as evaluation tools. I perceive this to be a reliable and credible review of the current developing picture of transition for young people involved in offending behaviour. This is supported by the Youth Justice Board's implementation of an attempt at clearer planning and assessment of needs for transition using the ASSET tool (Youth Justice Board, 2008). However, Webster *et al.* (2006) have problematized practitioner's use of the ASSET on the basis of the aforementioned complex and changing needs of young people involved in offending behaviour. In addition to this critique, the Youth Justice Board comment that "evidence based practice represents a new cultural approach for youth justice services to adopt" (Youth Justice Board, 2006, p.27). This all indicates the potential for me to contribute to the developing knowledge base around transition by researching individual's perceptions of their own experiences of transition and feed this back into the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and the EP service.

Available research studies on transition are mixed in terms of their quality and rigour in making justified claims about young people involved in offending

behaviour which do not generalise beyond the evidence base presented. For example, some larger studies (e.g. Bullis *et al.*, 2004; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998) indicate the importance of education in promoting positive outcomes for this vulnerable group. Bullis *et al.* (2004) conclude that engagement in education or employment within the first six months post-release is predictive of engagement in work or school a year later. This finding could be used to highlight the importance of transition in shaping future outcomes for young people leaving the secure estate. However, Andrews *et al.* (1990) analysis of 372 studies of the correlates of offending behaviour indicated that education explains only 2.4% of the variance in trajectories of offending behaviour. Although this appears to be a large analysis study, artificial separation of factors correlated with offending behaviour may be over-simplistic. It is reasonable to assume that many factors associated with offending behaviour may be inter-related and mutually reinforcing. I think that it would be more appropriate to conclude from this that education is an important factor, for example as a protective factor in resilience (Buchanan & Fluori, 2001, Youth Justice Board, 2008), but that this should be interpreted as part of the complex picture of ecological and interactional factors associated with offending behaviour (Altschuler & Brash, 2004).

It is apparent that research about young people involved in offending behaviour needs to represent the complexity of this phenomenon. Some studies such as Sullivan's 2004 research on 'youth perspectives on the experience of reentry', and Inderbitzin's 2009 research on the 'reentry of emerging adults', use qualitative methods to look at the complexity of transition from the perspectives of young people themselves. However both were limited by the omission of

audit trails and interview schedules, heterogeneity within small samples and overgeneralization of their findings. For example, Inderbitzin claims that “perspectives offer rich detail and valuable insight into the process of prisoner reentry” (2009, p.459). It may have been more credible to claim that these perspectives offer insight into the reentry experiences of five young men within their given context. These research attempts to represent the richness and complexity of human experience of transition, parallel the need for comprehensive, multifaceted assessment and planning involving young people themselves. This will then need to be rigorously evaluated (Anthony *et al.*, 2010). This indicates a need for a variety of research projects focussed on transition planning to identify and evidence best practice whilst keeping the young people themselves at the centre of this research. I perceive that my small scale research project could contribute to this by interacting with young people’s perceptions of their own experiences of transition.

#### **2.4: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour**

For all young people, one cannot overstate the importance of eliciting views about their education, welfare and any assessment or intervention we engage in with them as professionals. As EPs, our primary client is the young person or group of children, and so it is they who should ultimately evaluate whether our work in supporting them has been effective. In policy and practice however, it is often the adults through whom we work that are responsible for evaluating our input, and it is their voices we routinely elicit and listen to. This is further facilitated by the role of these adults and the state as our employer. Therefore to

embed the importance of eliciting the voice of the child in policy, key legislative documents make this both a right and a responsibility for those working with children. For example the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

“Children who are capable of forming views, have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child.” (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, articles 12 & 13).

For the EP role, this gives children the right to have a voice about all intervention, assessment and planning that is done on their behalf. Further the SEN Code of practice states that:

“All children should be involved in making decisions where possible right from the start of their education. The ways in which children are encouraged to participate should reflect the child’s evolving maturity. Participation in education is a process that will necessitate all children being given the opportunity to make choices and to understand that their views matter.” (DfES, 2001, p.28).

This is more pertinent for young people involved in offending behaviour for whom the process of transition may represent a crossroads where they choose between a path towards mainstream success or a continued path towards offending behaviour and custodial sentences (Harrington *et al.*, 2005). This is included in policy documents which include aims for the Youth Offending Service to “listen to and document the views of the children and ensure they are heard, to work in partnership with children” (██████ Youth Offending Service, 2007a, p.2) and to take “account of the views of young people” (██████ Youth Offending Service, 2007b, p.4).

Research which focuses on eliciting the voices of young people involved in offending behaviour often refers to the fact that their voice is “often unheard” (Tam *et al.*, 2007, p.131), commonly ignored (Lane *et al.*, 2002), and that they are powerless as a group (Freed & Smith, 2004). As a vulnerable group they may also be described as ‘hard to reach’ as professionals often find it difficult to engage with them (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2007). Research in this vein could be described as emancipatory in attempting to describe the views of this vulnerable group. Reasons given for eliciting these people’s voices include the fact that they can be perceived as the primary stakeholder in the system of youth offending so should be key agents in evaluating its effectiveness (Unruh, 2005), and that they are critical in interactions within this system so should impact upon them positively (Sullivan, 2004). Although these assumptions have not been rigorously evaluated I think this still gives a strong impetus for researching this population’s views about their own transition. Some researchers further highlight their findings that eliciting young people’s views may illuminate unmet needs, for example bullying within the secure estate (Champion & Clare, 2006; Youth Justice Board, 2006). It should be noted that the majority of research in this field has focussed on young adults in America, and research projects focussing on young people’s voices have not tended to evidence an audit trail for their interpretations and conclusions on the basis of their interactions with young people. This indicates a need to elicit the views of young people involved in offending behaviour in the UK as, especially from such small scale studies on such a complex phenomenon as the experience of a

young person involved in offending behaviour, one should not generalise that similar factors would be salient.

### **2.5: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment**

Historically research has focussed on adult views around transition for young people involved in offending behaviour, rather than young people's views. For example, Hagner *et al.*'s (2008) qualitative investigation of 'key stakeholders' perceptions of the factors which differentiate between successful and unsuccessful transitions, omits young people's perceptions (Unruh, 2005). Researchers operating from a similar viewpoint tend to use semi-structured interviews to elicit young people's descriptions of their own experiences (Inderbitzin, 2009; Abrams *et al.*, 2008; Champion & Clare, 2006; Youth Justice Board, 2006; Unruh, 2005; Bullis *et al.*, 2004). This is based on the assumption that young people can describe their own experiences, and that this description will reflect their perception of barriers and supports to their own transition. I am critical of this assumption on the basis of the relatively high proportion of young people involved in offending behaviour with speech and language difficulties (Bryan *et al.*, 2007) and special educational needs (Bullis *et al.*, 2004; Bullis *et al.*, 2002). In light of this potential barrier to communication and understanding, this research is variable in terms of the appropriateness of interview schedules and prompts used and the transparency of the analytic process used.

For example, Bullis *et al.* 2004 used phone interviews to elicit the views of a large sample of 531 young people over a period of 1-4 years. This longitudinal approach and large sample size has enabled this piece of research to influence subsequent research in this field (for example, Anthony *et al.*, 2010; Hagner *et al.*, 2008; Unruh, 2005; Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004). However, closer examination of the interview schedule indicates that leading, complex questions were used which could have biased the results or prohibited young people with lower levels of language comprehension and/or expression from having their views represented fully. For example, ‘have you worked competitively in the past?’ (Bullis *et al.*, 2004, p.83). On a smaller scale of 33 young people, Unruh (2005) used the views of staff working with these 33 young people to guide their construction of the interview schedule and implementation. This was based on the questionable assumption that staff who knew these young people well would have knowledge and understanding of how best to elicit these young people’s perceptions. This focus on individual perception rather than group perception was based on the researcher’s assumption that “more accurate and rich information is gathered one-on-one rather than in a group setting” (Unruh, 2005, p.416). This assumption was based on personal experience rather than a robust evidence base. Freed & Smith’s 2004 research on American Indians involved in offending behaviour demonstrates a similar omission of a research base for its use of essays to elicit the views of these young people. It could be argued that there may be serious limitations in the use of this approach given the well evidenced prevalence of literacy difficulties within this sample population (Snowling *et al.*, 2000). In addition to this, the analysis process for consequent essay responses is not detailed to support transparency. Freed and Smith

conclude that there should be an increase in appreciation of the influence of the American Indian culture on learning and inclusion in the curriculum for this sample. This conclusion is made on the basis of the finding that these young people do not mention American Indian culture throughout their essay responses. I question the credibility of this claim without further investigation of it as a hypothesis. I would propose that an alternative interpretation that culture was omitted from responses because it was not a salient factor for this sample of young people, could be equally credible. These research studies indicate the importance of transparency and clear justification in the use of research methods and analysis tools to engage in eliciting and interpreting young people's perceptions of their own transition experiences.

In my opinion, the research of Abrams *et al.* (2008) on 'transition services for incarcerated youth' provides one example of enhanced credibility and transparency by detailing the interview method used and utilising other authors' analysis process, in this case "Miles and Huberman's (1984) four stage process for qualitative data analysis" (Abrams *et al.*, 2008, p.527). This openness enables reviewers to critique the conclusions drawn on the basis of evidence collected. My critique of their research leads me to agree that they are justified in claiming that for their sample of ten youths;

"while youth described an array of challenges ranging from job disappointments to conflicts with their girlfriends, by far the primary thematic content of these challenges revolved around 'old friends and influences'" (Abrams *et al.*, 2008, p.527).

This could be further justified by the observation that this focus on the importance of key relationships for young people transitioning from the secure estate is also found in the following studies: Anthony *et al.* (2010) review of statistics around integration, Sullivan (2004) research on ‘youth perspectives of reentry’, Steinberg *et al.* (2004) research on the ‘reentry of young offenders’, Youth Justice Board’s (2006) review of the ‘Barriers to engagement in education, training and employment etc. This indicates the need for more credible and transparent research into young people’s perspectives of their experience of their own transition from the secure estate into education. As Inderbitzin explains, by using research to illuminate this vulnerable group one may hope that:

‘By listening to even a small sample of emerging adults learning to stand alone, we may gain a deeper understanding of the issues they consider most important and what might be done to tilt the odds in their favour’ (Inderbitzin, 2009, p.470).

The following section looks at how one could listen to the perspectives of young people and the epistemological underpinnings of such an approach.

## **2.6: Phenomenological approaches to investigating young people’s perceptions of their experience of the process of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment**

Phenomenological approaches focus on “understanding the meanings their psychological and social worlds hold for respondents” (Smith *et al.*, 1995, p.5).

This is based on the assumption that one cannot separate ‘objective fact’ or

‘truth’ from an individual’s perception of this (Langdridge, 2007). This perception will be influenced by a myriad of factors including how that perception is elicited from the individual person. The phenomenological approach attempts to interact with an individual’s perception of a lived experience and to describe or analyse the researcher’s perception of that perception. From this perspective, research into transition for young people (from the secure estate into education, training and employment) would focus on their perception of this process and the meaning they attribute to aspects of this process. Transition as a process would be the phenomenon researched. I maintain that it is appropriate to approach this research topic from a phenomenological position because I perceive transition to be a key lived experience, and young people leaving the secure estate to be a group with knowledge of this experience. My perception is based on my ontological position of phenomenology and my awareness of research in this area based on this position.

For example, I believe that Inderbitzin’s research on ‘reentry of emerging adults’ is conducted from a phenomenological perspective as Inderbitzin indicates that he follows Messerschmidt’s interest in,

“how adolescent male offenders construct and make sense of their particular world, and comprehend the ways in which they interpret their own lives and the world around them” (Messerschmidt, 1999, p.198).

This focus on constructions and meanings of transition for young people themselves may help to represent the complexity of this phenomenon and their

voice within it. The research of Freed and Smith (2004) 'American Indian Children's Voices from Prison' similarly focuses on the "personal interpretations of young people" (p.20). I would argue that the above two research papers are examples of the value of engaging with young people's perceptions of transition as a phenomenon to research. However, as previously noted, I would critique Inderbitzin, and Freed and Smith, on the lack of transparency of their analysis process for interpreting these young people's perceptions of their own experiences. This is a critique of their application of method and reporting rather than the appropriateness of the phenomenological underpinnings.

A more contemporary study by Champion and Clare (2006) demonstrates that phenomenological approaches can be employed in a transparent way to enhance the credibility of assertions about the perspectives of young people experiencing transition from the secure estate. Champion and Clare (2006) used semi-structured interviews to research the experiences of sixteen young males involved in offending behaviour. Their analysis of this led them to tentatively propose a hypothetical model that

"the extent to which young offenders use their sentence as a time for reflection and re-evaluation, and the extent to which they are able to reconnect successfully with their physical and social milieu, implement changes planned during the sentence, and adopt new roles and lifestyles all interact in influencing how the young offender responds following release" (Champion & Clare, 2006, p. 95-96).

This highlights the psychological processes they interpreted as forming part of their sample of young people's experiences of transition from the secure estate

into the community. Champion and Clare's transparency about limitations to generalizability for phenomenological research (see section 3.5.3) emphasizes the importance of further research into this phenomenon in order to inform support for this vulnerable group of young people.

My research project on 'young people's perspectives of their experience of transition from the secure estate into education' could contribute to the growing knowledge base about young people's perceptions of this lived experience.

### **Conclusion of Critical Literature Review**

This critical literature review has focussed on literature related to young people's perceptions of their experience of the transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment.

#### 2.1: Transition and the role of the EP within transition

I have reviewed transition in general as a key lived experience for young people for which multi-agency involvement including the EP would be desirable.

#### 2.2: Young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group during transition

I have highlighted young people involved in offending behaviour as a vulnerable group for transition despite current policy focussing on children with Special Educational Needs. Within this population I have highlighted the enhanced vulnerability of young people within the secure estate.

#### 2.3: Transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour

I have critiqued the variable credibility and transparency of research conducted about the transition experiences of young people involved in offending behaviour.

#### 2.4: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour

This included the need for research to elicit the voice of young people involved in offending behaviour, and the limitations of available literature in this field.

2.5: The voice of young people involved in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment

I presented a critical account of research which focuses on the voice of young people involved in offending behaviour in transition from the secure estate to education, training and employment.

2.6: Phenomenological approaches to investigating young people's perceptions of their experience of the process of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment

Finally I have introduced the phenomenological approach as a position from which to investigate the phenomenon of transition through the perspectives of young people leaving the secure estate.

I perceive that this review of the literature illuminates Ryrie's following conclusion from his reflection on current support for young people involved in offending behaviour:

“There are many opportunities for research into highly important topics of central relevance to the strategic responsibility of the local education authority. These include the views of young people in the youth justice system about the educational provision they had received, particularly those who had been in the custodial setting” (Ryrie, 2006, p.13).

This critical review of the literature has led me to aim to conduct a research project to investigate the following research question:

How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

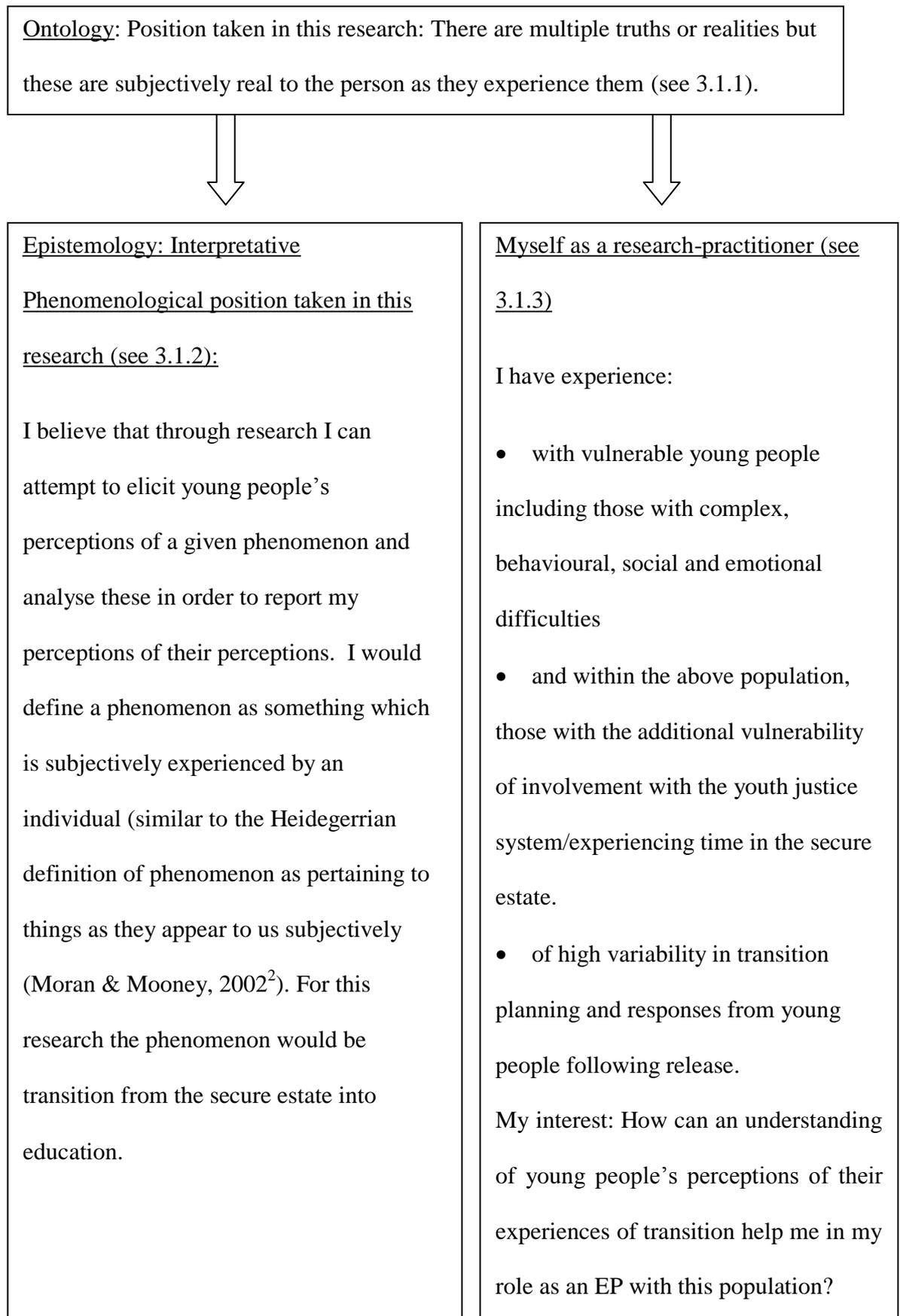
### 3.1: Overview

Figure 1 shows the decision process informing my choice of methodology and its theoretical underpinnings. In this chapter I will give a concise explanation of each of the following sections of this figure:

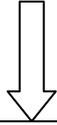
- Ontology
- Epistemology
- Myself as a research-practitioner
- Research Question
- Choice of methodology (including design and analysis process)

(See chapter 4 for results and chapter 5 for discussion).

Figure 1: Overview of Methodology



2. Moran and Mooney's 2002 text 'The Phenomenology Reader' is a collection of translations of original texts from phenomenological authors. Papers from this are referenced within this text in the form: (author, date in Moran & Mooney, 2002, page number). These should not be viewed as secondary citations.



Research question:

How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?



Methodology: IPA

The key lived experience under investigation: Transition from the secure estate into education.

Design (see 3.6)

Sample: Three young people identified by YOS or National Offender Management System (NOMS) as experiencing the transition from the secure estate into education (see 3.6.1).

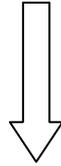
Data collection: semi-structured interviews with task-based activity approach

Interview 1: in the secure estate pre-release (see Appendix A1)

Interview 2: in the secure estate around the time of pre-release planning (see Appendix A2)

Interview 3: after release at Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP)/YOS setting (see Appendix A3).

(Interviews are planned to elicit perceptions of transition as this experience is lived over a period of time by the young people. The number of interviews is not significant).



Analysis, results and discussion

(See figure 4 for analysis, chapter 4 for results and chapter 5 for discussion)

### **3.1.1: Ontology**

“Ontology is the study of being and existence in the world. It is the attempt to discover the fundamental categories of what exists in the world” (Burr, 1995, p.92).

Ontological assumptions about the nature of being and knowledge impact upon epistemological and methodological approaches to research (following sections).

My ontological position is that whilst experience is always subject to interpretation (i.e. constructed and flexible) it is real to the person subjectively experiencing it. This could be described as an interpretative phenomenological ontology (Langdridge, 2007). In line with this, using research, I aim to engage with people’s verbal expressions of the reality of their subjective experience.

This engagement may be highly idiographic as one individual’s interpretation of their experience may be flexible and differ from another’s perception, and it may be partially constructed by the experience of communicating it to another.

As a researcher, I consider epistemological positions that are explicit about this flexible understanding of ‘being and existing in the world’ (ibid).

### **3.1.2: Epistemology**

Epistemology refers to the “theory of knowledge” and questions what can be defined as acceptable knowledge (Bryman, 2004, p.539).

Epistemological positions differ in what is considered to be acceptable knowledge, from realism (the world is made up of structures and objects that have cause and effect relationships with one another, and an objective existence outside human perception) to relativism (there is no such thing as reality, all

knowledge is relative and in constant flux). I have adopted an interpretative phenomenological epistemological position. Phenomenology is based on the Husserlian perception that “knowledge does not exist in itself but is correlated with subjectivity and so can only be claimed in the context of a subject apprehending the world” (Langdridge, 2007, p.155). Following this perception, acceptable knowledge about the transition from the secure estate into education would include rich, thick descriptive accounts from individuals who have experienced this phenomenon. This knowledge could be used to understand young people’s experiences of transition in this context i.e. to understand the lived experience of transition (Moran & Embree, 2004; Robson, 2002).

I am influenced by the work of Heidegger; my position is explicitly interpretative phenomenology rather than descriptive phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962 in Moran & Mooney, 2002). This acknowledges my perception that my analysis of these young people’s perceptions will be necessarily intersubjective i.e. it will be my perception of their perceptions rather than “the things themselves” (Husserl, 1970 in Moran & Mooney, 2002, p.67). (See methods section on IPA for further explanation of theoretical underpinning and method).

**3.1.3: Myself as a research-practitioner**Reflexivity

Phenomenological authors such as Langdridge have defined reflexivity as

“the term for the process in which researchers are conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and own subject position might impact on the psychological knowledge produced in a research study” (2007, p.58-59).

To support me to reflect upon myself as a research-practitioner and to identify underlying assumptions and motivations which could effect my choice of research question, data collection and analysis, I have followed Langdridge’s (2009, p.59) recommendation to answer a series of reflexive questions pre- and post-research. Please see box below for excerpts from my responses and appendix D1 for full responses.

“1. Why am I carrying out this study?”

In my role as Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training (EPiT), I think I could do more to support young people leaving the secure estate as a vulnerable group. My interest is based on my experience working with individuals experiencing such a transition, and stems from my observation of the variability of transition experiences and my belief in the importance of their perceptions of this. Through this research I hope to develop expertise in research and the youth justice system, in line with my long term ambition to specialise in either the secure estate, YOS or in the area of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. One of the purposes of this research is to achieve a doctoral qualification, the timing of which coincides with legislative changes giving a statutory duty for EPs to support young people in the secure estate in line with the support they would offer to young people outside the secure estate (Crown Copyright, 2009).

“3. What is my relationship to the topic being investigated?

‘Am I an insider/ outsider?’

I am an outsider to the topic in that I have never experienced the transition in question, but I can relate to the experience of transition between settings in which expectations and options for behaviour and learning are changing.

‘Do I empathize with the participants and their experiences?’

I feel a strong sense of empathy for this group of young people. I strongly believe that professionals and families need to do more to support these young people to have opportunities to make a successful transition into education and then later employment.

“4. Who am I and how might I influence the research I am conducting in terms of age, sex, class, ethnicity, sexuality, culture, politics, social factors?”

According to the literature about young people who are more likely to be in the secure estate, I am more likely to be: older (28 years old), female, more educated (studying for doctoral level qualification), more middle class (both parents attended university and had middle class jobs), to have friends with prosocial behaviour and negative attitudes towards crime, to be supported by a stable family environment (parents still married) and to be more socially mobile. I may be similar to the participants in terms of my ethnicity (White British) and heterosexuality.

Who I am may position the young people to:

- state that education professionals are important
- be defensive and distrustful of my intentions
- position me as someone who will not understand their experiences.

“6. How will my subjective position influence analysis?”

I might be biased towards writing a report which may elicit sympathy for the participants so that better systems are developed to identify and support their needs. As an EPiT, I might express these needs as complex in order to justify my involvement. My previous experience with this population might effect my interpretation of their expressed perspectives as I may associate this with previous communications.

Summary of ontology, epistemology and myself as a research-practitioner

The preceding section has explained that my research will be conducted with the following underpinning ontological, epistemological and personal principles:

- Interpretative phenomenological ontology (Langdridge, 2007).

Whilst experience is always the product of interpretation (i.e. constructed and flexible) it is real to the person subjectively experiencing it.

- Interpretative phenomenological epistemology (Heidegger, 1962, in Moran & Mooney, 2002). My analysis of these young people's perceptions will be necessarily intersubjective i.e. I will present my perception of their perception of transition (see chapters 4 and 5).

- As a research-practitioner I will be reflexive throughout the data collection and analysis process.

- The aim of my research is to contribute to the body of knowledge around experiences of transition in order to help us to understand three individual young people's perceptions of their own transitions (Robson, 2002; Moran & Embtree, 2004).

### **3.2: Research Question**

**How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?**

Keywords

1) Young People: 10-19 years old. 10 is the age of criminal responsibility in the United Kingdom (Bueren, 2007). 19 reflects the upper limit of current EP practice offering support for children and young people aged 0-19.

2) Secure Estate: Custody governed by the Youth Justice Board.

“A young person leaving the secure estate may have been secured;  
- under section 25 of the Children’s Act 1989 i.e. on welfare grounds  
- by a court ordered remand to a secure facility as a result of suspected criminal activity  
- having received a Detention and Training Order (DTO) under the powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000  
- having received a section 228 custodial sentence under the powers of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (████ Youth Offending Service, 2007b, p.3)”.

3) Transition: The process of moving from the secure estate into the education system and the local community (The Scottish Government, 2011; Hart, 2009; Youth Justice Board, 2008; Youth Offending Service, 2007a,b).

4) Education, training or employment: Any setting, provision or tuition allocated by the Local Authority or organised by the participant with support from YOS.

### **3.3: Choice of Methodology**

This section considers alternative research methodologies and my selection of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the most appropriate data collection and analysis technique for my research. Throughout the research process I have continued to reflect upon alternative research methodologies and my choice of IPA.

Quantitative research methods would not be appropriate to answer the research question because the perceptions are not directly measurable. Within the local authority researched, 12 young people are in the secure estate at any one time (██████,2010). Three percent of offences committed by young people within this local authority resulted in custodial sentences (Ministry of Justice, 2010). This sample size is too small for statistical analysis and Q methodology.

Theoretically the above research question could be answered using a range of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Key approaches considered include:

1. Grounded Theory
2. Discourse Analysis
3. Narrative Research
4. IPA

### 3.3.1: Grounded theory

There are many factions within grounded theory methodology. One definition is “theory that was derived from data gathered and analysed through the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.12).

To use grounded theory I could apply “theoretical sampling, coding, constant comparison, the identification of the core variable, and the saturation of data, categories and codes” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.494). The theory generated from this would “emerge from the data in an unforced manner, accounting for all of the data” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.494). For my question this would mean sampling young people leaving the secure estate on the basis that they will have a perception of their experience of transition from the secure estate into education. This group would be sampled to then generate a theory which would provide an explanatory framework of transition.

I have chosen not to use grounded theory because:

- my ability to reach saturation point for perceptions of transition may be limited by small sample size and the ability of the young people to express these perceptions.
- as a practitioner who has experience supporting young people in this transition and has completed a critical literature review I might have a biased theoretical position towards the phenomena in question.

- as this is an exploratory study, I am not seeking to derive general patterns in these perceptions or to develop a theory to explain this phenomenon.

As an alternative to grounded theory, IPA offers me a more appropriate method to focus on the individual experiences of these young people. In this research I have respected the shared assumption that my interpretation will be grounded in the data, rather than imposed from my experience or the literature.

### 3.3.2: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis “examines how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.6). Research utilising this methodology focuses on what language does as opposed to what language says.

I have chosen not to use discourse analysis because:

- I want to focus on young people’s perceptions rather than the impact of how they express them.
- discourse analysis tends to focus on naturally occurring data to reflect on social, political and contextual influences on language. My conversations were for the purpose of research; they were not naturally occurring.

In choosing IPA I have respected some of the common underlying assumptions between IPA and discourse analysis. For example, that meaning and language

are located in a particular time and space, and that these may change (see design section).

### 3.3.3: Narrative Research

Narrative research focuses on analysing “an individual’s story or account of their experience of events or people from the present or the past” (Breakwell *et al.*, 2006, p.266). This approach could be used to look at young people’s narratives of their experience of transition from the secure estate into education. The focus would be on the type of story being told, the themes within the narrative, the identities constructed using narrative etc. Presenting these narratives could answer my research question in order to contribute to understanding the phenomenon of young people’s experience of their transition from custody into education. In addition to this, narrative is a method of meaning making, which is the focus of IPA research (Smith *et. al.*, 2009). Therefore the choice between narrative and IPA has been the most difficult, as both have advantages and disadvantages in terms of answering my research question.

For the purposes of this thesis I have chosen IPA for the following reasons:

- it is more coherent with my epistemological position.
- IPA can enable the researcher to “present findings in a more psychological framework” (Jenkins, Irving & Hazlett, 2008, p.50).

- IPA explicitly focuses on the personal meanings of lived experiences (Smith *et al.*, 2009).
- IPA “privileges consciousness and understanding of the lived world of the participant as experienced.” (Langdrige, 2007, p.125).
- Following the analysis procedure of Smith *et al.* (2009) there is a clear structure and focus for analysis which should support communication of my findings to multiple audiences who may be less familiar with more relativist qualitative approaches (Youth Justice Board, 2006).

#### 3.3.4: IPA

“IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.1).

From this perspective, research into transition for young people from the secure estate into education is focussed on their perception of this process and the meaning they attribute to aspects of this process. Transition as a process would be the phenomenon researched. I perceive that it is appropriate to approach this research topic from a phenomenological position if one perceives transition to be a key lived experience, and young people leaving the secure estate as having knowledge of this experience. My perception is based on my ontological position of phenomenology and my awareness of research in this area based on this position (see chapter 2).

### **3.4: My Chosen Methodology: IPA**

IPA is a research methodology based on the theoretical roots of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith, 2011). My explanation of IPA as my research methodology will therefore focus on:

1. Phenomenology
2. Hermeneutics
3. Idiography

#### **3.4.1: Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a philosophical discipline which

“aims to describe in all its complexity the manifold layers of the experience of objectivity as it emerges at the heart of subjectivity” (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 2).

For research this means focussing on lived experiences as they are subjectively experienced by individual people, i.e. researching the experience as it ‘shows itself’ (ibid) in perception. There are factions within this philosophy (e.g. Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer). I will be adopting a Heideggerian position, as I view it as an interpretative process. My research will be a phenomenological inquiry into “the interpretation of people’s meaning making activities” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.18) of transition.

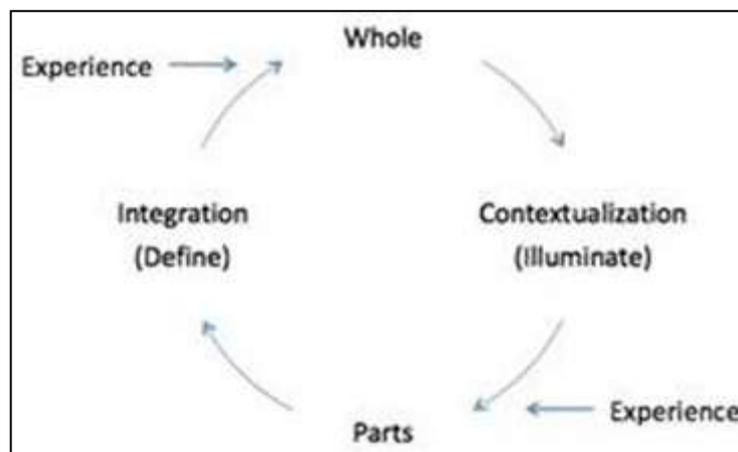
### 3.4.2: Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics can be defined as “the art of interpretation or understanding” (Gadamer 1989 in Moran & Mooney, 2002, p.311). The word ‘art’ emphasizes the subjective and creative nature of this philosophy. Within my research, which focuses on young people’s perceptions of their own transition experiences, I perceive that “language is the medium of the hermeneutic experience” (Gadamer 1989 in Moran & Mooney, 2002, p.312). My research focuses on analysing young people’s verbal expressions of their experience in order to attempt to interpret and understand their experience of the phenomenon of transition.

Researchers such as Smith *et al.* (2009) have operationalised the philosophy of hermeneutics for the purpose of research using a) the hermeneutic circle and b) the double hermeneutic.

a) The hermeneutic circle.

Figure 2: The hermeneutic circle (reproduced from Bontekoe, 1996, p.4)



The figure above illustrates the operational definition of the hermeneutic circle i.e. “to understand any given part you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts. Analysis is iterative” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.27-28).

In order to analyse young people’s perceptions of their experience of transition I needed to follow an iterative cycle, focussing on parts of this experience in the context of the whole experience, and the whole experience in the context of its parts (see figure 4).

#### b) The double hermeneutic

Figure 3: The Double Hermeneutic (reproduced from Norreklit, 2006, p.5)

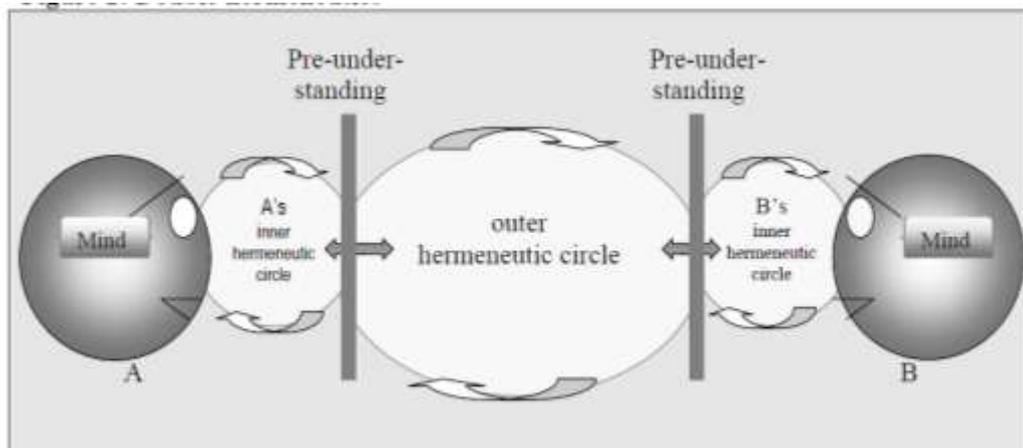


Figure 3 illustrates the complex concept of the double hermeneutic, the assumption that the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of the phenomenon (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Research following the hermeneutic philosophy is therefore explicit about its indirect access to the phenomenon, through the dual processes of the researcher and participants’ meaning making processes.

Adopting the double hermeneutic, my report will express my meaning making (or interpretation) of the young people's expressions of their own meaning making (or interpretation) of their experience of transition. It will be important for me to emphasize that my findings should be interpreted from this position, rather than them representing a direct analysis of the transition experience itself.

### 3.4.3: Idiography

Idiography is

“concerned with the particular... understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people in a particular context.” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.29).

This assumption of the embodied nature of experience and emphasis on its location in time and space requires data collection and analysis procedures that focus on the particulars of each individual's understandings and meanings of their experience of transition. Therefore my data was collected in the form of “rich, detailed, first person accounts” (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p.56) of young people's experiences. Following individual analysis, I have interpreted convergence and divergence within and across individual accounts of this experience (Smith, 2011) (see figure 4).

#### 3.4.4: Critique of IPA

Although I have chosen IPA for this research I recognise some of the common criticisms of it as a research method as follows:

##### 1. Language

Traditional IPA studies tend to analyse transcripts of semi-structured interviews with individual participants. From this, researchers seek to describe or interpret participants' thoughts, feelings and the meanings they attribute to these key experiences. Willig challenges this on the basis of the "representational validity of language" she questions "Do transcripts tell us about how we talk about experience rather than experience itself?" (Willig, 2008, p.63). My sample may be more likely to have limited ability to express their experience on the basis of aforementioned high prevalence of literacy (Snowling *et al.*, 2000), and speech and language difficulties (Bryan *et al.*, 2007). (See design section 3.6.3.3 for additional strategies used to enable this specific sample to express their experience of transition through language).

In response to arguments about the limitations of language as a medium for researching lived experience, interpretative phenomenologists such as Heidegger express that as a researcher one has to be clear about the knowledge claims being made on the basis of such research. For example, Heidegger asserts that "the nature of our practical encounter with things is encapsulated in our use of language" (Heidegger, 1962 as cited in Moran & Mooney, 2000, p.234) therefore to look at a phenomenon as it is shown one should look at its representation in language. Whilst interpreting this representation one is explicit

that “language itself forms its meanings and expressions (ibid, p.265). In line with Heidegger’s assertion, within this research I am explicit that I have analysed expressed perceptions of the experience of transition and reported my interpretations of this, rather than analysing the experience of transition directly through language. I am acutely aware that within the double hermeneutic my ability to interpret these meanings will be “shaped, limited and enabled by language” (Smith *et. al.*, 2009, p.194).

## 2. Social/political and cultural context

An extension of the above argument about language is that IPA does not sufficiently acknowledge the social/political and cultural context of data collection (Willig, 2008). IPA researchers such as Smith *et al.* (2009) have acknowledged this critique on the basis of the idiographic focus of IPA research. However, I would argue that this is accommodated for in phenomenological research. This means that the meanings a participant makes of their own experience, and the meanings made by researchers and readers of narratives of this experience will be located in the cultural and historical position of the individual making that meaning (i.e. located in time and space). In this research I am explicit that the participants’ experiences of the phenomenon of transition are situated in their social and political/cultural context. In using IPA as a research method I have not made general claims about the impact of social and cultural/political context on this experience. This context was embodied in the interpretation of the experience by the participant and my knowledge of this as a researcher was embodied within the double hermeneutic. I have been reflexive throughout this piece of research about the social process of research and the

intersubjectivity of IPA as a form of research. This is shown within reflective memos in section 3.1.3, Appendices D and E1. My focus will be on presenting an interpretation which is “experience close” (Smith, 2011) i.e. grounded in the participant’s expressed perceptions of transition rather than my own or those within literature.

Summary of my chosen methodology IPA:

I think that IPA is an appropriate research methodology for my thesis because following its theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography will support me to provide a “rich description of people’s experiences so that we can understand them in new subtle and different ways and then use this new knowledge to make a difference to the lived world of ourselves and others” (Langrdridge, 2007, p. 9).

### **3.5: Quality in research: reliability, validity, and generalisation/transferability of findings**

#### 3.5.1: Reliability

IPA is a qualitative research approach and therefore to assess the reliability of my research one would need to define it as “the extent to which what is recorded is what actually occurred in the setting” (McMillan & Wergin, 2002, p.122).

Therefore, I have recorded my interviews and ensured that my transcripts of these are available upon request so that examiners/interested parties can evaluate whether I have accurately reported them. Sections of these transcripts are included in chapters 4 and 5 (see appendix E1 for full transcripts of Jason’s interviews).

#### 3.5.2: Validity

The quantitative definition of validity: “the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure” (Wellington, 2000, p.30) would not be appropriate for my research as I am not measuring perceptions or experience.

It may be appropriate to define validity as “the extent to which our research describes, measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain” (Willig, 2008, p.16), or to use the term credibility to look at whether I am credible in what I claim my research describes or explains. Considering how to establish and communicate the credibility of my research has been a central source of reflection within my tutorials, supervision sessions and reading. My dilemmas centred on how to check that my interpretations of the young person’s

perceptions from their spoken words reflected the meaning they were trying to communicate.

Initially I considered checking my interpretations with people who knew the young people well (Champion & Clare, 2006), but I identified several problems with this technique:

- communication of the young people's perceptions of transition to professionals/parents could alter that transition experience positively or negatively. This would be against my ethical declaration to the young people that I am researching to understand their experience of transition but not to alter it.
- it might compromise what has been shared confidentially.
- this assumes that people who know the young person well will know their perceptions of transition. As these people will have an interest in the outcome of the young person's transition, they may be biased to interpret meanings that were not attributed to the experience by the young person themselves (Harden *et al.*, 2000).

To avoid this some researchers have used participants themselves to validate or judge the credibility of their findings (for example, Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

My initial NOMS research application (see Appendix B6) and presentation to my trainee cohort and tutors included plans to 'take back' my descriptions of young people's words to them in follow-up sessions following each individual interview. However, through further reflective discussion and reading I concluded that this does not fit with one of the assumptions of IPA; that an

individual's perception of an experience will be located in time and context (Langdridge, 2007). The young person may have a different perception of the experience of transition in the follow-up visit, as they will have continued to experience the transition. From this I reflected on the fact that the individual interview is the time for checking whether my understanding of their meaning is accurate and seeking further clarification. In the pilot study I found that the IPA prompt questions and my reflection of expressed content fulfilled this role (see Appendix C2 for reflections and learning points from the pilot study).

To further enhance credibility I have included a transparent audit trail and clear explanation of my process of data collection and analysis, so that readers can interpret my interpretations of the young people's expressed perceptions.

### 3.5.3: Generalisability/transferability

As I have chosen IPA I will be focussing on the experience of transition idiographically (Smith *et al.*, 2009) rather than seeking to generalise or derive theories about perceptions/experiences of transition.

Within my research I will be aiming to produce:

“a rich, substantive account with strong evidence for inferences and conclusions and then reporting the lived experiences of those observed and their perspectives on social reality, while recognising that these could be multiple and complex and that the researcher is intertwined in the portrayal of experience. The goal is understanding and providing a meaningful account of the complex perspectives and realities studied” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008, p.334).

The relationship between this in-depth focus on individual's experiences of a specific phenomenon and wider experiences of the phenomenon is embodied within the hermeneutic circle (see section 3.4.2). This is based on hermeneutic understanding that although experience is uniquely embodied it is experienced in relation to others and the world (Heidegger, 1962 in Moran and Mooney, 2002; Gadamer, 1989 in Moran and Mooney, 2002). This means that the individual young people within this study could give unique perspectives of their own experiences of transition. In my role as researcher it was then appropriate to look for convergence and divergence between particular expressed perceptions of this experience (Smith, 2011).

This thesis should be read as my interpretation of individual young people's expressions of their experience of transition in order to gain greater understanding of this experience. Readers should then be able to evaluate transferability of any findings to contexts they experience or discuss. Smith *et al.* (2009) have termed this reader assessment of transferability to practice or knowledge as theoretical/ conceptual generalizability. Within this approach any attempt at generalization is made cautiously as a theoretical or conceptual interpretation which is located in the particular. For my thesis readers can assess whether particular interpretations of the perceptions expressed by my small sample are transferable to their own knowledge or experience of transition from the secure estate, or to individual young people. To support the reader in evaluating the relevance of my interpretations I have included evidence from transcripts for each theme as part of a transparent audit trail of my analysis process (see Figure 4, Chapter 4 and related Appendices).

I am aware that the quality of my final interpretative account is highly dependent on the quality of my interviews and interpretation (Smith, 2011).

### **3.6: Design**

“Research design translates epistemological principles into pragmatic decisions and explains the choices we make” (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p.118).

This section will explain my choices for the following aspects of research design:

#### 3.6.1. Sample

#### 3.6.2. Ethical considerations

#### 3.6.3. Methodological considerations following pilot study

##### 3.6.1: Sample

Jason, Harry and Shaun<sup>3</sup> were selected by professionals within the youth justice system on the basis of the following criteria:

- Aged between 10 and 19 years old.
- Currently in the secure estate with a release date before October 2011.
- Registered to be released into a specific Local Authority.

All three young people were white males aged between 15 and 17 years old.

3. Pseudonyms are used for all three participants throughout this thesis to protect their anonymity. See above and 3.6.2b.

This was based on guidance from Smith *et al.* (2009) that

“between 3 and 6 participants can be a reasonable sample size for a student project using IPA. . . This should provide sufficient cases for the development of meaningful points of similarity and difference between participants” (Smith *et al.* 2009, p.51).

In line with the idiographic commitment of IPA the richness of analysis of individual perceptions is more important than sample size. Smith *et al.* (2009) argue that to present this coherently data collection of between four and ten transcripts is appropriate for a doctoral level study. Given the decision to interview each participant three times, for this research this would indicate an optimal sample size of 2 - 4 participants. Smith *et al.* (2009) further argue that a larger data set would inhibit successful analysis for me as a less experienced qualitative researcher.

Information about the young people has not been included in this thesis to protect their anonymity. Pen portraits were not included due to the risk of identification of participants given the small sample from which they were selected. (See 3.6.2b section on confidentiality).

3.6.2: Ethical Considerations (see appendices B3 and B4 for consent forms and ethical approval).

Ethics can be defined as “the science of morals or rules of behaviour” (BPS, 2009, p.6). To practise as an EPiT one must reflect upon whether all aspects of

work comply with ethical principles of the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct and the HPC Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students (HPC, 2009). In line with my role as a researcher-practitioner I complied with this Code of Ethics and Conduct, and the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2010). In addition to this throughout the research process I liaised with Youth Justice System professionals to ensure that my work complied with their ethical requirements. As indicated above, my ethical approval and application can be found in Appendices B4 and B5. I have included some key ethical considerations below which impact upon my research design:

a. Informed consent

- All potential participants received an information sheet with brief information about my research (see Appendix B1). Following advice from professionals within the secure estate, this was read and talked through with the young person by their casework officer. This form had been amended following feedback from participants in the pilot study (see Appendix C2).
- For those participants under 16-years old a similar information sheet with a consent form was sent to their parents (see Appendix B2).
- At the beginning of interview 1 the consent forms were discussed, on the basis of advice from forensic researchers and staff within the secure estate. Participants were then given the option to withdraw or to continue with semi-structured interview 1 (see Appendix B3). Participants who chose to engage with the research completed consent forms before interview 1.
- Throughout the research process participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw up until the end of interview 3 (Smith *et al.*, 2009), and that

they could choose which questions to answer or tasks to complete (see 3.6.3 for further discussion).

#### b. Confidentiality

NOMS protocols and discussions with forensic researchers indicate that issues such as confidentiality and anonymity are especially pertinent for my chosen sample given their status as young people involved in the criminal justice system (Morrow & Richards, 2002). These issues were discussed whilst going through consent forms and throughout subsequent interviews (see Appendix B3 for consent forms). In order to avoid identification the young people are referred to using pseudonyms, and the young offenders institute and local authority are not reported in this thesis.

Following completion of this thesis I have reflected upon the above research decision to use pseudonyms to represent young people involved in offending behaviour in this piece of academic writing. This reflection was prompted by the fact that none of the three participants chose to select their own pseudonym. Jason, Harry and Shaun reported that if it had been possible they would have been happy for their real names to have been used. I wondered whether enforcing a pseudonym communicated that they should distance themselves from their expressed perceptions of transition or selves as young people leaving the secure estate. I have therefore considered whether to challenge my research permission in order to include individual names, and provide more personal details to the reader. This inclusion of personal information could have further located my interpreted expressed perceptions with the particular identities of this

sample. This location of expressed perceptions in relation to identified young people may have aided the reader to evaluate the transferability of my work. I made an ethical decision not to do this because it would contradict the well-established rationale of NOMS and advice of professionals within the field (see above), and because of my awareness of convergence between Jason's expressed perceptions on this topic and the literature. For example as part of my interpretation of Jason as having expressed a goal directed approach to transition (see 4.3.2), he stated:

*“J: Being known for summat good instead of having a fucking asbo book or summat ... That's what I mean I don't want people reading the papers 'young lad mister \_\_\_\_\_ committed this crime' did that just I'll be in that traded paper whatever it is with all the trades... Cos what I mean when people do quite a serious offence it goes on the news and that dunnit cos like it's like it's out there innit. They let people know basically what you've done and that. But if I'm doing my own business and that I'll be doing that won't I? TV ads and that. 'You want joiners come see us'” (3.12.574-583).*

I perceived that inclusion of real names within my research could have led to these names being represented in media discussions about experiences of individual young people leaving the secure estate. This potential media representation could reinforce what Jason termed “being known... for having an asbo book” (ibid). My perception converges with literature proposing that successful transition is more of a challenge for those young people with a reputation for offending behaviour (Anthony *et al.* 2010). Therefore inclusion of real names within this thesis could have caused my participants harm (see 3.6.2c).

c. Preventing harm

In my ethical application I stated that ‘There is minimal potential for psychological harm or distress to participants’ (see Appendix B5). However, throughout my discussions with staff within young offenders institutes and in supervision I have continued to be mindful that it is possible that they might be reminded of a traumatic experience or period of life (Smith *et al.*, 2009). To minimise this as far as possible:

- semi-structured interview schedules, activities and prompts (see Appendices A1- A4) focus on their current and future experience of transition rather than their reasons for being in custody or life histories.
- my consent form includes the statement that they can choose to withdraw from the project or remain silent about any issue, and this will not affect how they are treated or cared for in custody or education (see Appendix B3).
- my consent form informs each participant that if they are at risk of harm then I would need to tell someone else. In light of this, all interviews were conducted on days when their casework officer was available to follow up any concerns. I also reminded them of this limit to confidentiality within the interviews.
- participants could choose from a range of task activities during the interview, which meant that they may have control over what they chose to disclose (Conolly, 2008) (see 3.6.3.3 and Appendix A4).

### 3.6.3: Methodological considerations following pilot study

In order to answer my research question: (How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?) I gathered data about

young people's perceptions of their transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment.

In this section I will explain some of my key methodological considerations in planning this research. These included the following:

3.6.3.1: Decision point 1: written or verbal data collection

3.6.3.2: Decision point 2: unstructured or semi-structured interviews

3.6.3.3: Decision point 3: use of additional strategies to enable my sample to give rich, thick descriptions of their experiences of their own transition

3.6.3.4: Decision point 4: Multiple interviews as the young people experience the process of transition.

3.6.3.1: Decision point 1: written or verbal data collection

I chose not to use written data (Smith *et al.*, 2009) because I did not want to exclude young people with literacy difficulties from my sample. As my sample was selected from young people in the secure estate, literacy-based methods of data collection could have excluded a large proportion of potential participants (Snowling *et al.* 2000). I could not justify this ethically as it may have further marginalised these individuals within the secure estate population (Lindsay, 2000).

3.6.3.2: Decision point 2: unstructured or semi-structured interviews

Following the recommendations of Smith *et al.* (2009) I chose to use semi-structured interviews rather than unstructured interviews. Firstly, because I am a novice IPA researcher. Secondly, because responding to an unstructured interview might be difficult for participants with speech, language and communication difficulties (Bryan *et al.*, 2007). This barrier to response for participants has been observed by researchers (for example, Punch, 2002).

Throughout initial planning of my pilot study I engaged in a series of reflective discussions with tutors, trainees and EPs about the appropriateness of IPA- an approach which is routinely used with articulate participants- with a sample population with a high prevalence of speech, language and communication difficulties (Bryan *et al.*, 2007). My discussions focussed on enabling these young people to give rich descriptions, without leading them in the content of their description of that experience (see 3.6.3.3).

3.6.3.3: Decision point 3: use of additional strategies to enable my sample to give rich, thick descriptions of their experiences of their own transition.

My pilot study interview materials included a semi-structured interview based on the guidance of Smith *et al.* on the types of open-ended questions used in IPA research (2009, p.60, see Table S1, Appendix C1), and activities based on literature around eliciting young people's voices and my aforementioned reflective discussions.

A task-based activity approach was trialled in which the researcher and participant could select which of the following supportive activities to do to answer the research question (Conolly, 2008; Punch, 2002) if required.

1. Post it notes for thoughts, feelings and examples to answer each question from the above semi-structured interview schedule.
2. Images of transition as stimulus for conversation (Harden *et al.*, 2000)
3. Spider diagram with 'my experience of transition' in the middle to draw/write thoughts, feelings and examples of transition (Punch, 2002).
4. Transition booklet based on solution focussed approaches (Rees, 2008)
5. Blob people image of a journey (Wilson & Long, 2007)
6. Draw me transition. Draw custody. Draw education (Barker & Weller, 2003).
7. Produce a story board of transition.
8. Distracting activity of UNO card game.

Multi-media approaches such as using photographs as 'visual narratives' (Carrington *et al.*, 2007), ICT presentations etc were not included because these would not be available for the interviews in the secure estate.

(See Appendix C2 for key learning points and reflections from my pilot study).

3.6.3.4: Decision point 4: Multiple interviews as the young people experience the process of transition.

Most IPA research uses single interviews with participants about experiences which are significant to them; these are sometimes supplemented with follow-up interviews that further explain content from the first interview (Smith, 2011). This is the traditional model for IPA research (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Willig, 2008; Cohen *et al.*, 2007). I thought that given my chosen phenomenon of transition and my chosen sample of young people, multiple interviews while the young people experience transition were more appropriate. As this has been a key methodological dilemma for me I have explained some key points underpinning my decision below.

- In accordance with theoretical underpinnings of IPA individual interviews are snapshots of the subjective reporting of an experience which are located in time and space. For my sample this involved attending to their expressed meanings and attempting to interpret them within the time and space that the young person subjectively experienced them, using the double hermeneutic. Using a single interaction to collect data on which to base these interpretations has been criticised by some researchers. For example Seidman refers to Mishler's 1986 comments that "interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an 'interviewee' whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice" (Seidman, 1998, p.11).
- Specific characteristics of my sample such as potential speech and language difficulties (Bryan *et al.*, 2007) and negative previous experiences with professionals may act as additional barriers to enabling rich data collection within a single interview. I think that multiple interviews provided me with more opportunities to develop a relationship with my participants, which could

enable them to trust me, and for me to understand what support they needed to express their perceptions in order to collect rich descriptions (Flowers, 2008).

- The quality of my final account is dependent on the quality of these interviews and my interpretation of them (Smith, 2011). This methodological decision is supported by the inclusion in Smith's 2011 'Evaluation of the Contribution of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' of Bramley and Eatough's (2005) paper using three interviews with individual participants experiencing living with Parkinson's disease. There is therefore a precedent for this decision.

- The example of the use of multiple interviews about Parkinson's disease is similar to my phenomenon in that it is experienced over time and may change as it is experienced; it is a process not a single event. This perception of transition as a process is shared by the Youth Justice Board (Hart, 2009; Youth Justice Board, 2008; Youth Offending Service, 2007a, b). This is also reflected in EP practice within the local authority researched as EPs attend Year 5 Annual Reviews in order to plan for transition to high school and Year 7 progress reviews following transfer to high school, and generally within the focus on transition planning within managed moves (Abdelnoor, 2007).

Use of multiple interviews is consistent with IPA methodology, and I argue that it is appropriate for my sample and chosen phenomenon. However, some key disadvantages for me as a novice researcher using IPA, choosing to use multiple interviews with the same participants could include:

- My design and analysis process was more complex with fewer exemplar studies to refer to.

- Flowers notes that “transparently articulating, for example, how the differing interviews, and different analytic stages, relate to a single narrative within a final written account will be very challenging” (Flowers, 2008, p.26).

The decision of whether to use single or multiple interviews has been one of the most difficult for my research. It has resulted in series of reflective discussions with my supervisors, EPs, youth justice professionals, fellow trainees and with the IPA forum<sup>4</sup>. These discussions have helped me to appreciate that although researching in this way was more difficult and controversial, it was appropriate to answer my research question. My discussions through the IPA forum indicate that some contemporary researchers have used multiple interviews and claimed that it deepened content and helped them to develop rapport with and understanding of their participants. Unfortunately these papers have not yet been published so cannot be cited as justification for my choice of multiple interviews. Nevertheless, I perceive that Flowers’ (2008) consideration of the importance of temporality within research, and studies such as Bramley & Eatough’s (2005) and Shaw *et al.*’s (2003) research, indicate that this could be a viable extension of the IPA method which is worthy of exploration.

\* The IPA forum is an online discussion group for people interested in IPA research. The website address is [ipanalysis@yahoo.com](mailto:ipanalysis@yahoo.com).

### **3.7: Methods and Procedures**

#### 3.7.1: Methods

##### Design

Sample: Three young people identified by YOS or NOMS as experiencing the transition from the secure estate into education.

Data collection semi-structured interviews with task-based activity approach:

Interview 1: in the secure estate pre-release (see Appendix A1)

Interview 2: in the secure estate around the time of pre-release planning (see Appendix A2)

Interview 3: after release at ISSP/ YOS (see Appendix A3).

Interviews have been recorded and transcribed verbatim (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

These transcripts were analysed using IPA to give an account of my perceptions of individual young people's perceptions of their lived experience of transition (see 3.7.2). In addition to this I kept "time-oriented reflexive notes to appreciate the impact of temporal issues upon a research project" (Flowers, 2008, p.26).

Sections of these can be found in Appendices D3 and E1.

### 3.7.2: Analysis

#### Figure 4: Overview of analysis

The process is presented linearly, but it was applied cyclically. I developed ‘dialogue’ between myself, my exploratory comments and my academic knowledge, about the possible meaning of the individual’s statements (interpretative account). Data analysis continued in light of relationships between themes.

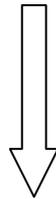
#### Interpretive Phenomenological Approach steps of Data Analysis

Adapted from Smith *et al.* (2009, p.79-106) and Willig (2008)

#### **1. Getting to know the data**

I listened to my recording of the interview and read the transcript several times, whilst noting any striking moments or recollections in research diary.

(See Appendix E1 for example transcripts from Jason).



**2. Line by line analysis of what the person says**

In the **left hand** margin, I annotated what was interesting or significant about what each participant said (exploratory comments)

I included:

- Descriptive comments: Objects which structure thoughts and experience (what he says)
- Linguistic comments: Question the meaning of the way he says it. Including pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of language repetition, tone, degree of fluency, metaphor. (the way he says it)
- **Conceptual comments:** interrogative and interpretative questioning of his meaning making (what does he mean?)
- My thoughts

My college place has been accepted so I can go straight back. Clear path to positive future already arranged. Clear goal + aim.

"It's a great college". Does he feel privileged to be accepted? valued? Form of recognition/praise? I thought independently and chose to go to a college where I didn't know people. To dissociate from crime you have to dissociate from peers? Is he creating a new identity? Independence from peers?

Start a fresh 'fresh start'? Clean slate?

Keep me head down here. I'll get me early! Good behaviour = early release. Relationship between behaviour within the secure estate and subsequent transition.

that part:

**A:** Cos me college place has been accepted so I can go straight back.

**I:** Oh fantastic what college place are you doing?

**A:** On \_\_\_ joinery. So it's not too bad, it's a great college. I could have gone to \_\_\_ but obviously I dint wanna go there. Like that un there (goldfish picture) says go on your own don't be thinking, think about yourself and not others an that. That's what I did. Instead of going to \_\_\_ college where knew people I went to \_\_\_ college where I dint you know what I mean. Start a fresh. So that's that.

**I:** So you can have a fresh start just going for what you want.

**A:** Yeah yeah.

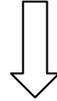
**I:** So it sounds like it's mainly those two that are quite like yours?

**A:** Yeah.

**I:** So if we're talking about making that transition what are the steps in going from here back into college?

**A:** Keep me head down here. Get out an obviously, hopefully I'll get me early. An then as soon as I get out I've got to talk to me tutor about what's

(Extract from analysis of Jason interview 1 line 65-79. See Appendix E2 for further example exploratory comments).



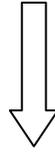
### 3. Identification of Emergent Patterns (themes within what the person says)

In the **right hand** margin, I identified and labelled themes that characterised each section of text.

I used psychological terminology. I checked threads back to the original text and exploratory comments to ensure that these were grounded in what was said. The same theme titles were used if I interpreted them as coming up more than once. I tried to ensure that themes were general enough to be conceptual but specific enough to be idiographic.

<p>here they say oh your mum wont saying that last night and other stuff. <u>They mess about with you an that it's just they don't understand that if they says the wrong things obviously they're gna get you in trouble. You know what I mean? So it's just like it's like temptation getting. You've just got to count to ten. Bite your tongue.</u></p> <p>I: Do you do that a lot?</p> <p>■: Yeah definitely. Cos <u>ont the out just short temper me. Me little brother to certain people picking on him just don't take it. Just hold your breath. Nowt else you can do is there, if you don't hold your breath you get in trouble.</u></p> <p>I: So maybe temper might go on here? It's especially things like your little brother or your mum?</p> <p>■: Yeah definitely.</p> <p>I: So people that you care about.</p> <p>■: Yeah. On the estate aswell that's another bad one.</p> <p>I: What's bad about that?</p> <p>■: <u>It's just that estate it's just meant for crime cos that's all it is. It's like yeah there is a youth club on there. But obviously I don't want to go there. It's just that estate it's like people, don't get me wrong people do have jobs and few of me mates do have jobs, well not all of them. But two or three of them. But they're all just I don't know they don't want nowt in life if you get me. So.</u></p>	<p>Prison officers cause temptation to offend</p> <p>Anger management within the secure estate</p> <p>Community norm of offending behaviour</p>
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(Extract from analysis of Jason interview 1 line 164-183. See Appendix E3 for further example emergent themes.)

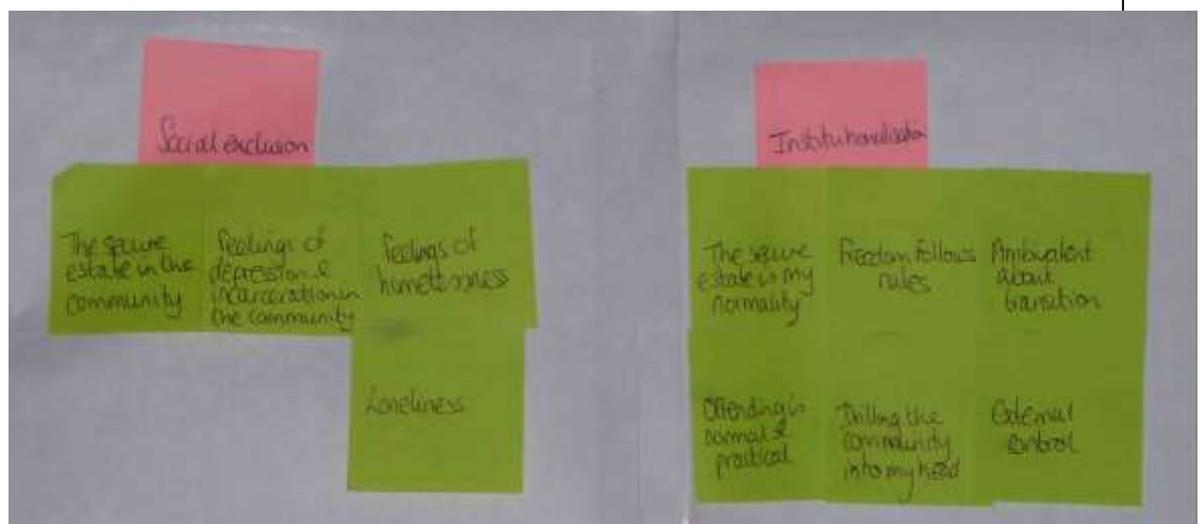


**4. Development of a structure which illustrates the relationship between themes.**

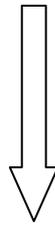
**Using the research question focus on connecting the themes;**

- a) I created electronic files for each emergent theme with supporting transcript extracts.
- b) I listed emergent themes on post-it notes and looked for connections between them using techniques such as abstraction (putting like with like), subsumption (emergent themes acquire ordinate status), polarization (oppositional relationships between emergent themes) and contextualisation (attending to temporal, contextual or narrative elements using transcript).
- c) I looked for emergent and ordinate concepts, and checked back to the original to make sure connections were grounded in the data.

Clusters were labelled either with descriptive labels or using quotes as an ordinate theme.



(Extract from analysis of Shaun Interview 1. See Appendix E4 for examples from electronic files and photograph of full interpretative display).



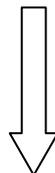
**5. Organisation of my data to make it possible to track through the process from my initial comments (line by line step 2), through initial clustering and thematic development (step 3) to the final structure of themes (step 4)**

a) **Summary table of structured ordinate themes, emergent themes, quotations, page numbers and line numbers.**

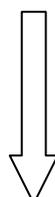
I grouped these under the clusters that emerged. I included only those relevant to my research question. I continued dialogue between interpretations, the transcript and emerging themes using techniques from step 4.

Themes	Page.Line	Transcript extract
<i>Ordinate Theme: Attachment to the secure estate</i>		
Feelings of loneliness and isolation outside the secure estate	1. 30-31	It's like in there you're with loadsa a people and then you're on your own in that one.
	2. 81-83	I thought I wore gonna stick to it but then I was I had to be in at seven o clock an then none of your friends are allowed in the hostel. It was a small room an it was scruffy an there was nothing to do so no-one to talk to so I just went.

(Extract from analysis of Shaun Interview 1. See Appendix E5 for example summary table).



Repeat steps 1-5 for transcripts 2 and 3.



**6. Looking at the analysis as a whole**

Table 1: Results of individual analysis:

Interview	Participant		
	Shaun	Jason	Harry
1	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes
2	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes
3	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes	Ordinate and emergent themes

**Step 6b:**  
Convergence and divergence across participants within each interview.

**Step 6J:**  
Convergence and divergence of participants across interviews.

**6a)** Using techniques from step 4 I looked for convergence and divergence of themes for each individual across all 3 interviews (red vertical arrows in Table 1).

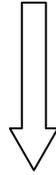
These themes are shown in Appendix F1; Tables S3, S4 and S5.

Interpretative post-it note displays of these tables were used to look for convergence across participants and interviews.

**6b)** Using interpretative displays for each participant for each interview I analysed convergence and divergence across participants (horizontal green arrows in Table 1).

These themes are shown in Appendix F3; Tables S7, S8 and S9 and example interpretative display.

(See Appendix G for interpretative account of convergence across participants within individual interviews).



## **7. Organisation of the data**

Using tables from step 6, I composed final summary tables of **structured super-ordinate themes, themes, quotations, page numbers and line numbers** indicating the participants and time frames from which these had emerged (see Appendix F).

### **Reporting the results (see chapter 4 and Appendix G):**

#### Convergence

Table 2 (results chapter): Themes that converge across all three interviews for all participants (see Appendix F2, Table S6).

Table 4 (Appendix G): Themes that converge across all participants for interview 1 (see Appendix F3, Table S7).

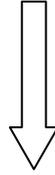
Table 5 (appendix G): Themes that converge across all participants for interview 2 (see Appendix F3, Table S8).

Table 6 (Appendix G): Themes that converge across all participants for interview 3 (see Appendix F3, Table S9).

#### Divergence

Table 3 (results chapter): Themes that converge for individual participants across all three interviews but diverge between participants (see Appendix F2, Table S6).

Throughout this analysis I continued the cyclic process between emerging themes, transcript, my interpretations and knowledge. I continued to analyse data in light of new relationships between themes.



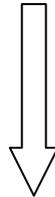
### **8. Development of an interpretative account of the analysis**

**Writing up:** I translated the themes into a narrative account with verbatim extracts.

I used italics and indentation to separate extracts from my interpretations.

I supported my narrative with tables of themes.

(See Chapter 4 and Appendix G for Interpretative Accounts of Analysis).



### **9. Reflections on the analysis process**

See 6.2 for ‘my experience of researching three young people’s perceptions of their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education.’

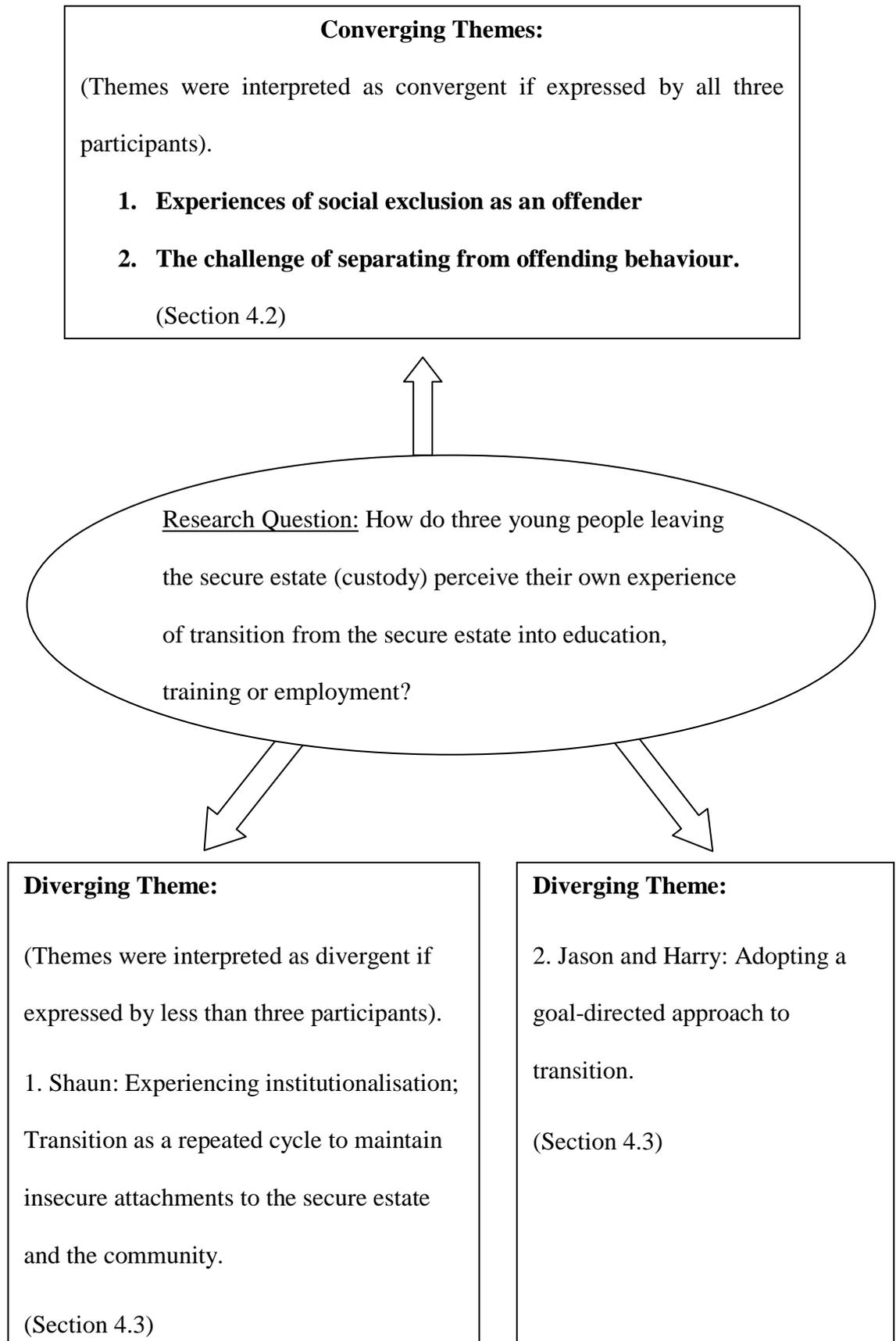
### Summary of Methodology Chapter

- Ontology: Interpretative Phenomenology (Langdridge, 2007). Whilst experience is always the product of interpretation (i.e. constructed and flexible) it is real to the person subjectively experiencing it.
- Epistemology: Interpretative Phenomenology (Heidegger 1962, in Moran & Mooney, 2002). My analysis of these young people's perceptions will be necessarily intersubjective and I have presented my perception of their perception of transition (see chapters 4 and 5).
- Myself as a **researcher**-practitioner: I have been reflexive throughout the data collection and analysis process.
- The aim of my research is to contribute to the body of knowledge around experiences of transition in order to help us to understand individual young people's perceptions of their own transitions (Moran & Embtree, 2004; Robson, 2002).
- Research Question: How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?
- I think that IPA is an appropriate research methodology for my thesis because following its theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography will support me to provide a "rich description of people's experiences so that we can understand them in new subtle and different ways and then use this new knowledge to make a difference to the lived world of ourselves and others" (Langdridge, 2007, p. 9).

- Design
  - Sample: 3 young people identified by YOS or NOMS as experiencing the transition from the secure estate into education.
  - Key ethical considerations for the above sample include informed consent, confidentiality and preventing harm.
  - Key methodological considerations include my choice of verbal data collection using multiple semi-structured interviews with additional strategies to support the young people to express their perceptions of their experience of their transition from the secure estate into education.
  - Data was recorded and transcribed. This was analysed using IPA (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

## Chapter 4: Results

Figure 5: Overview of results



#### **4.1: Introduction**

In recognition of my position as a novice researcher I have followed Smith *et al.*'s (2009) advice to construct separate chapters for my results (chapter 4) and discussion (chapter 5). This chapter is an interpretative account of the three participants' perceptions of their experience of transition from the secure estate into education.

By using semi-structured interviews I enabled all three participants to give rich, detailed accounts of their perceptions of their transition experience (see Appendix E1 for example transcripts). These perceptions were complex and varied.

To present a clear account for interpretation within the limits of this thesis, I have presented four themes which converged and diverged across all participants and all interviews within this chapter. (See Appendix G for themes which converged within individual interviews). See Appendix F2 for summary table of ordinate themes, themes, quotations, page numbers and line numbers, participant and interview number for themes interpreted as converging and diverging across all three interviews and participants. Quotes used within this chapter are highlighted within this table. This table should be used as a reference point for my process of analysis of the interviews through to my interpretation of them. The location of this table within Appendix F2 rather than this chapter is based on my recognition of the importance of clarity and focus within my presentation of results given the complex nature of the phenomenon researched

(transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment) and my research design (multiple interviews with individual participants).

Chapter Structure:

Section 4.2: themes which I perceived as converging across all three participants across all three interviews.

Section 4.3: themes which I perceived as diverging between participants across all three interviews.

Sections 4.2 and 4.3 are supported by transcript extracts demonstrating participant's perceptions of transition. Numbers in brackets following each extract denote the interview number, page number and line number, respectively, e.g. (3.2.127). The remainder of the text within this chapter represents my interpretation of these expressed perceptions.

**4.2: Converging perceptions of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment**

Table 2: Themes which converge across all three interviews for all participants.

<b>Convergent themes</b>	<b>Individual expressions of each theme</b>		
	<b>Shaun</b>	<b>Jason</b>	<b>Harry</b>
1: Experiences of social exclusion as an offender	Impact of identity as an offender - Experiencing social exclusion  - Power imbalance between self and police	Negative reflections on past as an offender	Social exclusion as an offender
2: The challenge of separating from offending behaviour	Understanding how to break the cycle of offending	Independent challenge of separating from engagement with offending behaviour.  The secure estate: Time to understand risk factors for offending behaviour.	Dissociating from offending

(See Appendix F2, table S6)

Table 2 shows that I interpreted all three participants as expressing the following perceptions of their own transition experiences:

1. Experiences of social exclusion as an offender
2. The challenge of separating from offending behaviour.

#### 4.2.1: Experiencing social exclusion as an offender

Social exclusion is a term commonly used to describe exclusion from social groups or institutions including the peer group, education, work, training and family.

I interpreted all three participants to have expressed that their engagement in offending behaviour led them to experience social exclusion from society and its institutions. This was experienced in different ways by each participant. Shaun expressed that he had experienced social exclusion (from his peers, education, work, training and family) and had limited attachments to the community and world outside the secure estate (see 4.3.1). Jason reflected on himself and his interactions within the secure estate. He perceived his potential for exclusion from the workforce due to his identity as an offender. Harry referred to his previous exclusion from education and '*a normal life*' (3.3.117) on the basis of his engagement with offending behaviour.

##### Shaun:

*“It’s like in there you’re with loadsa people and then you’re on your own in that one” (1.1.30-31).*

For Shaun the secure estate offered a consistent group of young people. He showed his relative isolation in the community by presenting himself as alone.

Throughout interviews he expanded on his perception that repeated periods in the secure estate had limited his attachment to and understanding of the world outside the secure estate. This was demonstrated by his observation that the world outside the secure estate was developing without him and becoming more distant from him.

*“Erm like your area changes, all the people what you know move to different places an that. Erm like new things would come out and like you don’t know what they are an that” (1.3.114-116).*

His social exclusion had been facilitated at a systemic level by his accommodation in a bail hostel following his last transition. He expressed that the bail hostel was like the secure estate in the community.

*“It’s like being in here really. Cos I can leave but if I leave but if I leave I’ll come back in here cos I’ve breached.” (2.6.287-288).*

This above extract highlights the similarities between his experience of social exclusion within the secure estate and within the community. Although the secure estate offered Shaun a group of peers he expressed feelings of isolation and exclusion within this group. In the community, his hostel accommodation exacerbated his isolation by offering him a group of socially excluded peers.

*“Allt smackheads<sup>5</sup> and that. I don’t really wanna sit there and talk to a load of bagheads<sup>5</sup> so I just go.” (2.6.284-285).*

I questioned whether this communicated to him that he was similarly rejected by society, and whether this rejection was a factor in his limited expression of an alternative future or identity as a non-offender in the community (see 4.2.2). He expressed this lack of identity in more practical terms:

*“I dint have no ID so I couldn’t open a bank account or anything”  
(1.9.444-445).*

Jason:

*“If it’s on your record, if you’re thieving an you’ve got stuff on your record for handling stolen goods, theft, stuff like that you’re never gna be able to work behind a till. You’re never gonna work in offices or owt like that are you? You think oh just a little bastard who’s going to do all this an that. Obviously I don’t want that me. I want them to say oh yeah he’s been, I’ll be honest about when I go for a job interview. I’ll be honest about where I’ve been an that. But obviously I’ve been here when I wo young an that, cos I come here when I was seventeen. Got out when I was seventeen and never been back.” (1.5-6.247-254<sup>6</sup>).*

The above extract shows that although Jason resisted accepting engagement in offending as part of his current perception of himself, he was cognisant of the negative impact of engagement in offending on employers’ perceptions of him. I perceived him as understanding offending as a barrier to joining the non-

6. It should be noted that this interview was conducted when Jason was seventeen. When he expressed that he had not returned to the secure estate he was talking as his future self. At the end of the study Jason had not returned to the secure estate.

offending community of workers, but protecting himself by planning to change his identity to become a non-offender (see 4.3.2).

Jason extended this expression that his offending would always be part of his history, and that it could prevent his future inclusion throughout interviews. He reflected that if rejected as an offender he thought he would engage in further offending in line with this labelling of him as an offender.

*“I’d feel gutted. I’d probably go off rails. Obviously the worst thing that would definitely be for me, you’ve obviously committed all these crimes and that, you’ve hurt a lot of families with this, you’ve come in jail and done your time. Couple years down the line then obviously it’s like you’re out of trouble. Your records more or less nearly clean, it’s like this has never happened really. That’s what I want. But obviously if your past creeps up on you it’s never gonna go away is it? Definitely.” (1.6.263-268).*

I interpreted this as part of his expression that to overcome social exclusion as an offender, society has to create conditions to support him to be included as a non-offender. This made me question how we (society) expect young people to disengage from offending whilst communicating to them that we exclude them as offenders (see Appendix G themes 4 and 7).

Jason explained that he was labelled as an offender before he had engaged in offending behaviour, and that this had led him to offend. I interpreted this as him

living up to negative expectations of him as a young person, and the impact of labelling on identity construction.

*“An it’s like I started doing things aswell because they’re saying I’m doing stuff when I’m not. So obviously I actually did it so then do you know what I mean they can’t accuse me of doing stuff” (1.3.147-149).*

Jason expressed that he had strong links to the socially excluded group of offenders within his community. He was clear that this group of young people would be highly motivated to maintain their relationship with him. This relationship also included the expectation that he would retain his identity as an offender.

*“I don’t know well some people think I won’t be able to do it but like the main people that do you know what I commit crime with. Cos obviously I’ve committed that much crime they’ll be thinking he’ll be back on it in no time. Bet the police aswell they’ll think I won’t able to do it.” (2.12.567-570).*

Harry:

Harry emphasized his experiences of exclusion from education as a result of his offending behaviour. In interviews 1 and 2 he had been hopeful that support systems for his transition would enable him to access education. I interpreted this as significant social exclusion because if he had access to education this would have provided him with opportunities to socialise with non-offending

peers and to gain qualifications to give him access to economic independence without offending. I recognised that I may have interpreted this to be significant because professionally as an EPiT I often promote education as an institutional level intervention to promote social inclusion. However, I was reassured by the fact that he emphasized the importance of access to education in all three interviews.

*“Like you just, if I was like on out just committing loads of offences and stuff and I was getting arrested and stuff and then like I tried asking to go back into school at my old school, they wunt let me. (1.3.144-146).*

*“Yeah I do wanna get into school, But there int no schools so you can’t do owt about it.” (3.1.30-31).*

Harry contemplated the long-term impact of social exclusion which he labelled as living a ‘prisoner’s life’.

*“Yeah and then I wouldn’t have the chances I’d just think oh well he’s got no, he ant got no grades he can’t go back to school, so he’s just gna be in and out of prison. A prisoner’s life.” (1.5.235-237)*

*“Yeah. And then being in here’s just like you’re wasting your life and not making no good of your life. If you’re just being rotting away in prison.” (1.7.318-319).*

His use of words such as ‘rotting away’ and ‘wasting your life’ communicated images of being discarded from society as waste and forgotten about. This indicated his perception of the potential for him to be fully excluded from society if he continued to engage in offending behaviour.

For all three participants, theme 1 overlapped with theme 2. Social exclusion from non-offending society could act as a barrier to engaging in non-offending behaviour.

#### **4.2.2: The challenge of separating from offending behaviour**

All three participants perceived separation from offending as a significant challenge involving changing their identities, lifestyles and peers. This involved sacrificing their past identities and certainties within relationships. I thought that Shaun was at the contemplative stage of understanding how to break his cycle of offending. (‘Contemplative stage’ is a concept from motivational interviewing (Atkinson & Woods, 2003), it refers to a description of a young person’s readiness to change. I thought that Shaun was at this stage because he appeared to be thinking about the disadvantages and advantages of changing from offending behaviour to non-offending behaviour). This transition was the first transition in which he had not re-offended.

Jason emphasized his determination to separate from offending behaviour. I perceived him to understand that this was his responsibility and that he needed

to think for himself, rather than as part of a group of offenders. Harry talked about dissociating himself from the offending behaviour in his past. Offending was presented as a memory to be forgotten, rather than part of his current behavioural repertoire.

Shaun:

Shaun communicated that separating from offending was a significant challenge which he was unsure he could achieve.

*“I should be able to stop, I shunt, I should be able to stop myself from doing it.” (2.14.679)*

*“I’d feel happy. I’d feel good cos I’ve never stuck to it before” (1.7.301).*

He was hopeful, but honest that his previous transitions had all resulted in a return to the secure estate. He was attached to offending behaviour as part of his normal behaviour. He saw transition from the secure estate as part of a repeated cycle of transition into and out of the secure estate. To separate from offending behaviour would be to engage in a pattern of behaviour which he had very limited experience of as an adolescent outside the secure estate.

*“Now I’ve been in six times I know if I do summat wrong I’m just gna come back, get out be on licence, breach that come back again, get out on licence, come back again” (3.7.306-207).*

*“Hard. So if I get caught for a drugs getting at least two, if I get caught burgling getting at least three years. That’s why I don’t wanna come back now. Cos I got con, I got convictions for drugs, burgling, stealing cars and assault. So if I get locked up for any of them I come back aswell”*  
(2.14.657-660).

*“I expected them to cos I’d just been in for, cos I was like last year I was doing burglaries all the time. But now I been, I I I ant been doing none I stopped and now I started selling weed instead of doing burglaries. It’s just as bad but erm it’s not as it, I don’t know burglaries are lot worse. Cos you’re robbing off people and I think it’s tight. But selling weed it’s not really, you’re not really robbing off anybody you’re just selling a bit of twifter<sup>7</sup>”* (2.8.372-377).

I also interpreted Shaun to be highly susceptible to peer pressure. His social relationships were contemporaneously maintained through offending behaviour and joint experiences of the secure estate. I perceived that these peer relationships did not extend beyond the shared activity of offending behaviour.

Interview 3 showed that this was the first transition in which he recognised that he might be capable of this.

*“Stick to my ISSP, stick to my tag, stay at my mum’s house without breaching an that. Get into college. That’s what I wanna do but it’s just hard. Stick to my ISSP an that. An when my mates are ringing me up an*

*saying oh come out I'll be like I'm on tag. It just makes me wanna breach” (1.6.286-289).*

*“Good. Loads of people asked me to er sell weed for em or if I wanted to come out, go out grafting<sup>8</sup> with them. I said no” (3.3.139-140).*

*“Sometimes go to \_\_\_ but couple of them are like that but I just don't stay there too late cos then I don't know. I don't think I'd end up going out burgling or owt but they'd just keep asking me” (3.6.280-282).*

*“Make my own choice instead of just saying yeah I'll do it. I'll do this, I'll do that. Like when I was in court you know \_\_\_? She was saying 'he's easily influenced' and that. Like if someone asks me to do summat I'll do it for them. So obviously I stopped doing that aswell” (3.11.523-527).*

I thought that Shaun perceived the conditions of his transition as facilitating his return to the secure estate, rather than separating him from offending behaviour.

*“Me licence conditions were pretty bad. Three month ISSP, three month twenty five hours a week, ninety one day tag, er non association with about twenty of me mates. Er to live at a hostel all that stuff. I think that's why he were saying that I were going back” (2.12.559-562).*

Jason:

Jason showed his determination to separate from offending behaviour throughout interviews and understood that this was an individual challenge. He

recognised the importance of separation from offending, as he perceived he needed to move to a community that would reinforce non-offending behaviour and an alternative future for him. I noted the significance of this move from a community I thought had relatively low socio-economic status and levels of education, to a relatively affluent community with high levels of education.

*“An that uns (points to goldfish picture) from like be on your own, do what you think and not what others think an that I’d say...” (1.1-2.50-51).*

*“That’s what I did. Instead of going to \_\_\_\_\_ college where I knew people I went to \_\_\_\_ college where I dint you know what I mean...” (1.2.70-71).*

*“Switch to like there’s more to life than crime aswell” (1.2.13.607).*

*“I’m moving off me estate I’m staying at me own for well temporary licence in like some flat in \_\_\_\_\_. Near me college so then” (1.5.219-220).*

Jason articulately expressed the environmental factors that had put him at risk of offending. He described his local community as conducive to offending as a shared norm for behaviour to compensate for poverty and lack of aspirations.

*“It’s just that estate it’s just meant for crime cos that’s all it is. It’s like yeah there is a youth club on there. But obviously I don’t want to go there. It’s just that estate it’s like people, don’t get me wrong people do have jobs and few of me mates do have jobs, well not all of them. But two or three of them. But they’re all just I don’t know they don’t want nowt in life if you get me. So” (1.4.180-184).*

*“Yeah that’s one of the main ones. An if you’re not doing owt with your time you’re more likely to make crime aren’t you really. Got nowt to set your ambitions on” (1.5.207-209).*

*“It’s some people don’t even get that a week you know ont the out. That’s why they commit the crime. Like me ont out yeah I do have money ont out. I get me EMA and stuff. But obviously it’s always good to have some money in your pocket. Like when you go commit crime an you got money in your pocket you can do owt you want” (1.11.503-507).*

Jason expressed that his current focus on change for transition should be understood in the context of his past. He was previously very attached to offending behaviour as part of his normal, daily routine of activity with his peers. It would be a challenge for him to separate from this, as he had established a high-status position within his group of offending peers.

*“Don’t get me wrong before I went to jail crime that were normal for me anyway” (3.4.165-166).*

*“It wont even a pattern it was just more like a schedule” (3.4.175).*

*“I’ll be thinking what I’ve got to lose and obviously at the same time you’d be thinking oh man you can do this one and you won’t get caught and it’d go through that one, escalate to two then just keep going an keep going won’t it? So just can’t let em tempt you” (1.3.101-104).*

*“Like when you go commit crime an you got money in your pocket you can do owt you want. You know what I mean? Like just before I come in*

*here I had a nice little bit of money. It lasted me a few week it did. It was just I had quite a bit. I could get what I wanted and stuff” (1.11.506-509).*

*“Could be straight back into college but obviously I’ve got to like avoid being tempted to commit crime again ant I? Obviously I stopped cannabis an that sort of stuff aswell so just get what, I suppose I’m not. Hopefully anyway all you can do you try innit? Can’t guarantee nowt but as long as you try innit” (1.2.81-84).*

*“I don’t know, me mates peer pressure really” (1.2.94).*

*“They’ll be thinking oh we’ll get him back into trouble” (1.7.328).*

*“They’d be all like er, cos me mates an that they all like money who dunt you know what I mean. Obviously they don’t get it legitimately. They’ll be like oh I’ve got all this money I’ve done this I’ve done that. An I’ll be thinking oh I might I wish to do that again. Just got to hold yourself back ant you?” (1.2.96-99).*

Jason explained that he had had to perceive himself as a non-offender before being able to accept support to separate from offending behaviour.

*“But criminals, that’s what you think but criminals. It’s like me obviously I dint want support at first but come in here and that and obviously I’m not gna turn round, I’m not gna be able to turn round my life if I don’t have support me no way. But everybody needs a bit of support now and then” (2.12.584-587).*

I perceived that contemplating disengaging from this activity was challenging for him when he had perceived himself as an offender. This indicated the role of group identity as part of a socially excluded group (those who offend) in facilitating continued social exclusion from wider society (those who do not offend). I thought this might contribute to Shaun's difficulty in accepting the conditions of his transition as supporting him to disengage from offending behaviour.

Although he was clearly determined, Jason perceived sustained separation from offending as a challenge. His separation was dependent on the success of an alternative future that was vulnerable to the aforementioned temptations to offend for money or marijuana and to provocation from others.

*“Hard definitely. I’ve done it before but it’s just like in here you can only take so much can’t you like people saying stuff to you an that you can only take so much. So you can be good for so long and then you just snap don’t you?” (1.3.106-108).*

*“I know I’d end up, end up re-offending if summat went wrong” (3.4.182-183).*

Harry:

Harry presented his experience of the secure estate as similar to rehabilitation from addiction to marijuana. He hoped this rehabilitation would enable him to separate from offending on release. He expressed that this had been a challenge before the secure estate as it had been part of his routine and part of his conflicting relationship with his mother (see Appendix G theme 3).

*“Yeah yeah. But there is a bit of rehabilitation cos you’re getting all used to it, I ant had no cannabis now for a while. And I think that if I do get back into school when I get out of here then I’ll be able to stop what I used to do. And not just start again” (1.2.86-88).*

*“But now I’m in here I’ve been off it for ages now I know that when I get out if I stay out of trouble and I stay out of that old routine then I’ll be alright. Cos I don’t need to smoke anything I’d be refreshed” (1.7-8.347-349).*

*“Like me and me mum argue all the time. Like I always asked my mum for money to buy cannabis and stuff when I was out. Cos obviously so I’m taking all her money off her she’s not happy. So we used to always argue” (1.7.344-347).*

His further explanation of marijuana as a risk factor focussed on the impact it has on his thought patterns. He perceived that whilst smoking marijuana he had a negative frame of reference through which to view the world. Having stopped

smoking marijuana within the secure estate, he was now able to think positively, which included the possibility of a non-offending future.

*“H: Yeah. Like I never used to think of good things like this just like always been thinking about bad things like how I’m gna get money to buy my next bag of cannabis. Just stuff like that. But now can think good. So then I don’t have to smoke it anymore” (1.8.357-359).*

I interpreted the secure estate as having given Harry the freedom to separate from his previous life, to construct his future.

Harry wanted to block out thoughts and memories of offending behaviour, so that it would not be an option for him. I interpreted this as cognitive preparation for the challenge of separating from offending behaviour and thought interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy within the secure estate might have contributed to this approach.

*“Forgetting what it’s like in here. Forgetting how it is, how I don’t wanna remember being in here. It’s just like summat that I’ve done. I’ve made a mistake and I don’t wanna go down that route again” (1.5.206-208).*

*“H: The downfall was being stupid.*

*I: And what do you mean by being stupid?*

*H: Not thinking about things.*

*I: Mmm can you tell me about those things?*

*H: What I were doing. Not thinking about consequences” (3.3.137-141).*

For all three participants I interpreted this challenge of separating from offending as overlapping with temporally located theme 4 ‘understanding our risk factors for offending’ (see Appendix G) because these factors are part of what make it challenging for them (for example Shaun’s susceptibility to peer pressure). However I also interpreted this concept of challenge to be an important part of their shared perceptions of transition across interviews, and have therefore presented it as a distinct theme within the results chapter.

Summary of converging perceptions of transition:

Themes which converge across all interviews and participants:

1. Experiences of social exclusion as a young offender.
2. The challenge of separating from offending behaviour.

**4.3: Diverging perceptions of the transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment**

Table 3: Themes which diverge between participants across all three interviews

<b>Diverging Theme</b>	<b>Expressed by:</b>	
1. Experiencing institutionalisation: Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.	Shaun	Institutionalisation - External locus of control.
	Shaun	The challenge of achieving inclusion when social relationships are dependent on offending behaviour
	Shaun	Transition as an opportunity to re-construct family relationships following reflection on the detrimental impact of offending.
	Shaun	Insecure attachments to the community and the secure estate.
2. Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition	Jason	Adopting a positive, logical approach to enable good transition  Reconstructing identity: From young offender to apprentice joiner with paternal role in family.
	Harry	Transition as an opportunity for goal-directed behaviour: Goal; 'a normal life'.  Freedom to construct new identity: 'I'd be a normal person'.
	Jason	Transition enabled by strong support network of family and friends
	Shaun	Understanding his needs as an adolescent

(See Appendix F2, table S6)

Table 3 shows that across all three interviews I interpreted the following themes as diverging between participants:

1. Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle to maintain insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.
2. Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition.

**4.3.1: Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.**

I interpreted Shaun as being institutionalised, based on his expressed perceptions of transition. These were centred on the secure estate as his frame of reference for understanding the world and his role within it. Although this overlapped with the convergent experience of social exclusion as an offender (see 4.2.1), some of Shaun's expressed perceptions diverged from those of Jason and Harry, as he expressed insecure attachments to both the secure estate and the community.

Shaun:

Shaun was relatively ambivalent about his transition. His perception was that it was normal for him to return to the secure estate; he seemed to be reassuring himself that it would be alright to return to the familiarity of the secure estate.

*“If I got recalled though I'd still be out for my eighteenth birthday, cos my licence finishes in November but I don't wanna get recalled. But if I re-offend and then I get in back here and I got another sentence I'd be in for me eighteenth and they'd keep me in here for the whole sentence instead of shipping me out to a YOs. Even if I was eighteen I came here and then I had my eighteenth birthday in here I'd stay in here because I committed the crime while I was seventeen. So they'd keep me here on a DTO”*  
(2.5.237-243).

I interpreted Shaun as viewing transition as part of a predictable, repeated sequence of behaviour based on his past experience.

*“... cos that’s what I’ve done my other time. Especially ISSP cos I do my induction and I don’t go back. I do the induction after I, the day that my youth offender takes me when I get released and then I don’t go back the next day. And I get, I get a letter through the post saying oh you’re been breached there’s your court date so I snap my tag off. Then I get breached for erm breach of tag. And then YOT put out a warrant for me” (2.10-11.496-501).*

Repeated transition was a shared behavioural norm with his peers, and he appeared to be maintaining his relationships by coordinating transition into and out of the secure estate. I thought these relationships with his peers were more important to him than his location in either the secure estate or the community.

*“It was just boring. It was alright though cos one of me mates from on the out and that just came back in and he’s next door to me so I just talk to him cos he’s on bang up aswell” (2.2.86-88).*

*“That’s what, me best mate \_\_\_\_, I got out last time I rung him up the day I got out. He’s like where are you? When did you get out? I goes oh I got out today. And he goes ‘oh you got any weed?’ I says yeah. So he came down and seen me and like bought some off me and I bought some. And he was helping me sell some of it and we were going out on our bikes to go drop it off and then he was like ‘you’re gna end up back in soon you’ cos I*

*breached me tag. And I came back in and I got out again. And I seen him the day I got out and he's like 'you're not are you going back again you?' I goes nah. And he said er, what was it, he said 'you're gna end up back in again'. And then all me mates were saying you're gna end up back in and then I did" (2.13.610-619).*

He had limited attachment to the wider community, and I perceived the loss of his relationship with his father to be a contributing factor in this (see Appendix G, theme 3), as this was due to his engagement in offending. This led me to question whether his relationship with offending had replaced his relationships with his family. It appeared that his dad would have rebuilt the relationship if Shaun had given up offending. I wondered whether offending offered an accessible peer group and was perceived as more achievable than a non-offending future.

*"I feel bad I've tried, I've tried to speak to him loads of times but he doesn't want to speak to me. Cos he's proper against drugs and that, and crime and all that stuff" (2.13.599-600).*

In addition to his clear separation from his father in the community and in the secure estate, it appeared that he perceived his mother and sister as accepting that his transition would always include a return to the secure estate.

*“They think it were good. Me mum and me sister were saying that they were proud cos I were not going out grafting and carrying on selling weed and that. She knew I were coming back for breaching” (3.6.257-259).*

This lack of attachment to the world outside the secure estate was also evident from the way he talked about the support he received from his YOT worker in his transitions from the secure estate.

*“Good. I’d rather be out than inside every time. My YOT worker told me loads of times to stay out. Me YOT workers been drilling it into me head for about a year, nearly two years now” (2.7.337-339).*

The phrase ‘drilling it into me head for about a year, nearly two years now’ (ibid) was significant to me. This metaphorical description and the length of time he referred to suggested that it was difficult to persuade Shaun to try living in the community, and to support him to separate from the secure estate.

This divergence between Shaun as an individual from Jason and Harry is explained by Jason as part of his emergent theme ‘transition is enabled by strong support network of family and friends’. For example, Jason comments:

*“J: And obviously the other luck aswell is when I obviously I’ve got people supporting me and that. Other people they’re not as lucky are they? To have people supporting them and stuff” (2.8.364-366).*

*“J: I don’t know, it’s gna go easy for me cos I’ve obviously got my family support and that so” (2.2.86-89).*

#### **4.3.2: Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition.**

In contrast to Shaun, I interpreted both Harry and Jason to have adopted goal-directed approaches to transition. Both had clear plans of how they were going to achieve good transitions and understood that this included reconstructing their identities outside the secure estate and their behaviour within the secure estate.

##### Jason:

*“That I hope that I don’t come back to jail an that. Cos jail it can be two things. It can be the beginning of fresh start or it can be the beginning of coming to jail. But obviously for the future I wanna see meself. Eventually I wanna be owning my own little company and stuff” (1.11-12.548-551).*

*“So different things can happen. That’s just exactly what it says that, just like the right path again. Choose the right path” (1.2.59-60).*

Jason perceived that he could choose to have a good transition and this included his goal of owning his own joinery company. His aim for transition was to reconstruct his identity from offender to apprentice joiner with a paternal role in his family. This paternal role included providing for and parenting his younger

brothers. Jason expressed this and his business plan for how to achieve it and sustain it throughout interviews.

*“J: But obviously for the future I wanna see meself. Eventually I wanna be owning my own little company and stuff. You can’t just snap your fingers and make that happen can you? You’ve got to you’ve got to go for it really ant you?”*

*I: Tell me a bit more about that company.*

*J: Joinery. That’s the only thing what I’ve done. If someone came up to me and said oh you can start your own company up now bricklaying I’d say no, I’d refuse everything. But of you come up to me and said joinery I’d do it hundred percent. It’s one thing I enjoy doing. Me tutor says if you enjoy doing something you might aswell stick it ant you? Cos you might aswell enjoy yourself really while your working ant you? I’d volunteer I’d do owt. I told him aswell I’d do it for nowt me. Hundred percent. Obviously you can only work for nowt for so long can’t you? Till you can get your own house an that but I would just to get me started” (1.11-12.549-561).*

*“I hope I start work as a joiner for a few year. Eventually build a business up. Obviously it would be small and then it’d be bigger. And as soon as you get a profit you can make it even bigger. Just all about it’s just right techniques innit? Like getting your name out there. Getting your company name out there and stuff. It’s competition, it’s what it’s all about innit? Being competitive” (3.12.568-572).*

*“Someone who’s had the experience of the business but who hasn’t got the money. So that if I get, if I get started and that and I get quite a bit of money just saved up obviously I’m not talking like millions and stuff just enough to get your own little property and that. Just to work from and then obviously me if I get someone who knows the business and trade and that then nowt could go wrong, well things could go wrong but then obviously we’ll be there to pick the pieces up won’t we both?” (3.12-13.593-598).*

*“There’s people in me family I don’t even really talk to like me Uncle \_\_\_\_\_. Obviously I wanted to do an apprenticeship with him cos he’s a qualified joiner and stuff he like builds his own houses an that. He’s only one in our family whose like been successful if you get me? Cos he’s like, he’s got houses all over. His own houses aswell. He’s got quite a bit of money int bank. Obviously that’s what I wanna be. Without him knowing obviously that’s my sorta role model. If you get me?” (1.9.433-438).*

In order to work towards this goal he was clear about the role of his college education and his work towards this within the secure estate.

*“Obviously if I dint really care I wunt go army course or would I? I wunt be like. Obviously I’ve come here and that, keeping my head down and just get most out of it while I’m here” (2.13.603-605).*

*“Yeah. I’m going straight into college once I get out. The week following. The week I get out obviously I’ve got to go see him and that to tell him what’s happened. But I can’t, I’m not going to go into college that week*

*cos obviously I wanna like talk to me mum and that cos obviously I've been in here for a bit. So just week after I'll go to college and then I'll hopefully get my apprenticeship. That'd be alright"* (2.2.78-82).

*"Yeah there's only a couple of in like that class of like, I'm one of the best in the class. Just said they'll extend it for me when I get out"* (1.3.122.123).

*"Got to set your mind on one thing and just stick to it really"* (2.8.390).

*"Well it's that, you definitely don't know what's coming, what's gna come round corner so, that. There's a couple cos if you think about it obviously I, when I get out I'm on that road me I'm ont right path to me education an that me definitely"* (1.2.62-64).

Jason had clearly visualised what it would be like to have achieved his goals.

*"J: Oh it is, it's like a painting in me head. It's all clear as day.*

*I: So can you describe that painting to me?*

*J: I just see meself holding loadsa certificates an that. All like when they say oh look you've passed"* (1.13.602-605).

*"J: Good feelings aswell just like obviously when I'm a bit older finished college an that. Once you've done a job, when you've done your first job an you've finished it and you've done it all right an that, you'll be proud of yourself really won't you?*

*I: So you'd be proud of you?*

*J: Definitely. Proud of what you've achieved an that. I never thought I'd be in \_\_\_\_ college an that" (1.5.238-243).*

*"You've got all your qualifications and that it's like I don't know what to do you'd be lost for words really wunt you. It's like with you when you got to uni an that. I bet you were lost for words when they accepted you wont you? So that's what it's like for me with me coming here an that it'll be a big step when I get me qualifications. So yourself you'd know exactly how I'd feel really" (2.13.605-609).*

*"J: Being known for summat good instead of having a fucking asbo book or summat.*

*I: So being known for good?*

*J: That's what I mean I don't want people reading the papers 'young lad mister \_\_\_\_ committed this crime' did that just I'll be in that traded paper whatever it is with all the trades.*

*I: Mmm.*

*J: Cos what I mean when people do quite a serious offence it goes on the news and that dunnit cos like it's like it's out there innit. They let people know basically what you've done and that. But if I'm doing my own business and that I'll be doing that won't I? TV ads and that. 'You want joiners come see us'" (3.12.574-583).*

This achievement motivation was also underpinned by self-efficacy, as Jason was confident throughout that he would achieve his goals. This was partly inspired by the role model of his uncle (mentioned above) and his grandfather's successful separation from offending behaviour.

*"You've got to believe in yourself aswell" (2.8.394).*

*"J: Yeah. People I work for aswell they'd be like I don't know they'd, they'd be a bit proud and a bit good on him if I were working with them. Cos obviously if I were telling, if I told them the truth that I've been here before and that, pulled me life round they would be wunt they? Can't believe you've pulled it off and that. You've actually turned your life around.*

*I: So they'd see that you'd done it?*

*J: Proving it to them aswell. Like the people who think I can't do it prove em wrong innit?*

*I: So what do you mean by proving it?*

*J: I don't know just there's saying it and there's doing it. If you say it you need to do it don't you? There's no point saying it if you aren't. Just prove it by doing it. Or even if I don't get all the way there just give it me best shot at least I can say I've tried. Hundred percent I know I'm trying by what I'm doing now" (2.12-13.589-601).*

*"I can because I want to" (3.9.398).*

*“Cos I used to work with me granddad, painting and decorating. So and when he was young he went to jail and he turned his life around so if he can do it I can do it. Do you know what I mean?” (3.7.327-329).*

In interview 3, Jason further demonstrated his goal-directed approach, by reflecting on his approach to the barriers he perceived to achieving his goals (see Appendix G, theme 7).

*“Better than ever. Don’t get me wrong when I were in there I were more positive in there but. Don’t get. I haven’t lost me positive positivity or whatever you call it. But obviously there’s gna be a few obstacles a few hurdles in the way. Like this tag and all that there’s a couple of hurdles innit? But I just need to work around don’t I? Just got to make it work really haven’t I? No point saying it you might aswell do it” (3.13.604-609).*

These goals were underpinned by his strong attachments to his family. He planned to adopt a paternal role in order to support his mother to provide for his younger siblings (see Appendix G, theme 3).

*“So. I mean a job aswell it’s not just to earn money though is though it’s like me family support me but I need to support me family you know” (3.7.345-347).*

*“I mean to help, don’t get me wrong she’s got a couple of members of family who she can rely on and that. She I know she I can tell when she’s*

*struggling for money like I can just tell. Just you don't, she dunt even need to say nowt. So if I can help her I can help. Just one of them days when you can tell she's struggling. Just give her an hand out. Even if it isn't giving her cash in hand, if it's just going to buy some milk or bread or summat. Some food for the twins or summat you know what I mean?" (3.8.357-362).*

He also planned to reconstruct his leadership role with respect to his peers. This reconstruction would enable him to continue to belong to both his peer group and the non-offending community, by leading his peers to gain employment and separate from offending behaviour.

*"J: And they're all going yeah man. I've asked one of me mates I went just get a job.*

*I: Mmm.*

*J: Just get a job with us. He goes 'I don't know I'll try. I'll try'. But yeah, obviously me doing good will hopefully me mate will follow me. I'm not bothered about all me mates just the one in particular.*

*I: So you want him to follow?*

*J: I've always been a leader me" (3.11-12.542-548).*

Harry:

Harry was clearly focussed and motivated to re-engage with education, which he perceived would open opportunities for him to succeed in adult life as a non-offender.

*“H: Just thinking that finally. I’ve now got a chance. First thing on my mind would be to go to probation to see about what they’re doing about my school. When I started. That’d be the first thing. Some people wanna get out and go see their mates and that straight away. I don’t I just wanna know when I’m gna be starting at school. I just wanna, I’ve been asking like seen my caseworker all the time to ask her if she’s heard owt about getting me into a school. Or college. Cos that’s just the main thing on my mind now.*

*I: So this is really the main thing that you’re thinking about?*

*H: Yeah. Like I’ve even I’ve been good since I’ve been here so that I can get out on my early release. And go to school. It’s the start, they start up again in September.*

*I: Yeah some of them open on the first but some of them don’t open until the fifth.*

*H: I mean I’ll be starting off in just after they start up again. Cos that wouldn’t be that bad I’d be going into a new year where all the rest of them are” (1.8-9.393-405).*

*“This one could if I do get into education (points to yellow roadmap image). Cos have a good finish. Cos if I do my exams and get good grades*

*an that then this'll be good un. So er, so is that one, that's like an open road (points to road image). Say like if I do my exams and get good grades then open to do anything" (1.1.39-42).*

As Harry talked about his future, he focussed on education as the key factor in enabling him to achieve his goals, and as a goal in itself.

*"What I hope for my future? It's a good. To get out, go to school, get good grades, get a job in motor mechanics if I go to college for mechanics, a job doing mechanics, get a nice car, girlfriend, maybe get married, have couple of kids, nice house and be able to tell my kids that not to go down my route" (1.8.372-375).*

Having been previously excluded from education (see 4.2.1), Harry perceived his time in the secure estate as an opportunity to access support to enable him to access education. The secure estate was perceived as a facilitator for his goal-directed behaviour.

*"In here though I've got like probation and a caseworker and stuff they'll be able to get me into school. And a fresh start" (1.3.146-148).*

*"I wanna go down that route. I wanna see, I wanna leave that one behind and go down that route wanna have a fresh start. New friends. Be able to do that" (1.3.139-140).*

Harry understood that in order to achieve his goals he had to focus and work towards them throughout his time in the secure estate and his transition.

*“Like it’s like from now it’s like what choices I make now is like gna be with me for like not just rest of my life, but it’s gonna start off the rest of my life. As soon as I make now from when I get out of here like if I’m making a decision go, do school, get good grades, that’s a good decision. And it will help me out to get good grades. To get a job and a little house” (1.9.443.447).*

*“The future, positive future. Positive future. I’d think about the future” (2.8.357).*

*“H: And erm and then like preparing for education. Education and college fill up my time.*

*I: What does preparing for education mean for you?*

*H: Like get ready, find out what school I’m going to, what year I’ll be going in and uniform sort of thing.*

*I: Oh right yeah.*

*H: like I’m getting just like preparing to go back into education cos I haven’t been for ages. Preparing for education and then like getting on with education” (2.2.92-99).*

Harry hoped that if he achieved his goals of education and work his life would be:

*“H: Good, be better. I’d be normal. I’d be a normal person. People wunt look at me and say oh he’s been in prison before. He ant got a chance of getting good grades or owt. He’ll never get a job. Or stuff like that.*

*I: So what does it mean to be a normal person?*

*H: Like being in education all the time. And not being out of education. Having a good life. Not being kicked out before and stuff like that. Not committing offences. Just to know what it’s like being a normal person. Wish I, I could have already gone down that route instead of being in here” (1.7. 301-308).*

I interpreted this to mean that for Harry being ‘normal’ meant being a non-offender.

#### Summary of diverging perceptions of transition

Themes which diverge between participants across all three interviews:

1. Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.
2. Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition.

### Summary of results chapter

I used IPA to answer the following research question:

How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?

This chapter summarises key interpretations from this analysis. This analysis involved looking across individuals and interviews for converging and diverging themes within expressed perceptions of the phenomenon in question (see chapter 3 for methodology and analysis process and chapter 5 for further discussion of these results).

4.2 Converging themes across all participants across all three interviews:

1. Experiences of social exclusion as a young offender.
2. The challenge of separating from offending behaviour.

4.3 Diverging themes across participants across all three interviews:

1. Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community.
2. Jason and Harry: adopting a goal-directed approach to transition.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction:

This chapter includes a discussion of my research results and their implications for EP practice (see 3.5.3 and 5.2.2 for limitations to generalizability of IPA research). This research was based on a critical review of the literature (see chapter 2), and the use of IPA methodology (see chapter 3) to answer the following research question: ‘How do three young people leaving the secure estate (custody) perceive their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment?’ (See chapter 4 for results).

### Chapter structure:

5.1: Dialogue between my findings and existing literature

5.2: Strengths and limitations of this study

5.3: Recommendations for further research

### **5.1: Dialogue between my research results and existing literature**

This section is an interpretative dialogue between my results and existing literature. In line with IPA research, this includes dialogue with literature critiqued in chapter 2 and a selective sample of additional literature (Smith *et al.*, 2009). The additional literature was selected as it is relevant to my results. Each of the themes presented in chapter 4 is discussed before a summary of convergence and divergence between my themes and the literature.

Within this dialogue I have used literature to interpret my results, and my results to re-interpret the literature. My account is representative of my interpretations of these three young people's expressed perceptions of their own transition experience within the time and space of this thesis. This account is not an interpretation of general experiences of transition as this would not be evidenced by my findings or approach to analysis. Although my dialogue utilises literature from authors who may claim general truths about groups of young people, my focus is on three individuals. The transferability of this research is open to interpretation by the reader.

#### 5.1.1: Experiencing social exclusion as an offender

(See results chapter 4.2.1)

All three participants expressed that they had experienced (Shaun and Harry), or could experience (Jason), social exclusion (from peer group, education, work, training and/or family) as a result of their offending behaviour. This converges with literature that describes young people who engage in offending behaviour as a socially excluded group (Ryrie, 2006; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). This literature also indicates that exclusion tends to be experienced before the young person's first period in the secure estate (ibid). Both Jason and Harry alluded to this; Jason expressed that police labelling him as an offender before he had offended had caused him to engage in offending; whilst Harry said that he had been excluded from school on the basis of his offending behaviour before entering the secure estate.

It is proposed that the experience of the secure estate then enhances vulnerability to social exclusion as it separates young people from attachments to the community and adolescent opportunities for social development (Steinberg *et al.*, 2004). For young people outside the secure estate, these opportunities tend to include romantic and social relationships with a variety of peers. I interpreted both Harry and Jason as perceiving the secure estate as a temporary barrier to their attachment relationships and social development. Both described themselves as different to other young people within the secure estate and were highly motivated to reconnect with family relationships outside the secure estate. They expressed that they perceived romantic relationships with non-offending females as part of their future plans for children and family (i.e. social inclusion as a non-offender). In contrast to this, Shaun expressed that he experienced detachment from and lack of secure social relationships outside the secure estate, as proposed by Steinberg *et al.* (2004). (This is discussed further in section 5.1.2 as part of my interpretation of Shaun as communicating that he had experienced institutionalisation).

Harry and Jason's examples of exclusion from education and employment have been highlighted as risk factors for young people engaged in offending behaviour (Ryrie, 2006; Hurry & Moriarty, 2004; Bullis *et al.*, 2002). As an extension of this social exclusion from education, Shaun presented himself as having limited attachment to education (Bennathan *et al.* 2010). He explained this limited attachment as a result of his repeated transitions into and out of the secure estate. These transitions are sometimes described as interruptions in development of attachment to or engagement with education (Youth Justice

Board, 2006). Shaun further expressed that the engagement of his peers with education or employment acted as a barrier to him maintaining social relationships with them. I interpreted this as meaning that all three participants had expressed that their offending behaviour prevented opportunities to achieve social inclusion through education and employment.

I thought there was a relationship between these young people's perception of barriers to inclusion within education and research findings that young people engaged in offending behaviour are more likely to be described as persistent absentees with learning difficulties and low attainment (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). I am reassured that these group level descriptors (persistent absentee, learning difficulty) are presented as biases in professional observation rather than representations of the actual skills and behaviours of all these individual young people. I think this separation between professional interpretation, and young people as individuals, is more reflective of the heterogeneity of young people generally, including those who engage in offending behaviour. I have focussed on how these observations could relate to my participants as individuals. For example, researchers (Unruh, 2005; Altschuler & Brash 2004) highlight the need for young people to experience an immediate opportunity for education following their release from the secure estate (i.e. an opportunity to engage with education as part of their transition). I think this is highlighted by Harry and Shaun's difficulties with transition, in comparison to Jason. Although I interpreted Harry as highly motivated to engage with education (see 5.1.4), following his release he had not been offered a school place and re-offended. I worried that this made him vulnerable to further offending. At interview 3

Shaun had been recalled to the secure estate before he had succeeded in applying for a college place or job (see Appendix G, theme 6). In contrast, Jason had re-engaged with his joinery course and emphasized continuity in his progress as a result of this opportunity (see 4.3.2). I interpreted barriers to Harry and Shaun achieving similar engagement with education to be partly systemic (Sullivan, 2004). The systemic barrier for Harry was that the local authority had not named a school for him before he was released, whilst Shaun's release date (and opportunity to apply to college) had been outside normal timeframes for application.

I therefore interpreted that all three participants had experienced social exclusion. Their perception of this included reflection on their experience of personal and systemic barriers to engagement with opportunities for social inclusion, such as education and employment. I questioned whether the experience of these barriers made them feel marginalised, powerless or unheard, as described in the literature (Tam *et al.*, 2007; Freed & Smith, 2004). I noted this query and whether Jason appeared to perceive more power and control over his own outcomes (see 5.1.4) because he had experienced less exclusion. However, this was unclear as his responses throughout all interviews also indicated that he tended to assume dominant roles within social groups in contrast to Shaun (susceptible to peer pressure) and Harry (accepting support and guidance from adults). This indicates the importance of focussing on individual experience of social exclusion as an offender, within the concept generally.

**5.1.2: Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community**

**(See results chapter 4.3.1)**

Shaun expressed the perception that he had experienced institutionalisation. Institutionalisation is a term used to describe the act of embedding something within an institution. The reader may be familiar with the use of institutionalisation as a negative label for the impact on individuals of experiences of mental hospitals or concentration camps. In these contexts it refers to individual's learnt dependence on the roles and functions of the institution to meet their psychological and self-care needs. This term has also been related to young people within the secure estate (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). I perceived Shaun as institutionalised because I thought that his responses to transition and opportunities within the community could be described as demonstrating "apathy and reduced motivation coupled with extreme dependency on routine and the support of the institution" (Sapsford, 1978, p.128). I wondered whether the secure estate had previously provided a secure base<sup>9</sup> for Shaun (Bowlby, 1988). This was based on his expression of the predictability of return, and the absence of a secure base in the community.

I perceived a link between Shaun's discussion of his increasing confusion with, and dissociation from the world outside the secure estate, and Inderbitzin's (2009) suggestion that some young people are 'lost' outside the secure estate.

This link has begun to be investigated by researchers such as Khan (2010) who

9. The concept of a secure base originates from the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth. They use this term in relation to attachment theory. This theory proposes that key attachment relationships act as a secure base for young people to explore the world from (Bowlby, 1988; Ainsworth, 1989).

propose a connection between young people's experiences of institutionalisation and later experiences of homelessness. This connection is explained on the basis of their separation from mainstream society. I interpreted Shaun as at risk of this significant level of separation from the community outside the secure estate. I also inferred that Shaun may have constructed the secure estate as a shelter from the general community (Khan, 2010). This inference was based on his expression that he breached his licence when placed in a bail hostel and then returned to the safety of the secure estate. He reported feelings of unhappiness in the bail hostel because of his co-location with drug addicts. This form of accommodation for young people leaving the secure estate has been negatively highlighted in the media (The Guardian, 2011) as being equivalent to release to homelessness. This media representation and previous government representations (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002) refer to Barnados research to support their claim that youth reoffending would be reduced by more-stable accommodation for young people like Shaun. However, the Social Exclusion Unit (ibid) is also transparent that this research is unpublished and only focuses on young people with severe accommodation problems. Therefore although assumptions about appropriate intervention for Shaun would need to be interpreted with caution, I perceive him to have communicated an unmet need for a secure base, or a sense of belonging, outside the secure estate.

Detachment from the community has been explained in terms of education, as a result of excluding young people from education in the community when they have limited attachment to it (Bennathan *et al.* 2010<sup>10</sup>; Youth Justice Board, 2006). Shaun expressed low levels of engagement with education because he

had completed most options within the secure estate, and could not access options in the community because of his frequent accommodation within the secure estate. It would be reasonable to assume that Shaun would be described as hard to reach or a persistent absentee (Pomerantz *et al.*, 2007; Altschuler & Brash, 2004). In addition to this lack of attachment to education (Bennathan *et al.*, 2010), Shaun presented himself as having limited attachments to his family and to prosocial peers (see 4.2.1 and Appendix G, theme 3). I interpreted this as further promoting his experience of institutionalisation. Sullivan (2004) concluded that similar patterns of detachment make return to the secure estate inevitable, whatever level of support is offered for transition. I remain sceptical about this interpretation, given the lack of an audit trail (interview schedule and analysis process not outlined, inconsistent use of results to support conclusions) within Sullivan's work, and the fact that I could not generalise similar factors to be salient for Shaun. However, Shaun's expressions that he was uncertain he could achieve transition and location within the secure estate for interview 3, suggest he may be at risk of repeated return to the secure estate. This possible perception is expressed by Harry:

*"In and out of prison all the time. I don't wanna do that. Cos that just wunt do good for me at all. I'd get used to it in here and then when I get out I'd think ooh it's better in here and then I'd rather stay in here"*  
(1.5.219-221).

Recognition of Shaun's vulnerability to repeated transition and increased institutionalisation provides an impetus for intervention. Bullis *et al.* (2004;

10. Bennathan *et al.* 2010 use this broader conceptualisation of attachment to institutions as an extension of Bowlby's 1988 concept of attachment relationships between people.

2002) highlight their finding that this intervention is most likely to be successful at the point of release. This finding converges with previous dialogue (see 5.1.1) about the potential impact of Shaun's return to the secure estate before he could engage with college.

This analysis of Shaun's individual expressed perceptions of institutionalisation within his experience of transition leaves me with concern that he could be described as part of the following vulnerable group of young people:

"Many prisoners have disadvantaged family and educational backgrounds which have not helped them to develop the practical skills necessary to sustain a job, relationships and housing or to manage their finances. The institutionalising effect of prison does not help and can damage what confidence and sense of responsibility they have developed" (SEU, 2002, p. 86).

### 5.1.3: The challenge of separating from offending behaviour

(See results chapter 4.2.2)

#### Jason:

*"It's just that estate it's just meant for crime cos that's all it is. It's like yeah there is a youth club on there. But obviously I don't want to go there. It's just that estate it's like people, don't get me wrong people do have jobs and few of me mates do have jobs, well not all of them. But two or three of them. But they're all just I don't know they don't want nowt in life if you get me. So" (1.4.180-184).*

In the above extract (and others located in the results chapter 4.2.2) Jason explains his perception of the community norm for offending behaviour to cope with low aspirations and poverty within his local area. Within this, his engagement in offending behaviour could be interpreted as a product of social and environmental influences. This converges with literature showing that a disproportionate number of young offenders originate from socially deprived communities with high levels of offending behaviour (Inderbitzin, 2009; Sullivan, 2004; Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mears & Travis, 2004; Spencer & Jones-Walker, 2004; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Jenson & Howard, 1998). Although politicians, such as Sir Iain Duncan Smith (2007), have used this to promote interventions to tackle poverty and to locate blame within family breakdown, Jason provides a more sophisticated explanation which converges with Webster *et al.*'s (2006) paper on 'Predicting Criminality? Risk factors, neighbourhood influences and desistance.' In a similar way to Webster and his colleagues, I interpreted that Jason explained specific factors which promoted offending behaviour. These factors included lack of alternative aspirations to offending and community acceptance that money was gained through offending. This economic function of offending could be associated with poverty, limited opportunities for high-level employment or the perception that this is unachievable. Acceptance of offending behaviour was perceived within the community, and labelled as a negative expectation of his community by those outside of it. Although I did not interpret Shaun and Harry as expressing their perception of a community norm for offending behaviour, they both referred to its prevalence within their peer groups and families. Shaun extended this by expressing his perception of increased chance of successful transition on the

basis of his mum's move to a new community. Harry was hopeful that his new school would provide a new community of peers to support him to separate from offending behaviour. This dialogue highlights the significance of the challenge of separating from offending behaviour if it is perceived to be normative behaviour (Fehr & Fishbacher, 2004).

Using the concept of offending as normative behaviour (Fehr & Fishbacher, 2004), all three participants could be interpreted as engaging in offending behaviour to maintain their social acceptance within their local offending community (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). Viewing their offending behaviour from this perspective emphasises the challenge of separating from this socially (and economically) functional behaviour. This challenge is created by the potential for exclusion from their community, or economic hardship, as a result of their separation from offending. Harry, Shaun and Jason face the additional challenge that their offending behaviour is constructed as being facilitated as a social norm within their relationships, whilst punished as a norm violation by the legal system. Fehr & Fishbacher (2004, p.189) propose that this ambivalence can be understood if one comprehends that

“the socioeconomic environment shapes the costs and benefits of cooperation and punishment and is thus likely to be an important determinant of the social norm”.

For Shaun, Jason and Harry this would mean that the socioeconomic environments of their communities had determined social norms of offending that are in contrast to the wider societal norm of non-offending. However, I

would share the authors' caution that there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate this claim, and add I do not think this necessarily applies to my participants. My interpretative caution is underpinned by my perception that, although the concept of offending behaviour as a community norm appears to converge with my interpretation (of these young people's expressed perceptions), I do not think it overlaps to the extent that it provides a full explanatory framework of the phenomenon. I am also aware that within my small sample Harry and Shaun were less explicit about the role of the community in constructing offending behaviour as normative for them. Therefore the concept of community norm does not present itself conclusively enough to fully communicate the experience of transition as it appears to these three young people. Given these limitations, I perceive that dialogue between my results and this psychological perspective provides the reader with an opportunity for re-engaging with and perhaps further understanding my interpretation of my participants' expressed perceptions.

At a lower level of abstraction (Smith *et al.*, 2009) from their expressed perceptions, challenges to their separation from offending behaviour included their susceptibility to peer pressure to offend. All three participants expressed that they had engaged in offending behaviour with family or peers. They perceived disengaging from these relationships as difficult or undesirable and thought that this may present a challenge to them becoming non-offenders (Abrams *et al.*, 2008; Hagner *et al.*, 2008; Webster *et al.*, 2006). All three discussed their plans to construct new relationships with peers who they hoped would role model and reinforce non-offending behaviour. It is apparent that this

sustained engagement with offending behaviour in order to maintain relationships could be understood within the aforementioned discussion of offending behaviour as normative behaviour for these three young people.

All three young people expressed their past identities as 'offenders' (see 5.1.1 for impact on social exclusion). This meant that they had established reputations within their communities as offenders, who expected this behaviour to continue following release (Anthony *et al.*, 2010). Given their developmental stage of middle adolescence (Altschuler & Brash, 2004), and expressed susceptibility to peer pressure, reconstructing their individual identities as non-offenders may be challenging. As mentioned previously (see 5.1.1), exclusion from education and employment may exacerbate this if it is perceived as exclusion from systems which provide opportunities to form relationships with prosocial peers (Steinberg *et al.*, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Jason expanded on this, by explaining that as a group people who engage in offending behaviour find it difficult to accept help. He expressed a need to perceive himself as a non-offender before being able to accept support to disengage from offending behaviour within the secure estate (4.2.2).

The final challenge to separating from offending behaviour expressed by all three young people was ending their use of marijuana. This substance abuse is more prevalent amongst young people who engage in offending behaviour (Youth Justice Board, 2008; Freed & Smith, 2004; Jenson & Howard, 1998). Harry explained that he perceived the secure estate as rehabilitation for his

marijuana addiction. He described the influence of the drug as challenging his separation from offending behaviour by impacting negatively on his thought patterns, and providing a financial motivation for offending. Shaun had substituted his previous offending for drug dealing as he perceived this as a more acceptable offence. This had become part of his normal daily routine, so he perceived his return to the secure estate as inevitable. Jason reflected on the negative impact of marijuana on his life and although he was confident that he would give it up, he inferred that he had previously used it to cope with his emotions.

I interpreted all three young people as expressing that separating from offending behaviour would be a challenge for them. This challenge is due to their perception of offending as normative behaviour within their local communities. This normative behaviour has a role in providing economic support, and maintaining relationships with peers and families. (For Jason and Harry these were relatively stable relationships, whilst Shaun maintained transient relationships with peers and a disrupted relationship with his family). All three participants have also engaged in marijuana use. For these three young people to separate from offending behaviour I perceived that they need to reconstruct their identities and give up favoured leisure activities, without certainty that they will be offered social inclusion or economic independence as a non-offender.

5.1.4: Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition(See results chapter 4.3.2)Jason:

*“That I hope that I don’t come back to jail an that. Cos jail it can be two things. It can be the beginning of fresh start or it can be the beginning of coming to jail. But obviously for the future I wanna see meself. Eventually I wanna be owning my own little company and stuff” (1.11-12.548-551).*

Harry:

*“Like it’s like from now it’s like what choices I make now is like gna be with me for like not just rest of my life, but it’s gna start off the rest of my life. As soon as I make now from when I get out of here like if I’m making a decision go, do school, get good grades, that’s a good decision. And it will help me out to get good grades. To get a job and a little house” (1.9.443.447).*

These extracts seem conceptually related to Harrington *et al.*'s (2005) description of transition as a crossroads. At this crossroads, young people either continue on their trajectory of offending and further periods in the secure estate, or change trajectory and adopt non-offending norms (see 5.1.3). I thought that both Harry and Jason aspired to succeed as non-offenders following their release from the secure estate. Similarly, Sullivan (2004) observed that adopting an

adult outlook with clear goals of financial independence had supported some of his participants to achieve positive transitions. I remain cautious about the transferability of Sullivan's (2004) report, but Jason and Harry expressed clear goals with a focus on achieving economic independence as adults in the community.

I interpreted Jason and Harry to have adopted a goal-directed approach to their transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment. This included clearly defined goals (Jason to become a joiner, Harry to become educated towards becoming a mechanic) and an action plan for achieving them (4.3.2). Literature about goal-directed behaviour has highlighted the role of planning in preventing failure due to distractions or obstacles to goal achievement (for example Gollwitzer *et al.*, 2005). I interpreted Jason as articulating this in interview 3 (see 4.3.2) when he expressed that his licence conditions were an obstacle to achieving his goals.

Within this goal-directed approach a dialogue between Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1977; 1982; 2001), and my interpretation of Jason and Harry's expressed perceptions is useful to discuss the cognitive processing of transition I interpreted from Jason and Harry's words. Bandura defines self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (1994, p.71). I interpreted both young people as having expressed perceptions of self-efficacy, as they believed that they would succeed in their own transitions.

I also considered how self-efficacy could provide an interpretative account of my interpretation of Jason and Harry's goal-directed approach. Bandura (1977) proposed that self-efficacy is based on:

“four principal sources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states” (op. cit, p.191).

Performance accomplishments referred to by Jason and Harry included their maintenance of privileges and success in education within the secure estate, and their expectations that they would achieve early release on the basis of sustained good behaviour. Jason had also achieved his GCSEs before entering the secure estate (see Appendix E1). Adopting Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, I interpreted that Jason and Harry had learnt that they were capable of success by experiencing success within the secure estate. Both Harry and Jason expressed that they had learnt that they could behave by behaving within the secure estate. Harry had also re-engaged with education, and Jason had learnt that he could succeed in adult employment as part of his army cadet course. This cognitive experience of success then supported them to perceive their goals as achievable (Bandura, 2001).

Both Jason and Harry had expressed vicarious experiences of successful transition from the secure estate. Harry expressed this as a generalised observation which led him to express “*I know it can be done*” (1.9.417-418). Jason provided the following observation of his granddad “*he went to jail and*

*turned his life around so if he can do it I can do it” (3.7.326-327).* From Bandura’s perspective, Jason and Harry would have been able to learn from the role modelling of behaviour for good transition.

Both Jason and Harry repeatedly referred to verbal persuasion that enabled them to perceive themselves as similar to those who had succeeded. Both referred to family and friends, especially their mothers, who had communicated their belief that they could achieve their goals. As indicated by Jason in 5.1.3, this was viewed as a support mechanism (Forste *et al.*, 2010). This provided more opportunities to plan to achieve success, reinforcing their goal-directed approach to transition. Forste *et al.* (2010) argue that this leads to individuals perceiving that they have more control over their own lives convergent with thoughts of the self as efficacious.

Jason and Harry’s reflections of physiological states associated with offending were interesting. Jason expressed his previous difficulties controlling his anger. This had previously led to violent offences. He had tried to manage this using boxing and marijuana. Marijuana had controlled his anger, but not supported his separation from offending. Following his reflection within the secure estate (Bandura 2001), he expressed that he was confident about becoming a non-offender whilst re-engaging with boxing to manage his anger. Harry perceived the physiological state induced by marijuana to have maintained his engagement with offending (4.3.2). Bandura’s theory suggests that my results give some insight into two young people’s cognitive processing of their own approach to

transition. It provides an insight into psychological concepts, such as self-efficacy, which have been raised by these two individual's accounts of their own transition experience.

Spencer and Jones-Walker (2004) identified young people who engage in offending behaviour as in need of support to develop self-efficacy. Altschuler & Brash (2004) reported that support is needed for younger adolescents in order for them to build the secure family, school and peer structures that Jason and Harry aim to build as part of their future goals. These studies both generalise about young people who engage in offending behaviour, so they might not apply to these two young people. However, they are useful in considering the difference between Jason and Harry, who expressed self-efficacy, and Shaun who did not. Shaun has the needs described by Spencer and Jones-Walker (2004) and Altschuler and Brash (2004). He also experienced his early adolescence within the secure estate. In contrast, Jason and Harry do not fit this description and experienced early adolescence outside the secure estate. Jason and Harry frequently stated that they were different from other young people within the secure estate. Harry commented on his good behaviour in contrast to other young people and his distinctive motivation to re-engage in education. Jason articulated his perception of his difference from other young people as follows:

*“Obviously they don't have like hope for theirselves if you get me? They, they come here and that you don't see them saying I wanna do this when I get out I wanna do that. They say I've had this, I've done this, I've done that.*

*It's not about what they're gna do in the future. Do you know what I mean? It's about what they've done int past. Yeah, like most people in here they ant got qualifications. Like I got kicked out of school in year 9. Went to a different school in the referral unit. Passed all my GCSEs an that. So obviously it's like going good'' (1.7.303-309).*

According to Inderbitzin (2009), this separation enables goal-directed behaviour, as young people withdraw from the culture of young offenders. For Jason and Harry as goal-directed individuals, this gives insight into their preparation within the secure estate to enable them to separate from offending behaviour in the community. Both were clear that their actions within the secure estate were part of their transition into education, training and employment.

A dialogue between Jason and Harry as adopting a goal-directed approach and literature about transition from the secure estate has emphasised the importance of this as a result. This finding is distinct from the literature about the vulnerability and exclusion of young people engaged in offending behaviour. In their conclusion, Forste *et al.* (2010) argued that they made a “unique contribution to the recidivism literature by examining the cognitive process inmates go through in preparation of future release” (ibid, p.431). From this they proposed that more research was needed to understand this process, from the perspective of young people. Although my research has not been a comprehensive analysis of cognitive processing, I hope that I have made a very

small contribution to the literature through my interpretations of the expressed perceptions of these two individual young people about their own experience.

#### 5.1.5: Summary and further dialogue between my results and existing literature

This section provides a summary of the dialogue between my results and existing literature (5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.1.4) in order to consider how my results add to understanding of, or the knowledge base around, young people's perceptions of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment. My position as an interpretative phenomenologist means that I recognise that this dialogue is influenced by both my interpretation of the young people's expressed perceptions, and my interpretations of the literature. Another researcher may have highlighted divergent interpretations at either or both of these levels of analysis. Within this thesis, I have sought to present my results and my perception of their convergence with existing literature, with sufficient clarity and transparency to enable the reader to interpret whether this is transferable to their interpretations of the young people or the literature.

My interpretations of social exclusion (5.1.1), institutionalisation (5.1.2) and the challenge of separating from offending behaviour (5.1.3) are convergent with the relevant literature. My results add to this knowledge base by providing idiographic accounts of these concepts in relation to three young people's expressed perceptions. I have also highlighted my perception of two young people as having expressed a goal-directed approach to own transition (5.1.4).

This finding contributes to emerging research about the cognitive processing of transition.

My results are relevant to literature about social exclusion of young people involved in offending behaviour, especially those who have experienced the secure estate. The idiographic focus of my research has highlighted converging and diverging experiences of social exclusion (see 4.2.1). These three young people perceive social exclusion as a barrier to separating from offending behaviour (5.1.1). I have also considered personal and systemic barriers to achieving social inclusion through education and employment within the complex general concept of social exclusion.

Shaun's interviews highlighted the potential for institutionalisation in the secure estate and lack of provision in the community. This relates to literature about its link to homelessness (Khan, 2010) and detachment from relationships and institutions within mainstream society. Institutionalisation was partly convergent with the shared perception of social exclusion (5.1.1). Shaun had experienced higher levels of sustained social exclusion than Harry and Jason illustrating convergence and divergence between experiences of barriers to social inclusion. Focus on Shaun's individual expressed perceptions could provide an individual narrative of experiences of institutionalisation from the perspective of a young person leaving the secure estate.

As indicated above, my interpretation of Shaun as institutionalised could provide a powerful and emotive narrative. However, within this research, I focussed on convergence and divergence between participants because this further illuminates their individual perceptions of their own experiences of transition. I perceive that Shaun's narrative of institutionalisation is more powerful and emotive in contrast to Jason and Harry's goal-directed approach, and their goal-directed approaches are more powerful in comparison to each other and to Shaun as institutionalised. The following paragraphs provide further discussion of some of the concepts within my interpretation of Shaun as institutionalised (5.1.3) to illuminate the value of considering this phenomenon as it converges and diverges between idiographic accounts. This theoretical discussion was prompted by dialogue within my viva as part of the iterative cycle of IPA analysis.

Within my interpretation of Shaun as institutionalised, I referred to the concept of a secure base from attachment theory (see footnotes 9 and 10). Attachment theory has been used by theorists, researchers and practitioners to make sense of challenging behaviour (Bowlby, 1988; Ainsworth, 1989; Geddes, 2005; Schofield & Beek, 2005; Bennathan, 2010). In the context of this thesis challenging behaviour would be described as offending behaviour. As indicated previously (footnote 10) I adopted Bennathan *et al.*'s (2010) wider conceptualisation of a secure base to include institutions and professionals as secure bases for young people to explore the world from. I did not argue that Shaun perceived the secure estate as a secure base because I thought that he was starting to deconstruct this perception in interview 3. This deconstruction of it as

a possible secure base appeared to be in response to his likely transfer to another YOI as a result of the riots. I also considered my observation that limits to his presentation of the secure estate as a secure base may be underpinned by the limitations of the secure estate in providing a secure attachment relationship for adolescents within its care. Qualities of a secure attachment figure tend to include the following “promoting trust in availability... promoting autonomy... experience the security that comes from a sense of identity and belonging” (Schofield & Beek, 2005, p.3). Shaun indicated barriers to availability of adults to meet young people’s emotional needs due to the need to maintain care of such a large number of vulnerable young people. This has been highlighted by the Youth Justice Board (2011). I questioned whether his transfer to a different YOI would further undermine his perception of adults as consistently available to him. All three young people expressed frustration at the lack of autonomy they experienced within the secure estate as all activities were determined by the governor’s rules and secure estate routines. Finally Jason and Harry’s perception of themselves as different from other young offenders (5.1.4) was expressed as an active decision not to adopt the identity of a young offender or to continue belonging to this social group. Although I did not perceive Shaun to have achieved full belonging to the secure estate or the community I perceived that his offending behaviour offered him an identity which he perceived as being more likely to result in such belonging (see Appendix G, themes 1 and 4).

An extension of barriers to the secure estate acting as a secure base, and the young people’s frustration with it, could be conceptualised as the secure estate adopting an authoritarian parenting style. Thompson *et al.* (2003) provide the

following common definition of an authoritarian parenting style “firmly enforced rules and edicts decided by parents, without acceptance of children’s demands and without bargaining and discussion” (p.84). The reader can evaluate whether they think this parenting style is transferable to their perception of the secure estate. Using this definition I have interrogated Jason and Harry’s expressed frustrations with following instructions and expectations within the secure estate. I have questioned whether Jason’s construction of himself as an assertive adult outside the secure estate (5.1.4) made it difficult for him to adopt the role of a submissive child within the secure estate. I wondered whether Harry’s conflicting relationship with his mother was projected into his relationship with the secure estate staff in terms of him not trusting their ability to provide support (Water & Cummings, 2000). Further interpretative dialogue with this meaning making indicated that as both Jason and Harry perceived the secure estate to be a temporary experience which they did not want to repeat, they were resistant to forming an attachment of any kind to the institution or professionals within it. Furthermore, Jason expressed a very secure attachment to his mother (although he constructed himself in the role of father within this relationship) and Harry communicated that his sister was compensating for the conflict between him and his mother by offering her house as a secure base for his release. It is interesting to contemplate the evidence base for the association between authoritarian parenting styles and offending behaviour (Thompson *et al.* 2003) in light of the above proposition of the secure estate in this role. This interest centres on the divergence between Jason and Harry resisting being parented in this manner and their adoption of a goal-directed approach to transition, in comparison to Shaun being relatively accepting of this and

experiencing repeated periods in the secure estate. However, given my ethical and methodological decision to focus on current experiences of transition rather than developmental histories, further discussion of parenting in relation to transition or offending behaviour would need to be in response to further research in this field.

My interpretation of all three young people as having expressed the challenge of separating from offending behaviour (5.1.3) contributes to understanding of this challenge in terms of the context around or systems of support for three young people. This included their discussion about the environmental, familial, economic, peer group, identity and substance misuse factors which had motivated their engagement with offending. Literature that conceptualises offending as normative behaviour relates to my psychological interpretation (Fehr & Fishbacher, 2004). Jason explained that the community norm promoted offending within his local area and Shaun and Harry felt this effect from their peer and family groups. Their experience of ambivalence between constructions of offending behaviour as leading to social exclusion from the wider community and facilitating inclusion within the offending community has been discussed as part of the challenge of separating from offending behaviour. My findings could be used to interrogate concepts such as social norms in relation to offending behaviour for three individual young people.

Reflection on my interpretation of Jason and Harry as having adopted a goal-directed approach to transition illuminated the limited literature demonstrating

or providing an explanatory framework for this finding. Prevalent themes within the literature include the needs of young people involved in offending behaviour and risk factors for offending behaviour which converged with my first three themes (social exclusion, institutionalisation, the challenge of separating from offending behaviour). Within my dialogue with my results I used Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1977; 1982; 2001) to illustrate my interpretation of Harry and Jason's cognitive processing of their own transition. I highlighted literature in which this concept had been explained as converging with the experience of young people leaving the secure estate or engaged with offending behaviour. I was excited by the potential for my results to have contributed to this emerging field of research. As previously noted, in 2010 Forste *et al.* had concluded that their research 'Staying out of Trouble: the intentions of young offenders' had been the only research to explicitly consider this process. My research applied Bandura's concept of self-efficacy as an explanatory framework in a new domain. This contribution is in terms of my individual interpretation of two young people's expressed perceptions of their own experience of transition.

My results contribute an idiographic insight into exploration of such complex concepts as social exclusion, institutionalisation, the challenge of separating from offending behaviour, social norms for behaviour, goal-directed behaviour and self-efficacy. This exploration is in terms of my interpretation of these concepts as potentially converging with Harry, Jason and Shaun's expressed perceptions of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment.

## **5.2: Strengths and limitations of this study**

### 5.2.1: Strengths

I have adopted an Interpretative Phenomenological position, and used its underlying philosophy, to inform my choice of research question, data collection and analysis procedures (see chapter 3). In line with my positionality, I have grounded my resultant interpretation in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. This study was phenomenological as it focussed on conscious, lived experiences of transition (Smith, 2011; Moran & Embree, 2004; Robson, 2002).

Transparency throughout demonstrated to the reader that I became ‘experience close’ through the elicitation of quality data (Smith, 2011), but have not made false claims of analysing experience directly. Data collection of rich, descriptive accounts from three young people (Moran & Embree, 2004) was supported by use of a task-based approach (see 3.6.3.3) and my rapport building skills. I thought that the use of multiple interviews was an important facilitating factor. The following extracts show some of the positive feedback given by all three participants about their experience of interviews regarding their transition experiences:

#### Shaun:

*“It’s good to have three like in different spaces cos then it’s different. It’s like different situations every time. Like I was in here, then I was nearly*

*getting out and then I the last one I was supposed to have been out but this one I'm back in on recall" (3.12.575-577).*

Jason:

*"J: No well you've got your reasons haven't you cos if like if you do it once then obviously you're gna like know things but everyone's different aren't they so one person could interview about other about something and then the other person say something totally different ... But if you interview one person a couple of times then you'll see how it's going really won't you? You'll see like the routine of it. You'll like see what they're on about if you get me?"*

*I: Yeah.*

*J: And I think some people, I think some people are like more comfortable like talking to people they don't know, they can't judge them really can they? Like obviously I can't judge you about you cos I don't know you and you can't basically judge me. So it's like just a conversation really innit? It's just giving you a bit of information about what it's like" (3.13.615-627).*

Harry:

*H: Better if it was more.*

*I: More?*

*H: It would help me keep on track and think about what I'm doing. More chances to think about my transition. It would make me think more.*  
(3.4.160-163).

In accordance with the hermeneutic cycle of IPA, chapters 3, 4 and 5 show my continual oscillation between the whole and parts of these three individuals expressed perceptions (Smith *et al.*, 2009). This is enhanced by clear separation between my interpretation of these expressed perceptions and the participant's words (see chapters 4 and 5), through the use of indented italicised text for transcript extracts. Transparency about the double hermeneutic (see chapter 3) is further supported by inclusion of responses to pre- and post-reflexive questions (Langdrige, 2007, see 3.1.3, 6.2 and Appendix D).

Adoption of an idiographic approach has enabled me to show complexity, convergence and divergence within these three young peoples expressed perceptions of transition (Smith, 2011; Smith *et al.*, 2009; Moran & Embree, 2002). This idiography is demonstrated by research of a distinct phenomenon (transition from the secure estate), and inclusion of extracts from each participant for each interpreted theme. This study represents my interpretation, within the time and space of this thesis, of three individual's expressed perceptions within the time and space of three interviews.

Inclusion of Jason's full transcripts within Appendix E1, and extracts from all three participants in chapters 4 and 5 support the reader to observe the reliability of this study (McMillan & Wergin, 2002). Credibility is enhanced using a transparent account of the research process with reference to examples in the appendices (see chapter 3). Appendix E1 shows use of IPA style prompts and clarification of meaning within interviews to augment the credibility of my interpretations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

As discussed in 5.1, this study contributes to literature relating to this phenomenon. Results were presented within the psychological frameworks of self-efficacy and social norms for behaviour (Jenkins, Irving & Hazlett, 2008). Section 5.1 shows additional contributions to research about concepts such as social exclusion, institutionalisation, the challenge of separating from offending behaviour and goal-directed behaviour. Planned dissemination to the Youth Offending Service, local Young Offenders Units, School Improvement Partners, Headteachers and the Educational Psychology Team, should enable further feedback about the clarity of these findings. This might also contribute to wider awareness of IPA as a research method (Smith, 2011).

### 5.2.2: Limitations

Given my positionality and chosen methodology, results only represent my interpretation of these three young people's expressed perceptions of their own transition experiences within the time and space of this thesis. I cannot claim

how transferable these results are to other young people or even to other transitions for these young people. Reliance on the reader to interpret the transferability of these results leaves it open to misuse or misinterpretation.

Use of psychological concepts within my analysis, in order to give the reader insight into the concepts prompted by these young peoples expressed perceptions (and to deepen my interpretation), could be criticised. Critics could comment that use of concepts demonstrates imported psychological meaning making rather than a response to individual participant's meaning making. I have continued to reflect upon whether this is part of the role of research-practitioner. My professional role as an EPiT may predispose me to interpret psychologically. In response to this I have followed my analysis process rigorously and frequently returned to check my interpretations were grounded in the data. The use of multiple extracts offers the reader an opportunity to reflect on how these concepts are expressed by the participants.

As discussed in chapter 3, Willig (2008) criticised the representational validity of language in studies using methods such as IPA (see chapter 3 for my management of this). I am aware that given the likelihood of limited vocabulary within my sample, there may have been language limits to the meanings they expressed, or language distortion of the meanings expressed (Bryan *et al.*, 2007; Snowling *et al.*, 2000). However my extracts (chapters 4 and 5) show the reader that my participants were articulate about their own experience as it appeared to be significant to them (Smith *et al.*, 2009). Willig (2008) also challenged the

social/political and cultural context of data collection (see chapter 3 for management of this limitation). I have reflected on observations of contextual difference between interviews in the secure estate and those in the community. For example all three participants swore more at interview 3. Further research would be needed to investigate these contextual differences, although I also perceive that this is part of the transition experience.

My perception of myself as a novice researcher could have limited this study. I am now more confident in the use of IPA having completed it. Given IPAs cyclic nature it would be interesting to start my analysis following this experience of constructing an interpretative account of my results. I remain aware that my developing research skills could have impacted on all aspects of this study.

In order to provide a good quality, coherent interpretative account of results, temporal differences in perceptions of transitions could not be explored within the main body of the thesis. For example Appendix G (G1, theme 3) shows that in interview 1, all three expressed complex relationships with their families. This included feelings of loss and separation from their fathers (Smith, 2007). Interview 3 (G3, theme 7) showed reflection on the impact of ISSP on maintaining their identities as offenders whilst they were trying to establish themselves as non-offenders. Both of these themes could have led to interesting discussion which Smith highlights as indicative of good IPA research (op cit, 2011).

Discussion of my results within the thesis (see 5.1) indicates that Jason and Harry's goal-directed behaviour could be the most distinctive finding of this study. Elaboration on this finding was limited by the fact that it was not the sole focus of the research.

### **5.3: Recommendations for further research**

I explored three young people's perceptions of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment using IPA. In addition to presenting converging and diverging themes within their perceptions, the following are potential research studies:

- Further IPA study of young people's perceptions of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment. Either this design or traditional IPA one-off interviews post-release with a larger number of participants (Smith, 2011; Smith *et al.*, 2009; Bullis *et al.*, 2004; 2002).
- Purposive selection of young people who express goal-directed approaches within early interviews for later analysis using IPA or thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- Use of case study design to focus on an individual experience of transition in greater detail using either IPA or narrative approach (Breakwell *et al.*, 2006)
- Discourse analysis of pre-release meetings to explore how transition opportunities are constructed with and by young people (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

- Q-sort analysis of general perceptions of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment.
- Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of barriers and facilitators to continued educational provision for young people transitioning into and out of the secure estate.
- Eliciting young people's perspectives of social exclusion.
- Exploration of risk factors for institutionalisation using the perceptions of staff working with young people described as institutionalised, or life history work with young people (Inderbitzin, 2009).
- Mixed methods study of self-efficacy of young people within the secure estate (Bandura, 2005).

Summary of discussion chapter

5.1: Dialogue between my findings and existing literature

I discussed my interpretations of these three young people's expressed perceptions of transition as an interpretative dialogue between the following four themes and existing literature:

1. 'Experiencing social exclusion as an offender' was discussed in relation to literature describing young people who engage in offending behaviour as a socially excluded group. Literature was used to highlight converging observations of barriers to social inclusion through exclusion from education and employment for these individuals. Convergence and divergence between participant's experiences of this was highlighted (5.1.1)

2. 'Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community' was discussed with reference to literature about homelessness and attachment theory (5.1.2).

3. 'The challenge of separating from offending behaviour' was discussed using literature and Jason's explanation of offending as normative behaviour. Environmental factors such as poverty, lack of aspiration, peer pressure and substance misuse were also highlighted (5.1.3).

4. 'Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition' was discussed in relation to the concept of self-efficacy, and cognitive processing of transition. Reference was made to the significance of this interpretation given limited existing literature (5.1.4).

### 5.2: Strengths and limitations of this study

Strengths and limitations of my research design and use of IPA were discussed in relation to literature.

### 5.3: Recommendations for further research

Recommendations for further research on the basis of my results were offered for interpretation.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

Chapter Structure:

6.1: Conclusion and recommendations for practice

6.2: Reflections on my experience of researching transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment.

### **6.1: Conclusion and Recommendations for Practice**

#### 6.1.1: Conclusion

This thesis explored three young people's expressed perceptions of their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment. Chapter 4 and 5 provided an interpretative account of convergence and divergence within these perceptions in relation to existing literature. This account highlighted the following themes for discussion:

1. Experiences of social exclusion as an offender (5.1.1, 4.2.1)
2. Shaun: Experiencing institutionalisation; Transition as a repeated cycle which maintains insecure attachments to the secure estate and the community (5.1.2, 4.3.1)
3. The challenge of separating from offending behaviour (5.1.3, 4.2.2)
4. Jason and Harry: Adopting a goal-directed approach to transition (5.1.4, chapter 4.3.2).

This research contributes to knowledge around the phenomenon of young people's experiences of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment (5.1). Section 5.1 shows additional contributions to research regarding the four themes above. Areas for further research are highlighted in section 5.3.

Completing this thesis has re-activated my focus on social justice, and belief that raised awareness should be used to promote social inclusion rather than to maintain social exclusion of marginalised groups including my sample. As indicated in chapter 2, this study offers an idiographic contribution to the above focus:

“By listening to even a small sample of emerging adults learning to stand alone, we may gain a deeper understanding of the issues they consider most important and what might be done to tilt the odds in their favour” (Inderbitzin, 2009, p.470).

#### 6.1.2: Recommendations for Practice

My interpretation is presented transparently so that readers can evaluate its transferability. My interpretation of implications for practice will continue cyclically involving discussion and re-interpretation through planned dissemination (5.2.1), and continued reflection on this piece of work. My interpretations of implications for practice within the time and space of this thesis are as follows:

1. I will promote my role as an EPiT within multi-agency work to support young people involved in offending behaviour and those leaving the secure

estate (Youth Justice Board, 2008; Bullis *et al.*, 2004; Hurry & Moriarty, 2004). My role will be to account for multiple perspectives in order to understand the holistic, complex and changing needs of these young people (Anthony *et al.*, 2010). Given my increased understanding of three young people's perspectives, I will be able to highlight the complexity of the challenges faced by this population. I will use my understanding of adolescent and child development to co-construct developmentally appropriate curricula, given my enhanced awareness of the potential for delayed psychosocial maturation in this population (Steinberg *et al.*, 2004).

2. Through consultation I will support parents and professionals to understand the process of attitude and behaviour change needed for a young person to separate from offending behaviour. I will highlight the importance of maintaining relationships rather than rejecting and excluding the young person on the basis of their offending behaviour. Within this I will be mindful of the complexity of these relationships and emotional impact of change.

3. I will use extracts from these three young people to highlight the idiographic nature of transition from the secure estate into education. I will support people to understand the need for bespoke packages of support for individual young people rather than universal or group level support. For example (as indicated in 5.2.1), Harry communicated that regular interviews would have supported him to continue to focus on his transition (in line with

Hagner *et al.*'s 2008 work). However Jason indicated that this would have led to disengagement for him (see Appendix E1 interview 3).

4. I will continue to critically evaluate the evidence base for changes in service configuration, to work within my parameters to impact as much as possible on outcomes for children (Hughes, 2006). For example, although a more coordinated multi-agency approach to supporting young people involved in offending behaviour is needed (2.1), interpersonal relationships and respect are more important than joint governance (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998). My relationships with individual Youth Offending Workers and Casework Officers attached to my participants may support me to work effectively with these agencies. My planned dissemination should further support mutual understanding of role, and relationships between education and the youth offending service within my local authority.

5. My experience of building relationships with these three young people, and use of supportive tools, will be shared with the EP team so that they can elicit young people's views more effectively (Youth Offending Service, 2007a, b).

6. Using extracts and my interpretations of Jason and Harry, I can promote the capability of these young people as articulate and goal-directed. Applications of my understanding of this goal-directed behaviour for these two young people will highlight the need for enabling young people to perceive achievable alternative goals to offending. Focussing on Harry I can

challenge agencies to accept joint responsibility for allocating school places and ensuring adequate transition planning is in place before young people are released from the secure estate.

7. Using my understanding of Bandura's theories of self-efficacy, and Harry and Jason's reference to the need for support to achieve their goals I can encourage agencies to provide this support. This will include the use of the concept of proxy agency (Bandura, 2001; 1977) to emphasize that professionals have access to resources and expertise in order to create opportunities for young people which they cannot create independently. Jason highlighted this in terms of ISSP getting him a job, whilst Harry focussed on secure estate staff and the youth offending team securing him a school place.
8. Using Jason's explanation (4.2.2, 5.1.3), I can widen understanding of the potential impact of poverty and community on self-efficacy and aspiration. I could use media coverage of the underachievement of white working class boys (Shepherd, 2006) to compliment this in emphasizing the need for community level interventions to promote alternatives to offending behaviour.
9. Using Shaun's story, I can emphasize the psychological impact of repeated periods in the secure estate on attachment relationships and perception of self. I can use his words, in addition to media coverage (The Guardian, 2011), to draw attention to the need for appropriate accommodation for these young people. My goal for this would be to inspire those with the power to change this to do so. In the short-term I will continue to promote the use of

agencies such as the Multi-Systemic Therapy Team (MST) to prevent family breakdown in the community, and interventions within the secure estate such as Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL, see E1 interview 2).

## **6.2: Reflections on my experience of researching transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment**

Throughout this thesis I kept reflective memos of my thoughts and feelings. Examples can be found in Appendix E1 and D3. I used Langdridge's 2007 reflexive questions to prepare for and reflect back on the research as a whole (see Appendix D). The following section is an open reflective account of my experience of researching three young people's experiences of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment. I have structured this using the questions which prompted my reflexive memos (Shepherd, 2006) as follows:

6.2.1: How do I feel about this?

6.2.2: What do I think about this?

6.2.3: What have I learnt from this?

6.2.4: What action will I take as a result of my lessons learned?

6.2.1: How do I feel about this?

Completing this thesis has felt like an emotional rollercoaster. Having interviewed the young people as they experienced their transition, I have felt

emotions in parallel with theirs at several points in the research process. I have experienced the apprehension of dedicating myself towards a partially formulated output with limited certainty about achieving it. I have gone through the anxiety of managing competing emotional and practical commitments. I have reflected on and questioned my emotional connection to my own goals, and the secure base of attachment relationships around me. I have felt the stress of the pressure I have placed on myself to continue full focus and dedication, and to achieve excellence in both this research and my concurrent practice. I have mirrored the ambivalence of fluctuating positive and negative emotions about reconstructing my identity as a qualified EP and leaving the support network of a trainee identity. Finally I have felt the pride of completing my transition from a trainee without a thesis, to a trainee with a thesis, whilst acknowledging that my future career remains uncertain.

#### 6.2.2: What do I think about this?

I think I have produced an honest piece of research about three young people's perceptions of their own experience of transition from the secure estate into education, training or employment. Having focussed in such depth on their expressed transitions, I have more of an understanding of what this experience could be like for these individuals. This has required a high level of sustained cognitive focus, which has at times left me cognitively drained. I have reflected upon the parallels between the thought processes involved in analysing heuristically and cyclically, and the construction of a doctoral thesis. This reflection, and my resultant coping mechanisms of to-do-lists and timetabling

dedicated thesis time, have given me insight into my cognitive approach to learning including this research. This has re-affirmed my perception of self as demonstrating most cognitive capability within structured parameters, and having a tendency to create structure in chaos. I think that the phenomenon researched is complex and highly idiographic. I believe that my study provides a small scale contribution towards a long-term aim to understand this as a practitioner.

### 6.2.3: What have I learnt from this?

I have learnt how to complete a piece of research which hopefully will be judged at doctoral standard. At the beginning of this course I was not very confident about my own skills as a researcher. I was open about this with my trainee cohort and tutors. Following the adult learning model I planned to overcome this area for development by completing research training days with the British Psychological Society and at the Birkbeck Institute. My experience of these taught me that I was more capable than I thought, and that I was ready to accept the challenge of a thesis.

Throughout my focussed reading, drafting, and re-drafting I have developed my academic writing. I have learnt to understand the grammatical feedback given by Microsoft Word, my tutor, sister and mum who have kindly read drafts of my thesis. This has taught me that given time and reassurance I could learn to produce an article on my work to be published.

I have learnt about the duality of role of the research-practitioner, and the competing priorities this brings. For example within this research Harry was not offered a school place. If Harry had been on my caseload as a practitioner (rather than as a participant in my research) I could have supported YOS and placement panel to provide an appropriate educational offer. As a researcher-practitioner I could not act to impact upon this panel as this could have changed Harry's experience of transition. I continue to wrestle with this dilemma given my knowledge of the impact of educational opportunities on outcomes for young people. My knowledge about the importance of education for this sample is partially constructed by researching Harry's (and Jason and Shaun's) expressed perceptions of their own transition.

I am more comfortable with the research aspect of my role, although I think I will always be drawn towards practical work using other people's research rather than my own.

For me the most important thing I have learnt is that I enjoy working with the sample population, and am committed to understanding their perspectives and needs. Having completed my draft research I have a wider skills set to use in order to do this.

6.2.4: What action will I take as a result of my lessons learned?

I am proud to say that I am now confident enough to promote my research to a variety of professionals within and outside education. This action is an achievement for me given my previous high levels of uncertainty and anxiety about undertaking research at this level. I am now clear in my mind that I can present my interpretations of individual young people's perceptions to prompt discussion. This discussion will be led by others interpretations of my work. I feel excited that this gives the potential for my results to be transferred into policy and practice on the basis of frontline practitioners perceptions of them.

I will be more likely to become involved in small-scale research with my colleagues now that I have proved to myself that I can do it.

I will promote my skills in building rapport with these young people to my local service. I hope to continue to build upon this and my knowledge of their support needs and opportunities. Using this knowledge and experience, I would be keen to apply for a specialist role in this field if the opportunity arises.

Within my daily practice I will continue to research using available literature and to engage in dialogue between this and my observations of my work. I think that this experience of research will enhance my ability to do this by making me a more competent critical reader, and focussing my thoughts on the fluid and

changing perceptions of individuals experiencing the phenomena I encounter  
(e.g. young people experiencing barriers to learning or engagement).

### Summary of Conclusion Chapter

#### 6.1: Conclusions and recommendations for practice

Conclusions and recommendations for my own practice were given to show how I interpret this research to be relevant to my role as an EPiT.

#### 6.2: Reflections on my experience of researching transition from the secure estate into education

A reflective account of my experience of researching three young people's perceptions of their own transition from the secure estate into education, training and employment was presented.

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