# "My history is not my destiny": Exploring Desistance in Adult Male Child Sex Offenders

By:

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*Life begins at the end of your comfort zone*

(Neale Donald Walsch)

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# Abstract

Child sexual abuse has become the subject of heightened public interest in recent years, with individuals committing such offences typically regarded as irredeemable. Public vilification of this offender type does little to assist their community integration and has the potential to result in exclusion and social isolation, known risk factors for sexual reoffending. Whilst research on desistance from non-sexual offending has grown exponentially over previous decades, a focus on desistance from sexual offending has been largely neglected until recent years, which have witnessed the publication of a small number of qualitative studies.

This thesis empirically explores the experiences of 15 men convicted of sexual offences involving children, and self-reporting desistance from further sexual offending. The men had served prison sentences and had since been released into the community for various periods. Obtaining access to a suitable sample proved to be a difficult and protracted process which resulted in the placement of an advertisement seeking volunteers. Narrative interviews generated a large amount of data which was subjected to thematic analysis. This revealed the three themes of formal social control, informal social control, and internal (re)sources of control. The use of stigma management techniques was significant, employed by the majority of respondents to enable a positive sense of self and allow for identity reconstruction. The findings also suggest two types of desistance from sexual offending within this sample - formal and substantive. The latter, a protracted process, involved identity change along a continuum, resulting from a continued interaction with the social and structural supports attained by respondents. In contrast, formal desistance involved no identifiable process.

These findings are argued to make a significant contribution to the largely neglected empirical and theoretical work exploring desistance from sexual offending, and hold implications for treatment and management of convicted sexual offenders with child victims.

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# Glossary of Abbreviations

CSO:             Convicted Sex Offender

RSO:             Registered Sex Offender

SOTP:            Sex Offender Treatment Programme

PPO:             Public Protection Officer

SOR:             Sex Offender Register

SOPO:            Sexual Offences Prevention Order

MAPPA:           Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements

CSODS:           Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme

FTO:             Foreign Travel Order

RSHO:            Risk of Sexual Harm Order

SHPO:            Sexual Harm Prevention Order

SRO:             Sexual Risk Order

CoSA:            Circles of Support and Accountability

GLM:             Good Lives Model

# One: Sexual Offenders in Contemporary Society

## 1.1 Introduction

Sexual offending is hardly a new phenomenon (Brown, 2005; Thomas, 2005) but over the last three decades it has increasingly become the focus of popular and political discourse (Brown, 2005; Rainey, 2010), with responses based on the management of risk, harsher sentencing practices and the introduction of legislative measures designed to place controls on sexual offenders (Thomas, 2004). The development of new technology - in particular, the advent of the internet - has presented new opportunities to those with a sexual interest in children. Individuals are able to engage with children online to 'groom' them with the intention of meeting to conduct sexual abuse (McAlinden, 2006). The worldwide web also provides an arena for the production and circulation of indecent images of children. In recent years, the topic of sexual offending has risen to the forefront of the popular media, for example, with reports of Jimmy Savile, the celebrity whose sexual offending career was revealed following his death. In turn this led to the Police's 'Operation Yewtree' (Grierson, 2015), which uncovered the sexual abuse of children committed by a number of other celebrities. The last decade has also witnessed reports of predatory gangs guilty of grooming and sexually abusing vulnerable teenage girls in Rotherham, Oldale, Rochdale and Derby (BBC News, 2015). Claims of institutional failures to take seriously and act on allegations of child sex abuse (Mills, 2015) reported within all of these cases are likely to have served to increase public anxiety and fear of sexual offenders. Sexual offenders are described as the modern day 'folk devil' (Cobley, 2000), the 'demonized other' (Mills, 2015), from whom society wishes to distance itself (Evans & Cubellis, 2015). Public vilification of this group of offenders does little to assist their community integration and has the potential to result in exclusion and social isolation, known risk factors for sexual reoffending (McAlinden, 2007; 2008).

Media portrayal of sexual offences implies their widespread prevalence despite the fact that these account for a small proportion of all recorded crime (Brown, 2005). Media representations of sex crime are influential in public perceptions, with sexual offenders consistently constructed as 'dangerous strangers' from whom the public must be protected (Brown, 2005). Such representations serve to encourage punitive public attitudes (McAlinden, 2007). The more extreme cases of child sexual abuse are the media's focus, whereby predatory abusers are consistently depicted as 'monsters' and 'evil beasts' (Sampson, 1994: 43), which

neglects the fact that the majority of child sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the victim (Grubin, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Fitch, 2006). Sex offenders tend to be uniformly labelled and treated as dangerous psychopaths, irrespective of offence type (Quinn, Forsyth & Mullen-Quinn, 2004). They are popularly perceived as irredeemable, unamenable to treatment and incapable of change, notions that are perpetuated by politicians and the media alike. A moral panic has ensued concerning sexual offenders, creating feelings of fear which threaten the wellbeing of society (Cohen, 1972). Governments have responded to sexual offenders by introducing harsher sentencing practices, greater supervision and a range of civil preventative orders with the overarching aim of public protection via restrictive methods of risk management. Together these factors hold serious consequences for sexual offenders attempting to desist and reintegrate into society.

Desistance from crime has become a key concept within probation practice (e.g., McNeill, 2006) and criminological research. Recent decades have witnessed a growth in both empirical research and theorising around desistance from non-sexual offending (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Giodarno, Cernkovich, & Rudolph, 2002; Farrall & Calverley, 2006), with the current academic consensus acknowledging desistance as a process involving the interaction of both social and structural influences together with internal cognitive processes (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2001). However, whilst research has focused extensively on desistance from non-sexual offending, desistance from sexual offending has attracted little research attention. Upon commencement of the current project, a significant gap in the literature was identified, as the only published empirical study to explicitly focus on desistance from sexual offending was quantitative and was conducted in America by Kruttschnitt, Uggen & Shelton (2000). However, this area of research has since been recognised and several qualitative studies have been conducted (Farmer, Beech & Ward, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer, McAlinden & Maruna, 2015). It is nonetheless argued that an urgent need exists for further empirical exploration of desistance from sexual offending in an attempt to further develop knowledge of this area. Such knowledge has the ability to inform future policy and practice regarding the treatment and management of sexual offenders, with the ultimate aim of reduced victimisation of children.

This research project therefore explores the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders. Despite Laws and Ward's (2011: 163) assertion that "…desistance from sexual crime proceeds in the same manner for sex offenders as it has been shown to do with criminal offenders", it is argued that further qualitative empirical study is required. Adult males are the focus of this project given that they are responsible for the vast majority of sexual offences with child victims (Brown, 2005).

The current research sought to contribute to the small body of existing literature and aimed to address the central research question 'which internal and external factors are involved in the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders?'. Internal factors include the subjective factors of agency, cognition and identity, whilst external factors incorporate social structural relational and situational factors. The aims and objectives of the study are set out below:

**Aims**

- To provide empirical insight into the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders

- To provide a contribution to the development of effective public protection policies and practices regarding the community management of child sex offenders.

**Objectives**

- To explore the effects of formal and informal social controls on the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders

- To explore the cognitive and agentic processes involved

- To gain insight into the interaction of the above

Whilst acknowledging that sex offenders are a heterogeneous population (Kemshall & McIvor, 2004), arguably they represent a different 'type' of offender to those engaged in other crime types for several reasons:

- Convicted sexual offenders are likely to experience societal exclusion due to public fear and punitive attitudes (Quaker Peace & Social Witness, 2005).

- Legislative measures directed at sexual offenders effect a number of community controls which may inhibit their ability to lead a fulfilling life (McAlinden, 2011).

- Previous research on non-sexual offenders indicates that their commitment to a law-abiding self is undermined by the stigma of a criminal conviction (Uggen, Manza & Behrens, 2004; Aresti, Etough & Brooks-Gordon, 2010). Arguably, the stigma experienced by sex offenders is greater (Laws & Ward, 2011).

- Individuals with a conviction for a sexual offence are typically viewed as incapable of change and most likely to continue their offending careers (Fortney et al, 2007; Laws & Ward, 2011). Sexual recidivism rates should be interpreted with caution, given that a large proportion of sexual offences are likely to remain undetected by the criminal justice system (Rice & Harris, 2006). However, sexual offenders consistently illustrate lower rates of recidivism than those displayed by other types of offenders (Brown, 2005), although remain at risk of reconviction for many years following release (West, 2000).

- The cognitive distortions often displayed by this type of offender may necessitate extensive treatment (Brown, 2005), potentially extending the desistance process.

It is widely documented that the sexual abuse of children has the potential to result in lifelong negative effects to victims including mental health problems, emotional difficulties, substance abuse and criminality (Allnock, 2009). This thesis does not seek to evoke sympathy for, or excuse those who have committed sexual offences against children. Rather, it is underpinned by utilitarian motivations in seeking to obtain a greater understanding of the factors assisting desistance from sexual offending, given that the majority of those convicted and incarcerated for child sexual offending will be released at some stage. The stereotypical manipulative and deceptive nature of sexual offenders (Waldram, 2007) may lead some to question the validity of their self-reports. However, it is pertinent that convicted sexual offenders' voices should be heard in an attempt to understand their subjective experiences of the desistance process. As Waldram (2007: 969) acknowledges, "…we need to hear from them if we are to avoid being harmed by them". The accounts of sexual offenders have gained credibility in recent years and it is acknowledged that their perspectives are useful in research (Brogden & Harkin, 2000; Pollock & Hashmall, 1991; Waterhouse, Dobash & Carnie, 1994).

A qualitative approach to this exploratory research was favoured, being the most suitable to address the research question which required exploration of both external and internal factors and thus, the subjective meanings and realities experienced by participants. This is clearly important given that previous research suggests that the simple presence of a job or a marriage is less important in desistance than the meaning ascribed to these by individuals (Maruna, 1999). A quantitative approach prohibits in-depth examination of internal cognitive processes and meaning ascribed to sources of social/structural support. Furthermore, analysis of narratives enables examination of the interconnections of episodes in individuals' lives and their perspectives revealed through the telling of their story, rather than simply with the facts of that life (Bryman, 2004).

The men in the present sample had received prison sentences ranging from nine months to 12 years for various sexual offences against child victims, including both contact and non-contact offences. At the time of the interviews, respondents had been residing in the community for periods ranging from one to 15 years. A loosely structured approach to interviewing was employed to encourage an informal conversational style, rather than a list of questions delivered in a pre-defined order. This approach reflected my desire to avoid reminding respondents of interactions with criminal justice professionals, and was considered more likely to encourage

rapport and narrative formation. I was keen to explore the mens' journeys since their conviction and encouraged them to tell me about their lives since that time, including their experiences of prison, treatment, probation supervision and integration into the community.

At the risk of perpetuating the labelling of these men as sex offenders, participants will be referred to throughout this thesis as Convicted Sex Offenders (CSOs) or Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) due to the lack of a suitable replacement term. The term 'ex-sex offender' was considered as an alternative replacement term, but was deemed somewhat cumbersome. It is for the latter reason that I employ the terms CSO and RSO, rather than to infer continued or present offending. Despite my inability to triangulate participants' accounts with official records, I had no reason to believe that any of the respondents had engaged in further offending. None presented any information to imply this within their self-narratives.

The remainder of this introductory chapter presents a discussion of responses to sexual offenders in the current highly punitive climate, which involves harsh sentencing practices with a focus on public protection and the management of risk. The law underpinning this type of offending and the wide range of sexual offences are considered. Further to this the prevalence of sexual offending in England and Wales is explored, together with what is known about the criminal careers of sexual offenders. This chapter continues to explore the community management of sex offenders and the raft of legislation and restrictive policies implemented in recent years. An outline of the thesis concludes this introductory chapter.

### 1.2 Responses to sexual offending in late modernity

As a result of societal changes including increased social and spatial mobility which have weakened individuals' ties with local places (Baker & Roberts, 2005), it has been argued that late modern society is characterised by a sense of 'ontological insecurity' (Jones, 2007). This concept refers to a heightened sense of (and fear of) the 'other' (Garland, 2001), as trust has been replaced with anxiety about people perceived to be undesirably different (Petrunik & Deutschmann, 2008). Indeed, Beck (1992) defines late modernity as the 'risk society' in which regulation of crime becomes a tangible method to control risk. Within this context, sexual offending has increasingly become the focus of popular and political discourse (Rainey, 2010), prominent in criminal justice issues since the 1990's (Lynch, 2002). Sex offenders have become subject to risk management penal strategies reflective of the 'new penology' (Feeley & Simon, 1992), which emphasises public protection with a focus on dangerous groups and harsher punishment practices highlighting the decline of the welfare approach within penology. The moral panic surrounding sexual offenders is suggested by Walker (2011) to, in part,

underpin the increasingly restrictive raft of sex offender legislation. The context of a contemporary risk society sustains a moral panic which may otherwise subside (Walker, 2011). 'Populist punitiveness', a term coined by Bottoms (1995) to refer to the perceptions of politicians and judges that the public demand harsher sentencing, is also influential in contemporary policy making. In addition, this concept is also said to underpin the lack of evidence-based (research in contemporary) policy making (Garland, 2000; Hudson, 2003), which has become increasingly simplistic and symbolic (Baker & Roberts, 2005). However, whilst harsh punishments and restrictive policies for CSOs dominate the contemporary penal landscape, rehabilitative efforts are still in existence, 'sold' through a utilitarian perspective (Robinson, 2008). Rehabilitation is necessary for public protection, as Garland (1997: 6) emphasizes, "It is future victims who are now 'rescued' by rehabilitative work, rather than the offenders themselves". Sex offender treatment programmes operating in both the prison and community context reflect the rehabilitative legacy. The following section presents a brief discussion of treatment programmes.

### 1.2.1 Sex offender treatment

> The major goal [of treatment programmes] is to teach sex offenders the skills to change the way they think, feel and act and to use this knowledge to avoid or escape from future high-risk situations (Laws & Ward, 2011: 99).

Despite the contemporary criminal justice focus on increased punitiveness and decreased orientation towards rehabilitation (Garland, 2001; Pratt, 2007; Feeley & Simon, 1992), the prison-based Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) is offered on a voluntary basis to all male prisoners convicted of a sexual offence and serving a sentence of sufficient length to complete the programme (Beech, Fisher & Beckett, 1998). The Ministry of Justice (2010a) claim that sex offenders undertaking treatment in England and Wales (regardless of the context - prison or community) generally demonstrate lower rates of recidivism than those who do not undertake treatment. Treatment programmes for sexual offenders are based on the premise of 'control not cure' (Home Office, 2002; National Probation Service, 2004), and aim to enable those undertaking them to develop strategies for self-control. It is acknowledged that there is no 'cure' for sexual offending and that help to change, together with the desire to cease offending, can result in successful desistance in some sex offenders (Philpot, 2011).

Treatment programmes in both the prison and community context are underpinned by the cognitive behavioural approach,[1] designed to teach sex offenders to understand and control their

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[1] Commonly known as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Home Office, 2002). The SOTP was implemented nationally in 1992 in 17 prisons in the UK and Ireland (Brown, 2005). Individuals undergo risk assessment to identify their treatment needs and determine which of the six separate programmes, which vary in intensity and length, are most suited to their treatment needs (Scott & Codd, 2010). The SOTP, the biggest sex offender treatment programme in the world, treats around 1000 men per year (Davidson, no date).

Treatment programmes are underpinned by theoretical explanations of sexual offending, a number of which have been proposed, although the constraints of space within this thesis prohibit a full discussion. Theories tend to combine a range of psychological, biological, social, cultural and situational factors which have been linked to sexual offending (Brown, 2005). Influential in treatment programmes are Wolf's multi-factor model of deviant sexuality (1985) and Finkelhor's integrated theory of child sexual abuse (1984). Wolf's model attempts to explain the development and maintenance of sexual offending behaviour, whilst Finkelhor's theory includes four pre-conditions to provide a situational explanation of child sexual abuse.

Treatment involves a multi-modal approach, involving group work where participants are required to discuss their offending and challenge any cognitive distortions apparent in others' accounts. Role play is also involved in attempts to encourage participants' empathy through understanding of the victim's perspective. Research evidence indicates that the cognitive behavioural approach is the most effective method of treating sex offenders, by addressing the criminogenic factors relevant to sexual offending (Beech et al, 1998). A number of accredited programmes are delivered in custodial or community settings. Sex offender treatment programmes operating in the community context are collectively termed the Sex Offender Group Programme (SOGP). The Home Office (2002) stated that ideally prisoners would attend the prison treatment programme and build upon this following release by attending a community based programme. Programmes operating in both contexts target five areas: dysfunctional attitudes and beliefs; victim empathy deficits; social functioning; deviant sexual arousal; and relapse prevention skills (Brown, 2005). The first four treatment targets have been shown to be contributory or characteristic factors in sexual abuse, whilst the fifth component, relapse prevention, aims to encourage offenders to apply constructs and skills central to preventing reoffending (Hudson, 2005). Individuals devise their own plan further to identification of their own risk factors and learn how to avoid and manage these.

Sexual offenders commonly harbour dysfunctional attitudes and beliefs which treatment programmes seek to address (Brown, 2005; Mann & Marshall, 2009). An array of concepts are employed within the treatment arena to refer to the cognitive mechanisms employed by sexual

offenders attempting to reduce responsibility for their offending behaviour. Such concepts include cognitive distortions, denial, minimisations, justifications and neutralisations. The numerous and subtle forms of denial commonly employed by sex offenders range from categorical denial (they deny they committed the offence); only admitting to part of the crime; or providing rationales to excuse their behaviour (Hanson, Cox & Woszczyn, 1991). Sex offenders often attempt to minimise their offending behaviour in an attempt to reduce culpability, even after denial is overcome (Brown, 2005). Those with high levels of denial or minimisation may be routinely excluded from treatment, as their inclusion is thought to negatively affect progress by other treatment members (Brown, 2005).

The following section explores the law relating to sexual offences together with the recent statistics on sexual offending in England and Wales. Further to this, what is known about the criminal careers of sexual offenders is explored, for the purpose of determining the most appropriate sampling criteria for the current research.

### 1.3 The law, sexual offences and their prevalence

In England and Wales sexual offences are incorporated within the Sexual Offences Act 2003, introduced in May 2004. A broad range of sexual offences are included within the Act, relating to both contact offences such as rape and sexual activity, and non-contact offences such as the possession of indecent photographs of children (Legislation.gov.uk, no date a). The offence of 'grooming' is also included to refer to 'the offence of meeting a child following sexual grooming', although the term 'grooming' is undefined in the Act (McAlinden, 2006: 340).

Police recorded crime figures for all sexual offences in England and Wales increased by 36% for the year ending September 2015 compared with the previous year, rising from 73,003 to 99,609 (Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2016). Offence categories relating to sexual offences against children contributed to 44% of the total increase in sexual offences recorded by police. However, all sexual offences constituted only two to four percent of all police recorded crime in England and Wales in 2015 (ONS, 2016). Whilst these figures create the impression that sexual offences are becoming more common, statistics should be interpreted with caution. Rather than an increase in actual offences, the increase in recorded crime may in part be attributed to the Police's Operation Yewtree, which has encouraged reporting of both historical and current sexual crime. In addition, police forces' recording practices have been improved as sexual offences were found to have been significantly under-recorded previously (ONS, 2016).

### 1.3.1 The criminal careers of sexual offenders

The literature and statistics on sexual offending were reviewed to identify firstly, the timescales during which the majority of reconvictions occur in adult male child sex offenders, and secondly, to ascertain which types of child sexual offender pose the greatest risks of reoffending. This information was significant to informing the sampling criteria for the current research.

Sexual offenders targeting child victims are popularly believed to be prone to repeat their crimes (Grubin, 1998), despite the fact that reconviction rates suggest otherwise. It should, however, be borne in mind that a large amount of sexual offending is likely to remain undetected (Rice & Harris, 2006). CSOs consistently demonstrate lower reconviction rates than those evidenced by other types of offenders (Brown, 2005). In England and Wales, the majority of sexual reconvictions in the former remain fairly constant, at around 10% within six years of prison release (Hood et al, 2002), contrasted with reconviction rates for adult offenders in general which amounted to 25.2% in a one year follow up study (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Studies of recidivism rates of sexual offenders receiving non-custodial sentences are difficult to obtain. Thompson's (1995) Australian research found 4% recidivism within two years, however, this study found higher than usual recidivism rates at 19% among those having served a custodial sentence. Hanson and Bussiere (1998) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of 29,000 sex offenders followed for four to five years and found a sexual recidivism rate of 19% for child molesters. Grubin (1998) suggests that around 25% of those convicted of sexual offences against children are reconvicted of similar offences within a 20 year period. Child molesters followed up for 15-30 years evidenced a 35% sexual reconviction rate (Hanson, Scott & Steffy, 1995), highlighting West's (2000) assertion that the risk of reoffending persists for many years.

These studies broadly indicate that the majority of sexual reoffending occurs within the first six years following prison release and for this reason, the current project's original sampling criteria dictated that participants should have been living in the community for at least six years, in an attempt to interview those most likely to be desisting. Of course, a limitation of desistance research is the fact that it is not possible to truly determine whether the individual has in fact ceased offending. This factor is perhaps particularly significant when sampling sexual offenders, given that child sexual assaults in particular are often unreported and therefore it is unsurprising that convicted male sexual offenders of children claim on average to have committed their crimes for six years prior to their first arrest (Browne, 2009).

Public policy and crime control of sexual offenders is based on the assumption that they are highly specialised and prone to persist (Miethe, Olson & Mitchell, 2006). When the category of child sex offender is disaggregated, reconviction rates differ dependent upon the offence type. Intra-familial offenders pose the least risk of recidivism (Quinsey et al, 1995; Alexander, 1999; Seto et al, 2015), whilst offenders against extra-familial males pose the greatest risk of recidivism (Abel et al, 1987; Hanson, Steffy & Gauthier, 1993; Grubin, 1998; Soothill et al, 2000; Harris & Hanson, 2004). Hood et al (2002) found striking differences in the reconviction rates of intra-familial and extra-familial sex offenders of children. Hood et al's small sample demonstrated no reconvictions of intra-familial offenders within six years of prison release, whilst 32% of extra-familial offenders had been re-imprisoned for a further sexual or serious violent crime.

The statistics above highlight the heterogenerous nature of sexual offenders, indicating that extra-familial abusers of boys pose the greatest risk of reoffending. Such differences in offending trajectories raises the potential of differing desistance trajectories, emphasised by Laws and Ward (2011: 23) who suggest that that the process of desistance should be examined in "…distinct offender groups (child molesters, rapists, exhibitionists, and other minor paraphiliacs)". I would argue further that within the 'child molester' category, those committing offences against extra-familial victims would be the ideal focus of desistance research, given that statistics indicate they pose the greatest risk. Understanding the desistance process in this distinct group of offenders may prove most beneficial for informing policy and practice.

Sex offenders as a group are treated as 'specialists' by the criminal justice system (Simon, 1997), implicit in the Sex Offenders Act 1997 (Soothill et al, 2000) which introduced the Sex Offender Register. However, the longstanding debate on whether sexual offenders are 'specialists' or 'generalists' has been generally inconclusive, often due to differing methodologies and differing criteria for identifying specialisation (Howard, Barnett & Mann, 2014). The 'specialisation hypothesis' states that sexual offenders have a specific propensity to commit sexual crimes and thus, if the criminal activity of a sexual offender persists, it would be primarily in sexual crime (Lussier, 2005). By definition, generalists engage in other crime types in addition to sexual offending. Specialisation *in* sexual offending relates to the tendency of individuals to only engage in this crime type throughout their offending career, whilst specialisation *within* sexual offending relates to the tendency to commit similar sexual crimes involving victims of similar age and gender (Howard et al, 2014). Soothill et al's (2000) findings led them to argue that sex offenders may be both generalists and specialists, by engaging in a wide spectrum of offences but still specialising *within* sexual offending.

Lussier's (2005) review of the sexual offending specialisation literature concluded that specialisation in other crime types such as violence or property crime is observed more frequently than specialisation *in* sexual offending. Other research evidences that sexual offenders' criminal careers are characterised by much versatility, that is, also include non-sexual crime (Simon, 2000; Sample & Bray, 2003; Smallbone, Wheaton, & Hourigan, 2003). Howard et al's (2014) recent review of the literature, involving a large data set, concludes that child molesters are more likely to specialise *in* sexual offending than those who sexually abuse adult women. Specialisation *within* sexual offending was significant in relation to non-contact offenders, in particular those whose offending involved indecent images of children. These offenders were unlikely to be reconvicted for a contact sexual offence. However, those whose offending history related to contact child offences also engaged in non-contact offending relating to indecent images. The research findings above can therefore be summarised to suggest that sexual offenders do not solely commit sexual offences, however, the sexual offences they do commit tend to be of the same type.

Sexual offender recidivism, in accordance with non-sexual offender recidivism, generally declines with increasing age. However, sex offender recidivism declines at a much older age than non-sexual recidivism. Various studies demonstrate a reduction in sexual recidivism from the age of 45 (Langan, Schmitt & Durose, 2003); over the age of 50 (Hanson, 2002; Harris & Hanson, 2004; Barbaree, Blanchard & Langton, 2003); over 55 (Fazel et al, 2006); and over 60 (Thornton, 2006). Studies rarely differentiate between categories of sex offender, with the exception of Hanson (2002) who found recidivism in extra-familial child molesters to cease at an older age (over 50) than for rapists. The mechanism underpinning the effect of ageing on reduced CSO recidivism is however unclear. Explanations include declining testosterone and changing life circumstances (Barbaree & Blanchard, 2008). The assumption that reoffending by sexual offenders against children reduces with ageing implies that sexual arousal motivates offending. However, this fails to distinguish libido from deviance; the complex nature of sexual deviancy is driven by a range of factors which are difficult to observe (Brown, 2005). Barbaree et al (2003) found that sexual arousal[2] reduces in accordance with increasing age, furthermore, bioavailable testosterone, the male sex hormone, peaks in the early twenties and declines thereafter. Higher testosterone levels were associated with greater likelihood of further sexual violence in Studer, Aylwin & Reddon's (2005) sample of CSOs. However, Ardash Kaul, a psychiatrist responsible for assessing CSOs volunteering for chemical castration in HMP Whatton, found none of the men to have high testosterone levels (Aitkenhead, 2013), thus highlighting sexual offending as a complex phenomenon.

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[2] Measured by erectile responses to erotic visual stimuli.

This section has explored the criminal careers of adult male child sex offenders, in order to inform the sampling criteria for the present project, which is discussed at length in Chapter Three. A summary of the existing literature and statistics identify that: the majority of sexual reoffending occurs within six years of prison release; extra-familial offenders (particularly those abusing boys) pose the greatest risk of reoffending; sexual offenders appear to commit other types of crime, however, of the sexual offences which are committed, these tend to take the same form (same gendered, similarly aged victims); and sexual recidivism appears to decline from the age of 45 onwards. The following section discusses the management of CSOs in the community.

## 1.4 Sexual offenders in the community

The harsh penal climate of late modernity includes numerous restrictions on CSOs residing in the community. The management of CSOs is overseen by Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), but also include the Sex Offender Register (SOR) and civil orders with specific restrictions dependent upon the individual's offending history. Furthermore, the recent introduction of the child sex offender disclosure scheme (CSODS), popularly known as Sarah's Law, may present additional anxiety for CSOs. Employment legislation concerning CSOs will also be discussed in this section, as this is presumed to present difficulties for CSOs seeking employment.

## 1.4.1 Multi-agency public protection arrangements

The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 acknowledged that joint working between the police and probation services[3] would enhance the management of sex offenders living in the community, and introduced MAPPAs to assess and manage the risk posed by sexual and violent offenders. These arrangements were further strengthened by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, to also include the prison service within the joint working arrangements. Other agencies are also involved in MAPPAs when necessary, including local education, housing and health and social services (McAlinden, 2007).

MAPPA work is structured around the central concept of risk assessment. Actuarial risk assessment calculates risk dependent upon static and dynamic factors. This method of risk assessment replaced the previously used clinical assessments, which were considered less

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[3] It is acknowledged that the probation service became 35 probation trusts across England and Wales, through the Offender Management Act 2007. These were dissolved in 2014, to be replaced by a new public sector National Probation Service to manage high risk offenders, together with 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies charged with the provision of probation services for medium and low risk offenders (Legislation.gov.uk, 2014).

accurate (Hanson, Morton-Bourgon & Harris, 2009). Three broad categories of offender are eligible for MAPPA, with registered sex offenders (RSOs) forming category one. Offenders are managed at three levels within MAPPA, reflecting the level of multi-agency co-operation required to effectively implement the offender's risk management plan (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Level one management refers to 'ordinary agency management' meaning that low to medium risk offenders are subject to the usual management arrangements applied by whichever agency has the lead in supervising them (Ministry of Justice, 2015). For example, upon release from prison, sex offenders may be subject to supervision whilst on licence by the probation service, whilst upon expiry of licence, they will revert to supervision by the police via the conditions of the sex offender register (SOR). Level two involves active multi-agency management for individuals deemed high to very high risk of harm and requires the active involvement of several agencies. Level three reflects the input of level two but relates to those deemed to pose the highest risk of serious harm to others, and thus requires the involvement of agencies' senior staff (Ministry of Justice, 2015), and may also include police surveillance or the use of specialised accommodation. The majority of RSOs are managed at level one, with only 0.1% of RSOs managed at level three (Ministry of Justice, 2014). In March 2015, MAPPA eligible offenders totalled 68,214. Seventy-three per cent of these were category one (RSOs – an increase of 5% on the previous year), 98% of whom were managed at level one (Ministry of Justice, 2015).

### 1.4.2 The sex offender register

Individuals receiving a caution or conviction for a sexual offence become subject to the terms and conditions of what is commonly known as the sex offender register (SOR), introduced via the 1997 Sex Offenders Act with the aims of:

- Ensuring that the Police National Computer contains up to date information on convicted and cautioned sex offenders
- Aiding with identification of suspects when a crime has been committed
- Providing a deterrent to potential reoffenders
- Possibly helping to prevent sexual crimes (Home Office, 1996, cited in Hebenton & Thomas, 1997)

Prior to the introduction of the 1997 Sex Offenders Act, sexual offenders' addresses at the time of conviction were held on the Police National Computer (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2000) and sex offenders were not routinely monitored or tracked by the police (Quaker Peace & Social Witness, 2005). The 1997 Act required sexual offenders (aged 18 and above) convicted or cautioned on or after the first of September 1997 to notify police of their names and addresses

and any subsequent changes (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2000), which are stored on a national computerised police database. Those serving custodial or community sentences, or under post-release supervision on the aforementioned date also became subject to these requirements (Plotnikoff & Wolfson, 2000). The 1997 Sex Offenders Act never makes any reference to a 'Register' as such (Thomas, 2008), but presents a list of 'notification requirements' (Legislation.gov.uk, no date b). However, as this is the common term of reference (National Probation Service, 2004), this thesis will refer throughout to the 'Register' or the 'SOR'. The number of RSOs in 2015 in England and Wales amounted to almost 50,000 (Ministry of Justice, 2015).

The length of time for which sexual offenders are subject to the notification requirements of the Register is dependent upon the penalty received. Under the 1997 Act those receiving a police caution or probation order were required to register for five years; a prison sentence of less than six months requires seven years registration; a six to 30 month prison sentence requires 10 years registration; and indefinite registration is required for those serving a prison sentence of 30 months or more (Legislation.gov.uk, no date b).

Sexual offenders convicted or cautioned of a specified offence detailed in Schedule One of the 1997 Sex Offenders Act are subject to registration requirements and must notify police within 14 days of receipt of the penalty (or upon release from prison), either in person at a police station or in writing (Legislation.gov.uk, no date b). Police are also to be informed within 14 days if an offender moves to a new address. Failure to comply with notification or the provision of false information is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine or imprisonment (Hebenton & Thomas, 1997).

Since its introduction, the conditions of the SOR have generally become more stringent through several legislative measures. The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 reduced the initial notification period from 14 to three days and also increased the maximum fine for non-compliance with Register conditions (Legislation.gov.uk, no date c).

The 1997 Act also specified that an offender should inform police if he intends to be staying at any other address for a 14 day period (Legislation.gov.uk, no date b), reduced to seven days by The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Legislation.gov.uk, no date a). The latter Act also stipulates that RSOs should report annually to a prescribed police station to verify their details and also to notify police of any overseas travel. The only revision to the 1997 Act which became less stringent is the reduced registration period for those cautioned to two years, through the 2003 Act (Legislation.gov.uk, no date a).

Public Protection Officers (PPOs) are the representatives of the police responsible for enforcing the legal structure and with whom RSOs have regular contact for the duration of their registration period. RSOs are subject to unannounced visits from PPOs to their homes for the purpose of checking addresses and monitoring personal circumstances, which may require a change in assessed level of risk (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2000). The frequency of visits is conducted in accordance with assessed risk level and home visits underpinned by the premise that enhanced monitoring may result in increased identification of offending behaviour (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2000). RSOs are also required to visit a prescribed police station annually to verify their details. Failure to do so can incur further penalty.

Despite the Home Office assertion that the SOR was not intended to be an additional penalty for offenders (Home Office/Scottish Executive, 2001), Thomas (2008) questions whether this has shifted from being a measure in public protection to a punishment in its own right. Should RSOs view the SOR as a source of additional punishment, the legitimacy of the sanction may be questioned, a factor which scholars have identified as impacting negatively upon offenders' commitments to compliance and desistance (Robinson & McNeill, 2008; Digard, 2010; Ugwidike, 2011; Weaver, 2014).

Furthermore, a number of additional criticisms of the SOR have been identified by scholars. Whilst sexual offenders form a heterogeneous population, SORs are argued to assume homogeneity (Sample & Bray, 2006). Gillespie (2002) argues that those cautioned are likely to have committed a less serious offence but become subject to registration requirements which are potentially a harsher penalty than a sentence of the court. This point is reflected in Liberty's (the civil liberties campaign group) concerns regarding the range of offences covered by the SOR and the fact that anyone cautioned or convicted under the 2003 Sexual Offences Act can be placed on the SOR (Batty, 2006). Therefore, the most serious offenders, such as adults convicted of child sexual abuse, through to less serious offenders such as underage teenagers engaged in consensual sex, may all become subject to sex offender registration, albeit for differing periods of time. Given that sexual offences are notoriously under reported, RSOs are likely to represent only a small proportion of all sex offenders and, as such, the value of SORs may be limited (Browne, 2009). In addition, the terms and conditions of the SOR have also been suggested to be unduly intrusive to sex offenders (Tewkesbury & Lees, 2006).

A UK Supreme Court ruling in 2010 acknowledged the lack of opportunity for CSOs to be removed from the SOR to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (BBC News, 2012). Individuals subject to indefinite sex offender registration can now apply to be removed from the register further to being released from prison for at least 15 years. Decisions regarding this lay with the police and are based on issues of public protection (Home

Office, 2012). The following section discusses additional measures designed to restrict the activities of CSOs deemed to be at risk of further offending.

### 1.4.3 Civil orders

Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPOs), introduced via the Sexual Offences Act 2003, are a civil order, which can be imposed at the time of conviction or applied for at a later date by police who believe that the individual poses a risk of further sexual offending (Thomas, 2004). These are intended to regulate the behaviour of sex offenders in the interests of child protection and community safety (Thomas, 2004) and as such, can prohibit the individual from participating in particular activities outlined in the order. Restrictions can include a variety of factors related to the nature of the individual's offending behaviour, such as specified exclusion zones or the prohibition of unsupervised contact with children. In addition, Foreign Travel Orders (FTO) prevent offenders with convictions against children from travelling overseas. The SOR requires that police are notified of individuals' intention to travel abroad but does not prohibit them from doing so. SOPOs are imposed for specified timescales, with a minimum of five years to indefinitely. The imposition of a SOPO deems that the individual becomes subject to the terms and conditions of the SOR for the duration of the SOPO. Similar orders were previously available within the 1997 Sexual Offenders Act. Breach of SOPO conditions constitutes a criminal offence and is liable to prosecution.

A further civil order was also available within the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Risk of Sexual Harm Order (RSHO). This was similar to the SOPO in content and procedure, but available for those thought to pose a risk to children under 16 (Cobley, 2005). Legal powers are extended to those not in receipt of a previous conviction but the individual must have performed at least two sexual acts involving children previously. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 replaced SOPOs, RSHOs and FTOs with Sexual Harm Prevention Orders (SHPO) and Sexual Risk Orders (SRO). Similar to the RSHO, SROs can be applied for by Police or the National Crime Agency and imposed on those deemed to pose a risk of sexual harm (to adults or children) in England and Wales regardless of whether they have been convicted (Home Office, 2015). SHPOs (replacing SOPOs and Foreign Travel Orders) can be applied to individuals cautioned or convicted of a sexual offence including those committed overseas. Both orders can impose a range of restrictions, dependent upon the nature of the individual's offending. Participants in the current study were interviewed prior to the introduction of SHPOs and SROs and nine were at the time subject to conditions of a SOPO. Thus, it is the latter which are referred to within the thesis.

### 1.4.4 The child sex offender disclosure scheme

The murder of eight year old Sarah Payne in 2000 by convicted sex offender Roy Whiting led to calls for a notification system in England and Wales, similar to the system of 'Megan's Law' in the USA which has provided public access to sex offender registers since 1996 (Thomas, 2003). The introduction of Megan's Law in the US followed the murder of Megan Kanka in a situation similar to that of Sarah Payne in the UK, and was underpinned by the rationale of promoting awareness of sexual offenders to enable parents to protect their children (Levenson, 2004). However, given that the majority of sexual abuse of children is committed by someone known to them (Grubin, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Fitch, 2006), it could be argued that community notification does little to protect such victims (Fitch, 2006; Cohen & Jeglic, 2007). Furthermore, several authors suggest that victims of sexual abuse committed by family members or acquaintances may be deterred from reporting due to fear of community notification resulting in stigmatisation of both themselves and their offender (Fitch, 2006; Freeman-Longo, 1996).

Massive media coverage resulted from Sarah Payne's murder, including a News of the World campaign to 'name and shame' paedophiles. Names and photographs of individuals the newspaper identified as paedophiles led to vigilante attacks, often involving mistaken identities and thus targeting innocent victims (BBC News, 2001), reflecting the public outrage surrounding child sex offenders. However, despite Home Office acknowledgement that the USA had not found a reduction in sexual offences (Fitch, 2006), the child sex offender disclosure scheme (CSODS), popularly known as 'Sarah's law', was introduced across England and Wales in Spring 2011 (Home Office, 2010) following a pilot study involving four police force areas (Kemshall et al, 2010). Evaluation of the pilot study stated that 21 disclosures had been made (Kemshall et al, 2010), and thus it is unclear how the Home Office (2010) concluded that the pilot schemes had protected 60 children from abuse. The Home Secretary at the time, Theresa May, claimed that "this scheme is an important step forward for child protection in this country", which "keeps children safer" (Home Office, 2010). The CSODS in England and Wales provides a formal mechanism to enable parents, carers and guardians with a concern about a named individual who has unsupervised contact with children to make enquiries by contacting police. If the individual has a previous conviction for child sexual abuse and is considered a risk, the police decide whether a disclosure to the applicant and/or further action is necessary (Kemshall et al, 2010). However, prior to the introduction of the CSODS, disclosures when necessary were undertaken via MAPPA (Kemshall et al, 2010).

The UK approach to contemporary criminal justice policy making tends to emulate that of America (Tonry, 2001), exemplified in the introduction of 'Sarah's Law', which adopts a more limited approach to disclosure than the American version of 'Megan's Law'. The latter provides information on sex offenders via publicly accessible websites (Levenson, Fortney & Baker, 2010). The following section discusses employment legislation to which CSOs are subject.

### 1.4.5 Employment legislation

CSOs may be subject to restrictions regarding the type of employment they are able to engage in. The 1974 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act allowed employers to obtain details about individuals and placed burdens of disclosure on ex-offenders (Rhodes, 2008). This Act (amended by the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014) recognises that criminal convictions can impede rehabilitative efforts and as such allows cautions and convictions to become 'spent' after a certain time period, which is dependent upon sentence length or disposal received. Until the conviction is spent, if an employer requests information on an applicant's criminal record, the individual must provide this or risk prosecution, unless the job is exempt from the ROA, such as those which involve standard or enhanced criminal records checks (Unlock, 2014a). However, prison sentences of over four years and all sentences for public protection are excepted and never become spent, meaning that criminal record information must always be disclosed. Prison sentences of between 30 and 48 months become spent seven years after expiry of the sentence. Sexual offenders, however, may be subject to additional requirements of disclosure required by MAPPA (Brown, Spencer & Deakin, 2007). Furthermore, for individuals subject to SOPO conditions, their conviction cannot become spent until SOPO expiry. Thus, individuals receiving an indefinite SOPO cannot have spent sexual convictions, unless a successful court appeal reduces the length of, or terminates, the SOPO (Unlock, 2014b). Nacro (2016) advise individuals with unspent convictions to disclose at the point when declaration is requested. Should the application process require a Curriculum Vitae (CV), inclusion of criminal record disclosure is not recommended. Gaps in a CV should be documented as 'unavailable for work' and individuals prepared to explain this honestly at interview. Nacro (2016) also advise that applicants prepare a written disclosure statement documenting details of their conviction prior to applying for jobs which may be submitted with any application form or taken to interview for verbal discussion. Alternatively, individuals are advised to state on the application form that they have a conviction which they are happy to discuss at interview. The disclosure statement should be presented to the interviewer as evidence that disclosure has been made. Other sources indicate that disclosure is not necessary unless requested, however, failure to do so if asked at any stage of the application process can result in dismissal from a job after

selection (Target Jobs, 2014).  Failure to disclose an unspent conviction if explicitly requested may also result in prosecution (Unlock, 2014a).

This introductory chapter has presented the contemporary penal climate in relation to sex offenders, identifying that whilst harsh penal policies are directed towards this offender type, rehabilitative elements remain, reframed via the discourse of 'risk management' and 'public protection' (Robinson, 2008).  Sex offender treatment programmes operating in both custodial and community contexts provide evidence that rehabilitative efforts continue.  The community management of sex offenders has been discussed, including the MAPPA framework, the SOR, and several civil orders available to restrict the activities of those with a sexual conviction.  The types of employment which CSOs can undertake is limited, and, whilst the recent revisions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act aim to assist those with convictions, the fact that CSOs are likely to receive custodial sentences of four or more years makes this Act of little relevance to some sex offenders.  This chapter proceeds to provide an outline of the thesis.

### 1.5 Outline of the thesis

The next chapter of this thesis reviews a selection of existing empirical and theoretical accounts of desistance from crime, firstly in relation to non-sexual offenders. The chapter continues to review the small body of extant empirical research and theorising relating to desistance from sexual offending.  Attention is then turned to other sources identified as being of potential relevance when considering desistance from sexual offending.  These include a strengths-based approach to rehabilitation - the Good Lives Model (Ward, 2002).  The latter is combined with desistance theory to form a programme of intervention, developed by Laws and Ward (2011) and discussed further in Chapter Two.  Deterrence theory may be associated with desistance from sexual offending and this is also considered, together with rational choice theory. Theories of compliance developed by Bottoms (2001) may assist in explaining desistance from sexual offending and are also considered in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three presents the methodology employed in the present project, which adopted a qualitative approach involving loosely structured narrative interviews.  The numerous ethical issues raised with research involving vulnerable participants and sensitive subjects required careful consideration, and this is detailed in Chapter Three.  The significant difficulties in accessing a sample population led to a protracted and frustrating process which is also discussed further.  The choice of interview venue was problematic when considering the sensitive nature of the interviews and the stigmatised status of respondents.  Few sources of literature were available detailing the situated context of interviewing sexual offenders, hence I consider my

own experiences of doing so, in addition to considering my own biography and the impact of this on interviews. Chapter Three concludes with a discussion of the approach to data analysis employed.

Chapters Four to Seven present the data generated by the fieldwork. These chapters all include the term 'control' within their titles, reflecting its prominence in treatment and management and the fact that respondents were required to exercise their own internal controls to desist from further sexual crime. Excerpts from participants' accounts are presented throughout the analysis chapters in an attempt to aid transparency of interpretation. Chapter Four, 'formal social control' refers to the sources of penal control encountered by the men in their desistance journeys. These sources are discussed in the chronological order in which they were experienced and hence, begin with respondents' experiences of prison. Thirteen of the men undertook treatment programmes whilst in prison, which was on the whole considered to assist desistance. Further to release, the majority of respondents were subject to supervision by probation whilst on licence. The management and supervisory role of police in accordance with the SOR was a recurrent theme in participants' accounts and is discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five, 'informal social control', draws on the various sources of informal social control evident in participants' narratives. Again, these follow the general chronological order in which they were experienced following prison release, beginning with stable accommodation, followed by employment, romantic relationships, support networks and constructive activity. Despite the barriers encountered by respondents in accessing employment, the majority of those of working age had secured a job. Romantic relationships were more difficult to achieve, with only four of the men having a stable romantic partner. The remainder of the men were deterred from seeking romantic partners due to issues surrounding disclosure.

Chapter Six focuses on the internal resources upon which participants drew to assist their desistance. Acutely aware of the stigma assigned to those with a conviction for a sexual offence, respondents often employed techniques to negotiate feelings of self-stigma, which threatened identity reconstruction. The role of agency is aso considered in this chapter, together with the significance of hope and trust in the desistance process. In addition, several respondents displayed generative behaviour which is also explored in Chapter Six.

Chapter Seven draws together the key themes within participants' narratives to unravel the process of desistance from sexual offending. Two types of desistance are identified – formal and substantive. The former involves simple adherence to the legal framework, being deterrence based and involving no identifiable process. In contrast, substantive desistance,

conceptually similar to secondary desistance, involves internal change along a continuum of identity transformation, and is argued to be a complex and protracted process.

Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, summarises the key findings, which are then considered in light of implications for policy and practice, in relation to both the treatment and management of CSOs. All empirical research has limitations and the present study is no exception. These are highlighted in the concluding chapter, together with the contribution to knowledge this empirical study provides. The thesis concludes with suggested avenues for future research.

# Two: Exploring the Desistance Process: Does it Differ for Sexual Offenders?

## 2.1 Introduction

As Chapter One acknowledged, understanding of desistance from general, non-sexual crime has expanded exponentially over previous decades. Research into desistance from general offending has encompassed three perspectives: ontogenic theories which stress the importance of age and maturation (Glueck & Glueck, 1937; Moffitt, 1993); sociogenic theories which highlight the significance of social bonds (Sampson & Laub, 1993); and narrative theories which emphasise the importance of subjective changes including cognitive transformations and identity change (Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). The current academic consensus acknowledges that a combination of both structure and agency are necessary for desistance, leading to the emergence of integrated theories (e.g., Bottoms et al, 2004; LeBel et al, 2008). Desistance from sexual offending has been a neglected avenue of research until recently when a small number of publications from empirical studies have emerged, highlighting similar findings to those within the literature from general offending (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015). Furthermore, Göbbels, Ward and Willis' (2012) provision of an *Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending* (ITDSO), includes the significance of both internal and external factors and is the only theory identified to focus explicitly on desistance from sexual offending.

The factors influencing the commencement of offending are not simply reversed to explain desistance (McNeill et al, 2012). It is therefore important to explore the resources required by individuals in order to abstain from sexual offending, as this knowledge has the potential to develop interventions for CSOs. As Chapter One considered, recidivism rates and the criminal careers of sexual offenders differ from those relating to non-sexual offenders. Furthermore, when the category of sex offenders is disaggregated, differing offending trajectories are evidenced, highlighting the potential of differing desistance trajectories. This project explores the desistance trajectories of adult male child sex offenders in order to contribute to the small body of extant literature.

This chapter begins by attempting to define desistance, a concept which lacks universal definition. A selection of the literature exploring, firstly, desistance from non-sexual offending is then reviewed. Rather than an exhaustive account of all proposed explanations of desistance

from non-sexual crime, those considered of potential relevance to desistance in adult male child sex offenders are explored. The significant and consistent finding that offenders 'age out' of crime is discussed, together with Moffitt's (1993) dual taxonomy, which develops the age-crime curve further through identification of adolescent-limited and life-course persistent offenders. Empirical findings highlighting the significance of informal social control in desistance from crime are then considered. The recurrent themes of agency, identity and cognition in desistance from crime are the focus of the following section, followed by a review of integrated theories which acknowledge the significance of both structure and agency in desistance from non-sexual crime.

Attention is then turned to the small body of empirical work exploring desistance from sexual offending. Upon commencement of the present project, knowledge of desistance from sexual offending was scarce, with evidence of only one published paper explicitly exploring this phenomenon in a sample of mixed sexual offenders (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000). Recent years have witnessed the development of a small but growing body of research to which this project aims to contribute. The Good Lives Model, a model of rehabilitation, is subsequently considered, as this underpins theorising of desistance from sexual offending which the subsequent section explores. Attention is then turned to alternative theories, namely deterrence, rational choice and compliance, which are discussed due to their potential applicability to desistance from sexual offending. The chapter concludes with a discussion which draws the literature together and provides a lens through which to empirically explore desistance from sexual offending.

It should be noted that, whilst these accounts are presented in sections according to their primary focus, there is some natural overlap between findings. For example, the main finding of the empirical research may relate to the role of agency, whilst still acknowledging the significance of informal social control in desistance.

### 2.1.1 Defining desistance

The concept of desistance from crime lacks universal definition and is more complex than simple cessation of offending. Defining desistance raises as many questions as there are answers - is desistance a reduction in the frequency of offending? or the seriousness? (Bushway et al, 2001). How many years of non-offending are required until desistance can be assumed? (Bushway et al., 2001; Laub & Sampson, 2001, 2003; Maruna, 2001; Piquero, Farrington & Blumstein, 2003), or, can desistance only be ensured upon death? (Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 1989; Farrington &Wikström, 1994; Maruna, 2001).

Meisenhelder's (1977) early work referred to desistance as 'exiting', relating this concept to disengagement from a subjectively recognised pattern of criminal behaviour. Uggen and Kruttschnitt (1998) refer to behavioural desistance, which implies a shift from a state of offending to a state of non-offending and its maintenance. Laub and Sampson (2001: 11) refer to termination as "the time at which criminal activity stops", and desistance as "the causal process that supports the termination of offending", which "maintains the continued state of nonoffending". Indeed, the academic consensus proposes that desistance should be perceived as a gradual process requiring maintenance, rather than simple termination (Kazemian, 2007). Maruna and Farrall (2004) identify two forms of desistance - primary and secondary. Primary desistance refers to a lull or a crime free gap in a criminal career, whilst secondary desistance, the type of interest to researchers, is "the movement from the behaviour of non-offending to the assumption of a role or identity of a non-offender" (2004: 175). For the purpose of the current study, desistance is defined as no further self-reported sexual offending since participants' most recent custodial sentence.

## 2.2 Desistance from non-sexual offending

According to McNeill et al (2012) the earliest identifiable empirical work on desistance from crime was conducted by Goring (1919, cited in McNeill et al, 2012) and proposed 'maturational reform', a natural process whereby individuals matured out of criminal behaviour. Subsequently, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1937) found support for maturational reform from their longitudinal large scale American study involving a sample of 500 convicted delinquent males[4] and a matched control sample of non-delinquent males. Research into desistance from crime has gained momentum over the last few decades, and, whilst age remains a useful predictor of desistance (McNeill et al, 2012), other factors have been identified as important within the process. Sampson and Laub (1993) highlight the necessity of informal social controls, whilst others have developed the research agenda further to propose that external factors alone are insufficient without the individual's own agentic input. Maruna's (2001) findings indicate the significance of a changed identity, a factor also important within Giodarno et al's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation. The current consensus emphasises the importance of both internal and external factors in the desistance process, leading to theoretical developments which integrate the two.

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[4] Offence types unspecified.

### 2.2.1 Ageing and maturation

The age-crime curve is a consistently universal finding across western populations. This identifies that offending peaks in adolescence and declines in the early twenties (Farrington, 1986). Differences in the age-crime curve in boys and girls have been identified, with boys peaking later than girls (Farrington, 1986). Violent offenders tend to peak later than property offenders (Piquero, Hawkins & Kazemian, 2012), and, as the previous chapter highlighted, sexual offenders tend to continue their offending careers until later in life than non-sexual offenders. As previously noted in relation to sexual offenders, there are also few convincing explanations for the age-crime curve in non-sexual offenders (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1995; Moffitt, 1993). Further to their identification of maturational reform (Glueck & Glueck, 1937), the Gluecks (1945) sought to develop the concept of maturation further to propose that, rather than the importance of chronological age, the concept of psychological maturation significantly influenced behaviour change. However, as Maruna notes (2001: 34), "…the Gluecks left this notion of 'maturity' dangerously vague, and their explanation was deemed tautological" (Wootton, 1959: 164, cited in Maruna, 2001: 34).

Shover's (1983; 1985) identification of the 'criminal calculus' developed the mechanisms underpinning the age-crime curve further. Reminiscent of the Gluecks' (1945) claim that psychological maturation, rather than biological ageing, underpins maturational reform, Shover saliently argued that accompany ageing is the significance of changes in "identity, self-concept and the framework employed to judge oneself and others" (Shover, 1983: 208). Thirty-six ageing property offenders who had previously served prison sentences were the subjects of Shover's conclusions. Shifts in identity were significant, as the men, in their thirties and forties, "…decided that their earlier identity and behaviour were of limited value for constructing the future" (Shover, 1983: 211). Influential in respondents' identity shifts were the meaningful social ties they had established to a woman or a job, which they did not wish to jeopardise by engaging in further crime. Furthermore, having grown tired of the consequences of crime, prison also served as a deterrent. Whilst Shover's account of desistance from non-sexual crime can be viewed as an early integrated theory of desistance in acknowledging the important interaction of social and subjective factors, the 'criminal calculus' is significant in providing an explanation for ageing out of criminal behaviour.

A number of studies have identified a small group of chronic offenders who continue to commit crime at high rates into later life (West & Farrington, 1977; Moffit, 1993; Farrington & Wikstrom, 1994). Moffitt (1993) explored this phenomenon further, identifying a dual taxonomy of 'adolescent limited delinquents' and a small group of 'life-course persistent

delinquents', the latter who began to display anti-social behaviour in childhood and continued such behaviour into adulthood. This finding led Moffitt (1993) to propose an explanation for adolescent limited delinquency, suggesting that young people engage in antisocial behaviour in situations in which this is profitable, where it may serve an instrumental function. Relating their behaviour to learning theory, antisocial or delinquent behaviour allows the young person to assert their independence and prove their maturity. Provoking a response from adults in authority reinforces the young person's delinquent behaviour. The adolescent limited delinquent is however, also able to present a prosocial attitude when this serves them beneficially. Life-course persistent antisocial behaviour was related by Moffitt (1993) to result from the interaction of neuropsychological problems and criminological environments, culminating in a pathological personality inclined towards persistent offending.

The life-course perspective offers additional explanations for the ageing-out of criminal behaviour. This explores an individual's life history to identify how early events influence future decisions or events. It focuses on situating the individual within the collective context, given that human lives are linked to the lives of those around us (Elder, 1985) and are influenced by both culture and structural conditions (Mayer, 2009). Trajectories, conceptually incorporated within the life course perspective, incorporate long term patterns of behaviour marked by a sequence of life events (Elder, 1985), which can exhibit both change and stability depending on whether they are interrupted by transitions (Sampson & Laub, 1990). The latter evolve over shorter time periods and involve events such as marriage or obtaining employment (Ezell & Cohen, 2005). Transitions are embedded in trajectories and can act as a 'turning point' as they may serve to redirect the course of a trajectory (Elder, 1985).

Chapter One highlighted that the sexual recidivism rates of CSOs are relatively low in comparison to recidivism in non-sexual offenders. Decreasing sexual recidivism in CSOs is demonstrated from around the age of 45 upwards (Langan et al, 2003). Explanations of declining testosterone to account for reduced recidivism with ageing are not particularly convincing and thus, if the present study indicates that ageing out of crime underpins CSO desistance, it is necessary to explore the mechanisms underpinning this. Shover's (1983; 1985) identification of the 'criminal calculus' provides a convincing explanation for the decline in offending in a sample of ageing property offenders. Ceasing to commit crime was underpinned by changes in identity and self-concept which accompanied ageing, together with the establishment of social ties to a woman or a job, factors which the desistance literature identifies as significant. The significance of social factors in desistance is explored further in the following section.

### 2.2.2 Informal social control

Meisenhelder's (1977) early research exploring property offenders exiting[5] from crime, found the deterrent effect of prison to be powerful, together with the establishment of social bonds providing meaningful attachments.  The importance of informal social controls such as a 'good job', or investments in intimate and familial relationships was emphasised.  Meisenhelder also identified that the final phase of exiting required symbolic 'certification' – verification of the individual's 'reform' by a non-criminal.  This was significant in acknowledging the individual's change and provided for the achievement of a non-criminal social identity.

The significance of informal social controls in desistance is also emphasised in the work of Sampson and Laub (1993) whose *age-graded theory of informal social control* was developed following their reanalysis of original quantitative and qualitative data gathered by American criminologists Eleanor and Sheldon Glueck (1937). This theory is underpinned by the life course perspective and its "…strong assumption that prior life history has strong impacts on later life outcome" (Mayer, 2009: 414). Drawing on Hirschi's (1969) control theory, whereby weakened bonds to society result in crime and delinquency, Sampson and Laub (1993) suggest that less crime and deviance result when adult ties to work and family are strong.  According to their theory, those committing crime as adults (aged 25-45) do so due to their inability to re-establish bonds to society.  Those who develop bonds before adolescence, at adolescence, or in adulthood will no longer engage in criminal behaviour due to the influence of informal social controls.  The theory therefore emphasises the quality or strength of social ties more so than the occurrence or timing of life events.  Despite differences in early childhood experiences, adult social bonds to work and family had similar consequences for the life trajectories of the sample. Reflecting the significance of the life-course perspective, Sampson and Laub (1993) argue that 'turning points', in serving to redirect trajectories, are crucial to understanding desistance.  They suggest that triggering life events such as the military and parenthood can also modify life trajectories.  However they argue that marriage alone is insufficient to provide social capital.  A strong attachment to a spouse combined with close emotional ties are necessary to create a social bond which leads to a reduction in deviant behaviour.  Similarly, the nature of employment must be important to the individual in order to influence desistance, hence, the *meaning* of the structural element to the individual is important in order to result in informal social control.  Sampson and Laub (1993) also consider the influence of formal social control in the form of incarceration, arguing that this is likely to be criminogenic by limiting the acquisition of social capital.

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[5] 'Exiting' is referred to throughout Meisenhelder's paper, rather than desistance.

Laub and Sampson's (2001) subsequent work was developed to incorporate the role of human agency in constructing the choices and life course taken by the individual. Resulting from interviews with 52 men approaching the age of 70 (from the Gluecks' original sample), the concept of 'knifing off' is introduced as a central element in the desistance process. This allows offenders to extract themselves from their immediate environment through a 'turning point' such as marriage or military service. Laub and Sampson (2003) later argued that the desistance process also involves human agency and choice as embedded in social structures. A commitment by the offender is necessary, even if their actions to desist are below the surface of active consciousness, which is referred to as "desistance by default" (Laub & Sampson, 2003: 278-9). Multiple pathways to desistance are proposed, but emphasis is attributed to "self-described turning points" (Laub & Sampson, 2003: 278) which facilitate desistance and serve as a catalyst for long-term behaviour change. However, although turning points are frequently envisioned as positive events, negative turning points can redirect a trajectory onto a more maladaptive path (Ezell & Cohen, 2005). For example, a male adult criminal marrying into an unstable, conflict riddled relationship has the potential to increase his rate of criminal activity (Ezell & Cohen, 2005), thus serving as a negative turning point.

In a subsequent paper, Sampson and Laub (2005) acknowledge that their previous work had conceptualised turning points as singular, sometimes rare events, when in fact many important life events are repeating in nature. The mechanisms associated with marriage are not constant and vary over time as people may enter and exit marriage. Therefore, in dynamic terms marriage is not seen as a single turning point but part of a potential causal dynamic over the life course. Emphasising the role of human agency, Sampson and Laub (2005: 37) argued that a new sense of self and identity as a desister from crime emerged through what is termed "transformative action". The authors state that their data clearly show that agency is crucial to explaining desistance and that this is a challenge for future work on life-course criminology. However, as Bottoms (2006) notes, they fail to elaborate as to how the concept of human agency should be understood or utilised in order to aid understanding of desistance.

Sampson and Laub's research was conducted with a sample comprised entirely of white male offenders maturing into adulthood during the 1950's. Although the sample size was large and also involved a similarly matched control group, the findings and the theory which derived from them may not be generalisable to all offenders, and may be specific to the historical period in which the Gluecks' research was conducted. Furthermore, this theory fails to explain desistance from crime in individuals who do not receive exposure to prosocial experiences such as marriage or job opportunities. Further to exploring the external factors significant to desistance

in this section, the following section presents empirical work and theorising of desistance with the primary focus on the subjective factors involved.

### 2.2.3 Agency, identity and cognition

The explanations of desistance presented below focus primarily on the internal (re)sources underpinning desistance, although the role of external sources is also acknowledged. Aiming to supplement research on the structural correlates and predictors of desistance, Maruna's (2001) Liverpool Desistance Study sought to examine the common psychosocial structure underlying ex-offender narratives in order to outline a phenomenology of desistance. The psychosocial, or socio-cognitive, approach seeks to explore both the psychological and social elements underlying behaviour and may therefore be argued to offer a more complete understanding of desistance than research which neglects examination of one of these elements. Maruna (2001:8) justifies his choice of narrative research methodology by acknowledging that such a method "…makes it possible to empirically examine the cognitive mediators between…environmental influences and individual behaviour".

To facilitate the contrasting of thought patterns, personal beliefs, self-perspective and outlook of desisters from persisters, Maruna recruited two carefully matched samples of participants with a mean age of 30; those actively involved in criminal behaviour and those actively desisting. All participants were defined as 'career criminals', having committed crime on at least a weekly basis over a period of at least two years. Participants were or had engaged in crimes such as burglary, car theft, and drug sales, with a small percentage engaging in more violent offences such as armed robbery and assault. Those defined as desisters had 12 months of drug-free, crime-free and arrest-free behaviour. Almost all participants admitted to regular drug use at some point in their lives. The sample comprised men and women; 30 were classified as desisting and 20 persisting.

Two common types of personal narratives emerged. Striking differences were apparent in the narratives of the desisters and the persisters, leading Maruna to define the former as 'redemption scripts' (or recovery stories) and the latter 'condemnation scripts'. The scripts of desisting offenders were not simply the opposite of the active offenders' scripts but contained a number of fundamental differences. Desisters' accounts were underpinned by a sense of optimism; they attempted to characterize their 'true selves' by emphasising that 'deep down' they were good people. They often made reference to generative pursuits, which seemed to address the emptiness left by criminal behaviour. Volunteering and mentoring was common to almost every desisting narrative, as ex-offenders made reference to wanting to help others and to use

their experiences of a criminal lifestyle to stop others from following the same path. This desire to be productive and give something back to society appeared to play an important role in the desistance process. Maruna suggests that generative behaviours can provide therapeutic value, a factor recognised by the Twelve Step programme in Alcoholics Anonymous. Generative pursuits can be empowering and help to maintain reform through fulfilment (by providing alternative meaning and achievement); exoneration (their own sense of guilt or shame is relieved by helping others); and legitimacy (achieved by helping others to stop offending).

In contrast to the desisters' optimistic narratives, the active offenders' accounts were pessimistic. The feeling of having little power to change, together with the shared sense of being doomed to their life situation were common recurrent themes. Persisters appeared to have resigned themselves to being a victim of circumstance and believed they had little chance of achieving success. The 'language of agency' (Maruna, 2001: 76) noted in the redemption scripts of ex-offenders was five times less likely to be present in the condemnation scripts of active offenders, who were unlikely to search for meaning in life. The concept of turning points is incorporated into Maruna's interviews, however, he concludes that "...their value to the understanding of desistance has probably been overstated" (2001: 25). Whilst acknowledging their potential to serve important symbolic and psychological functions, Maruna notes that what may serve as one person's reason for giving up crime may be another's reason for continuation of offending, as "...nothing inherent in a situation makes it a turning point" (2001: 25).

Others also question the value of the turning point concept. Gadd and Farrall (2004) argue that the strength of argument regarding turning points has generally emerged through quantitative data, hence it may be methodological effects which indicate that turning points are salient within desistance, due to absences in the information gathered. Carlsson (2012) notes that life course processes and the turning points within them are often interdependent and emerge in context specific circumstances. As such, turning points should be viewed not as a singular event but a process which interacts with other elements of the desistance process. Individuals are perhaps unlikely to recognise at the time that a particular source/event serves as turning point which redirects their life, but rather something which is recognised retrospectively. Thus, the significance of turning points is more likely to emerge from retrospective accounts. Laub and Sampson (2003: 134) explicitly asked interviewees about "any important turning points" which may serve as a leading question which respondents take up and use to construct their narrative (Carlsson, 2012).

Although acknowledging the personal agency involved in the 'knifing off' concept introduced by Laub and Sampson (2001), Maruna asserts that the common format of desisters' narratives is

more akin to 'making good' than 'knifing off'. He argues that desisting ex-offenders do not try to amputate their troubled past by rejecting its existence, but rather they tend to believe they have always been a good person who was ultimately "able to accomplish what he or she was 'always meant to do'" (2001: 87). Thus, Maruna proposes that 'making good' reflects a process of self-construction rather than 'amputation'.

Desisters' accounts were highly positive and featured recurring themes with striking regularity. Their narrative accounts implied a sense of moral superiority over those who had not experienced crime and gone straight. Rather than expressing shame and guilt over their previous criminal behaviour, desisters tended to make excuses, often blaming their circumstances (such as addiction, social situation or delinquent friends) for their previous behaviour. Thus, in common with persisters' condemnation scripts, desisters' narratives also incorporated the 'victim of society', however, the desisters had achieved the "…help of some outside force, someone who 'believed in' the ex-offender", which enabled them to "accomplish what he or she was 'always meant to do'" (Maruna, 2001: 87). Ultimately, "newly empowered, he or she now also seeks to 'give something back' to society as a display of gratitude" which Maruna terms "the process of 'making good'" (2001: 87). The ex-offenders tended to refer to an organisation, philosophy/religion, or special individual as the catalyst for change, which appeared to have helped them acknowledge their own personal value and allow desistance to come "from within" (2001: 96). Desisters' narratives often involved the significance of 'redemption rituals', whereby reintegration and acknowledgement of reform by judges, family members and others in the form of a social ritual allows ex-offenders to be formally and symbolically accepted by significant others, and indeed, themselves. Furthermore, Maruna finds support for Meisenhelder's (1977) finding that 'certification' of the individual's reform by a non-criminal serves a beneficial de-labelling process which reinforces the individual's new identity.

Given that the vast majority of Maruna's (2001) participants were ex-drug users, engaged in crimes such as selling drugs, burglary and stealing cars, their subjective accounts may be peculiar to this type of ex-offender. Gadd (2003) argues that the psychosocial approach should involve greater focus on the examination of selfhood, identity and subjectivity. He suggests that Maruna may have added further weight to his analysis by conducting an "in-depth deconstruction of the subjectivity of any one of the ex-offenders he interviewed" (Gadd, 2003: 320) in order to understand the "subtle psychosocial differences between offenders and non

offenders" (2003: 319).[6]  Furthermore, Graham and Bowling (1995) argue that retrospective accounts of desistance may lack accuracy due to their dependence on memory.  However, Maruna notes that although the narratives collected are largely retrospective accounts of past events, the study itself is not retrospective, due to the desisters "…actively making good or going straight right before my eyes as I interviewed them" (2001: 38).  Ex-offending participants implied that desistance was ongoing work in progress, referring to themselves as "going straight", "making good", or "going legit" (2001: 26), leading Maruna to conceptualise desistance as a maintenance process.  Ex-offenders participating in the Liverpool Desistance Study's focus groups rejected the term 'rehabilitation' in favour of 'recovery', the linguistic implications of which Maruna believes to be significant: "A person can be rehabilitated by a program or by a treatment professional, yet recovery is an individual, agentic and purposeful process" (2001: 26).

Despite criticisms of Maruna's (2001) work, it is argued to provide a significant contribution to preceding work on desistance which placed greater weight on external factors.  Whilst the Liverpool Desistance Study confirmed that external factors are important in the desistance process, it also offered a breakthrough in establishing the significant role of agency in facilitating and maintaining desistance.  The redemption scripts (or recovery stories) of ex-offenders displayed a strong sense of agency and allowed them to rewrite their shameful pasts into a positive and productive current and future life.  The common themes within such narratives illustrate the necessity for ex-offenders to have a logical, respectable and believable story of who they are and why they are going straight to convince themselves and others that this is real change.  Maruna's analysis therefore reflects the necessity of exploring both internal and external factors in order to provide a comprehensive account of the desistance process.

The importance of a changed identity in desistance is reinforced by Giodarno et al's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation which emphasises the fundamental nature of cognitive shifts in desistance. Whilst acknowledging that social control is likely to be of importance in desistance, Giodarno and colleagues note that this fails to account for the role of the 'up-front' work accomplished by actors themselves and thus argue the necessity of theorising "…a more reciprocal relationship between actor and environment…" (2002: 999).  The theory of cognitive transformation begins with a shift in the actor's basic openness to change.  Secondly, and highlighting the interplay between internal and external sources in desistance, the subsequent

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[6] Gadd's approach to the 'psychosocial' differs somewhat to that of Maruna.  Gadd and Farrall (2004) propose that exploration of the "…psychosocial interface, where structure and agency intersect…", is not best achieved by the content analysis approach employed by Maruna (2001), but rather, in agreement with the psychoanalytical approach of Hollway and Jefferson (2000; in Gadd & Farrall, 2004: 131), requires "…in-depth case analysis that is sensitive to the *latent* or *unconscious* meanings of respondents' narratives including all the absences, contradictions and avoidances intrinsic to them" (Gadd & Farrall, 2004: 131, emphasis in original).

cognitive shift involves exposure to prosocial environmental elements that serve as a catalyst for change. Termed 'hooks for change', and perhaps not dissimilar to the concept of turning points (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Maruna, 2001), these may involve a new job or commitment to a relationship, which must be viewed as a positive development and also regarded as incompatible with deviant behaviour.

In the third part of the transformation process, and necessary for sustained behaviour change, the actor must envisage a new identity, an appealing and conventional 'replacement self' to replace their previous criminal identity. The desistance process is complete when this replacement identity has developed, to the extent that the individual views their previous identity as being negative, irrelevant and incompatible with their new self. This theory of cognitive transformation thus proposes that "Both cognitive shifts and the agentic moves that connect to them will be associated with sustained behavioural change" (Giodarno et al, 2002: 1003).

The theory of cognitive transformation can account for individuals who experience change in environmental circumstances such as job loss or divorce without reverting to criminal behaviour, as the 'solid replacement self' becomes fully developed and prevents the individual from returning to their previous deviant lifestyle. Giodarno et al's (2002) theory addresses the limitations apparent in Sampson and Laub's (1993) theory of informal social control by developing the concept of 'transformative action' referred to by Laub and Sampson (2001:50). Indeed Giodarno et al suggest that their qualitative data analyses have led them to "…a different overall perspective on the desistance process, one which we wish to distinguish from a control approach" (2002: 998).

The role of identity change in desistance is emphasised in Vaughan's (2007) 'internal narrative of desistance'. Although acknowledging that external sources are also implicated in desistance, Vaughan suggests that the process begins with 'discernment', which involves a review of possible lifestyle choices. Secondly, 'deliberation' involves reviewing the pros and cons of various options - "who one is and who one wishes to be" (2007: 394). The third and final part in the sequence of the 'internal conversation' relates to 'dedication', a commitment to a new non-criminal identity which is incompatible with ongoing criminality.

The importance of conventional identity formation in desistance is also supported by Paternoster and Bushway (2009) who propose that their identity theory of desistance contributes to and complements existing theoretical arguments in being "...more cognitive and individualistic than some..." (2009: 1103). This theory of desistance proposes that "offenders

have 'working selves' as criminal offenders with a set of preferences and social networks consistent with that self" (2009: 1103). In addition to the working self, there is a future self, whom the person wishes to become, together with anxiety over what they fear they may become - the 'feared self'. Whilst the authors acknowledge that both structural influences and human agency are necessary in desistance, they believe that the initial motivation for change arises when the individual experiences anxiety over becoming the 'feared self'. This leads to "a change in preferences and social networks that stabilize the newly emerging self" (2009: 1103). The change in identity is thus driven by 'avoidant motives' of not becoming the 'feared self' (2009: 1126). The movement towards becoming a more conformist individual is assisted by a change in preference and social networks, said to occur following the change in identity.

In contrast to Giodarno et al's (2002) theory, which implies that the early stages of desistance involve the individual making a rational choice through consideration of the costs and benefits of crime continuation, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) propose it is purely the disadvantages of crime continuation that the individual begins to consider. Whilst acknowledging that their theory requires empirical development, Paternoster and Bushway suggest that an evolving awareness of the costs of crime gradually, over time, results in the 'crystallisation of discontent' (2009: 1103), which provides the initial motivation to change the self. This theory thus proposes that the role of agency provides the impetus for change to a "...new, conventional identity" (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009: 1106), following which networks of prosocial others are deliberately and intentionally sought.

Although acknowledging similarities with the work of Giodarno et al (2002), Paternoster and Bushway suggest that the theory of cognitive transformation, in stressing "...the influence of social processes...in developing the motive to change" (2009: 1106) thus differs from their theory of the 'feared self', which is "more cognitive, internal and individual" (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009: 1106). They believe their theory to be more compatible with Maruna's (2001) and Farrall's (2005) position that "sustained desistance most likely requires a fundamental and *intentional* shift in a person's sense of self" (2009: 1107), therefore implying that Giodarno et al's (2002) theory involves unintentional self-change. Arguably, Giodarno et al's (2002) provision of narrative extracts and their accompanying analysis indicate that the first cognitive shift in the process is a conscious one. Whilst these theoretical approaches provide useful explanations for desistance from non-sexual offending, desistance from sexual offending is perhaps more likely to involve an intentional shift in the individual's sense of self, given that this offender type is subject to intense stigma.

Noting similarities with Maruna's (2001) findings, Paternoster and Bushway (2009) state that the two theories involve important differences. Maruna's desisting participants appeared to have prosocial views of themselves in the present and have cognitively distorted their interpretation of their criminal pasts in order to align with their present self. Maruna's desisters did not appear to have created new, more conventional identities in order to provide the motivation for change, in contrast to Paternoster and Bushway's theory.

Although points of convergence with Giodarno et al's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation are apparent in Paternoster and Bushway's theory, the latter differs in proposing that the individual's new identity is formed prior to accessing structural supports, thus providing an additional contribution to the potential mechanisms involved in the desistance process. However, it is acknowledged that the theory requires empirical testing and that what remains to be addressed are "…conceptual questions such as exactly what human agency is, what its dimensions are and how it can be operationalized" (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009: 1154).

The value of existential sociology to the study of desistance is highlighted by Farrall (2005: 368), who notes that:

> …existentialism captures the 'internal' changes in self-identity and the processes which foster such changes, but does not lose sight of the wider social world and the problems which it can create for those wishing to desist.

Put simply, existential sociology may aid understanding of desistance by exploring the meaning of being to an individual located within the wider world, given that human beings do not exist in a vacuum. It thus appears to be a useful position through which to explore changes in the criminal career, involving "transformations in self-identity which occur as individuals move from one social setting or institution to another, or adapt to new social roles" (Farrall, 2005: 369). Citing the work of Giodarno et al (2002) and Maruna (2001), Farrall notes that such theories of desistance have begun to "echo some of the core interests of existentialism" (2005: 373). The concept of existentialism is evident in Giodarno et al's (2002) theory as this proposes that desistance proceeds through four stages to result in "transforming the way the actor views deviant behaviour" (Farrall, 2005: 373), and Maruna's (2001) research which found that desistance was "an internal process which enabled the 'real me' to emerge" (Farrall, 2005: 373).

In order to illustrate how the application of an existential focus can aid understanding of the desistance process, Farrall (2005) presents a case study of 'Sandra', a respondent in his longitudinal research who participated in seven interviews. Farrall (2005) notes that at the time of Sandra's first interview, shortly after commencing probation supervision, life was lacking positive meaning. Sandra felt she deserved a more severe penalty for her crimes and that her

parents did not love her. She did not seem to like 'being Sandra' and could not imagine a future for herself. Subsequent interviews revealed a gradual change in Sandra who slowly started to see a 'future Sandra', who said she had begun to blame herself less and had accepted that she was allowed to be happy. She gained a new job which she described as a "blessing" (2005: 376). Sandra became more positive about life and her confidence gradually increased as she saw herself as a valued employee, which led to improvements in her personal relationships. Sandra ultimately transformed her sense of self and "found a new way of 'being Sandra'" (2005: 380). Paternoster and Bushway's theory of desistance highlights the influence of existential sociology in its focus on human meaning within social contexts. It may also explain Sandra's desistance - Sandra, although perhaps not necessarily wishing to avoid a future feared self, appeared to wish to leave behind her old identity and create a new one. CSOs are likely to experience the damaging effects of stigmatisation upon their sense of self and thus, may already *be* their 'feared self', which serves as the motivation to desist from further crime, rather than the desire to avoid *becoming* their 'feared self' in the future.

Explanations of desistance from non-sexual offending discussed in this section predominantly focus on the role of either structural or agentic factors in the desistance process, but also acknowledge the role of both. Attention is turned in the following section to integrated theories of desistance from non-sexual offending which emphasise the interplay of both structure and agency.

### 2.2.4 Integrated theories

The theories of desistance discussed in this section aim to integrate structural and agentic factors into a coherent explanation of the desistance process and are thus termed 'integrated theories'.[7] The chronology of the internal and external factors in the desistance process are also explored by several authors.

Farrall and Bowling (1999) highlight the limitations of desistance research prioritising either individual agency or social structure, and argue that the desistance process should be understood as: "...an *interplay* between individual choices, and a range of wider social forces, institutional and societal practices which are beyond the control of the individual" (1999: 261, emphasis in original).

Bottoms et al's (2004: 372) 'integrated theory' of desistance is proposed as "an approach that gives proper weight to *both* structure *and* agency, in continuous interaction" (emphasis in

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[7] The term 'integrated theories' is borrowed from Farrall and Bowling (1999).

original). Based on early stages of longitudinal research (The Sheffield Desistance Study) exploring desistance in 113 young male recidivists with convictions for standard list offences,[8] Bottoms et al (2004) question whether conscious awareness of change is apparent as it occurs in desistance. The longitudinal research with young recidivists allows for exploration of this, through which potential dynamic mechanisms are considered, with three possibilities identified:

- cognitive reorientation and a conformist self-identity may arise out of meaningful social attachments, perhaps initially subconsciously
- an external effect could trigger some cognitive reorientation which in turn could lead to more meaningful social attachments, involving conscious initial agency
- a complex set of circumstances involving both of the aforementioned mechanisms.

Reflecting the relapse prevention element of sex offender treatment programmes and the motivation required to avoid criminal temptation, the concept of diachronic self-control is argued by Shapland and Bottoms (2011) to be significant in desistance. This concept was identified in the later stages of interviews with young adult male recidivists in the longitudinal Sheffield Desistance Study. The young men often displayed conformist values with reference to future aspirations and their desire to refrain from criminality, however, these values were often not reflected in their continued offending. This dissonance was explained by lapses into learned criminal responses or invitations to offend by criminal friends - the lure of temptation. Shapland and Bottoms (2011: 273) suggest that tactics of diachronic self-control were adopted to avoid future situations of criminal temptation whereby "…those determined to try to desist slowly manage to change their lifestyles so that such temptations no longer confront them so often". CSO desistance is likely to involve diachronic self-control which aligns closely with the relapse prevention element of treatment programmes, through which the individual learns to avoid places or activities which may lead to relapse.

The Oxford recidivism study (LeBel et al, 2008) adopted a longitudinal approach involving a sample of 130 male property offenders to explore the temporal ordering of social and subjective factors in the desistance process. Interviews explored themes apparent in previous desistance research including: self-efficacy, shame and remorse, internalising stigma, and alternative identities. Confirming that a social-subjective model provides the most accurate explanation of desistance, LeBel et al's findings indicated that subjective changes including individual cognitions and meaning systems prior to release from prison "may precede life-changing

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[8] "The category of standard list offences does not include most motoring offences, nor minor summary offences. For this sample, the main offences included were theft, burglary, damage, fraud, violence, robbery and drug dealing. Sex offences are also included in the standard list category, but were very rare among this sample" (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011: 277).

structural events and, to that extent, individuals can act as agents of their own change" (2008: 155). LeBel et al (2008) suggest that the notion of self-efficacy is important in desistance and appears to equip individuals with the ability to weather setbacks, which prevents weakening and reverting to crime. In common with Maruna's (2001) persisters' scripts, LeBel and colleagues found that those who expressed feelings of internal stigmatisation and doom prior to prison release were more likely to be reconvicted. LeBel et al's findings are comparable with Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) theory in identifying internal factors as the initial drivers of desistance. LeBel et al's (2008) emphasis on the importance of cognitions and meaning systems also highlights similarities with the findings of Maruna (2001) and Giodarno et al (2002).

Other authors attempt to delineate the chronology of subjective and social factors in desistance. Bottoms and Shapland (2011) identified that desistance begins with a triggering event which leads to a desire to change. Further to this the individual begins to think differently about both themselves and their surroundings, leading to action towards desistance. Temptations may intervene in the maintenance of desistance. In order to overcome these, the individual finds reinforcers and ultimately realises a non-offending identity. Farrall and colleagues' (2011) integrated perspective focused on the influence of structural and individual level influences in desistance and suggested that interaction of these is unlikely to follow the same course in all individuals.

This section has explored several explanations of desistance from non-sexual offending which acknowledge the role of both internal and external factors in the process. The temporal ordering of these subjective and social factors however, is currently inconclusive, although may differ amongst individuals. The following section explores empirical studies exploring desistance from sexual offending.

### *2.3 Desistance from sexual offending*

As previously noted, empirical research with the explicit aim of exploring desistance in sexual offenders is limited, beginning with Kruttschnitt et al's (2000) quantitative study. In recent years a small body of empirical research and a comprehensive theory of desistance have emerged. This section explores these findings which include studies of mixed types of CSOs and also those focusing solely on offenders targeting child victims. Given the heterogeneous nature of sexual offenders and the potentially unique desistance trajectories in offending against adults versus children (Laws & Ward, 2011), studies focusing on desistance from child sexual abuse hold greater relevance to the present project. Attention is then turned to the Good Lives Model, a model of rehabilitation, which is incorporated into theorising of desistance from

sexual offending. Further to this, an approach to assessment and intervention with sexual offenders is discussed prior to presentation of the only apparent theoretical explanation of desistance from sexual crime (Göbbels et al, 2012). The penultimate section of this chapter explores deterrence theory and its potential relevance to desistance. Linking with deterrence, rational choice theory is examined, together with empirical research underpinned by this theory, both in non-sexual and sexual offenders. Theories of compliance with community orders offer a useful framework for exploring desistance from sexual offending and conclude the section. The final section draws together the chapter and presents a lens through which to explore desistance from sexual offending.

### 2.3.1 Empirical accounts

Kruttschnitt and colleagues' (2000) empirical US study explored the roles of formal and informal social control in desistance from sexual offending. Their quantitative approach involved a sample of 556 mixed sex offender types on probation, 66% of whom had victimised children. Formal social controls are defined as 'criminal justice sanctions', which include "treatment strategies and incapacitation policies" (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000: 66), such as probation supervision and sex offender treatment. The informal social controls explored included marriage and employment. The authors concluded that a combination of stable employment and sex offender treatment programmes appeared to reduce the risk of sexual reoffending and thus, the combined effects of formal and informal social controls aid desistance from sexual crime. During the five-year follow up period, 5.6% reoffended with a new sexual offence. Kruttschnitt et al (2000) therefore claim that their findings provide partial support for Sampson and Laub's (1993) age-graded theory of informal social control, given that participants' offending trajectories were altered when stable employment was secured, but marriage exerted virtually no effect. The absence of a marriage effect in this sample may result from a methodological artefact, as the quantitative method excluded assessment of the quality and duration of the relationship, which studies have shown to be of significance in desistance from non-sexual offending (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Rutter, 1996).

Whilst not explicitly exploring desistance, Brogden and Harkin's (2000) qualitative study examined the effects of 'community controls' on 28 CSOs with child victims in the UK. The authors defined three types of controls to which such offenders are subject when living in the community. Formal social controls are said to refer to legal controls including the SOR and Community Service Orders. 'Professional codes' form the second type of control explored. These are said to be 'codes' internalised from treatment programmes, such as techniques of relapse prevention. Brogden and Harkin (2000: 47) state that due to internalisation of these

'codes', "…offenders refrain from certain behaviour even when not legally prohibited, appreciating that it might precipitate re-offending". The third type of community control relates to the informal controls exercised by familial and community networks, including wives/partners, family relationships, interaction with friends, neighbours and locals. The effect of housing and employment on 'rule maintenance' is also considered.

Reminiscent of the work of Sampson and Laub (1993), Brogden and Harkin (2000) hypothesised that positive relation bonds discourage reoffending, as ex-offenders wish to avoid the removal of affective relations by significant others, and thus refrain from further offending. Findings from the life history approach indicated that, in the few whose romantic relationships survived the conviction, CSOs' partners became the first line monitor of their behaviour. Whilst treatment programmes encouraged individuals to seek new social networks, this was avoided due to the fear of discovery of their offending history and potential violent reactions. Respondents were also fearful of associating with others who had children (reflecting the 'professional codes' to which the authors refer to as the second type of control). As such, Brogden and Harkin (2000: 56) suggest that "control is secured through sanctions relating to the fear of revelation of convictions". The informal control of employment proved difficult for respondents to secure - only a quarter of the sample were employed. Most participants were socially isolated and led unfulfilling lives. The authors conclude that non-offending was due to pressure from partners, families, and the local community rather than to the other two sources of control. However, rather than the effects of social bonding preventing reoffending, Brogden and Harkin (2000) suggest that coercive practices were involved whereby significant others acted as a form of surveillance.

Farmer et al's (2012) qualitative study investigated the process of desistance by comparing two groups of child molesters undertaking sex offender treatment in the UK. The context of the treatment programme was not specified, however, the method of selecting participants (discussed below) indicates that treatment was being undertaken in a community setting. The authors failed to note whether participants had served prison sentences for their offence/s. The use of risk assessment tools to determine the presence or absence of dynamic risk factors identified the sample of five desisters and five (potentially) active offenders. Striking differences were revealed in narratives of the two groups, particularly in relation to the sense of agency apparent in the desisters' self-narratives, which demonstrated the ability to turn a negative into a positive, and also demonstrated belief in their own personal efficacy. Farmer et al (2012) equate agency with a high internal locus of control and contrast this with the external locus of control demonstrated by the (potentially) active group, who attributed events to external sources and were pessimistic for the future. All of the men in the desisting group

identified their turning point as attending sex offender treatment, suggested by Farmer et al to be their 'hook for change' (Giodarno et al, 2002). Desisters were also able to find a sense of communion through family, friends and the church, in contrast to the (potentially) active offenders who demonstrated a sense of alienation and appeared disconnected from social supports. Interestingly, four of the desisters' narratives indicated that there appeared to have been a time when they were more similar in attitudes and beliefs to the (potentially) active group, thus suggesting change. Transcripts were coded by Farmer et al using the pre-existing themes identified by Maruna (2001) which included redemption, generativity and agency, together with additional themes emerging from the transcripts. Perhaps in part due the methodological similarities, their findings resemble those of Maruna (2001). The limitations of their study were acknowledged by Farmer and colleagues, who noted that their use of predefined categories may have influenced the results and that the identification of persisters and desisters may not have necessarily been accurate. However, their finding of the value of sex offender treatment supports Kruttschnitt et al (2000). As Sampson and Laub (1993) argued, the experience of imprisonment may adversely affect the desistance process and thus it would be interesting to determine whether participants had been previously incarcerated.

Harris (2014) explored desistance in CSOs with adult and child victims. Conducted in America, this sample consisted of 21 participants undertaking sex offender treatment. All participants had previously been incarcerated for their offence and had since been residing in the community for periods ranging from six months to 15 years. Life history interviews produced narratives which were analysed using the themes identified in "three established desistance theories" (Harris, 2014: 1554), namely natural desistance, informal social control, and cognitive transformation, together with any additional emergent themes. Natural desistance is said to relate to abstinence from offending which occurs independently of formal or informal social control (Laws & Ward, 2011; Göbbels et al, 2012). Harris identified three participants as natural desisters, having apparently 'grown out' of crime and who were, perhaps ironically, amongst the youngest in the sample (aged 44-48). As discussed in Chapter One, CSO recidivism generally declines with increasing age. Various studies demonstrate reduced recidivism from the age of 45 (Langan et al, 2003), to others which find a decline from the age of 60 (Thornton, 2006), however, the mechanisms underpinning this remain unclear. Harris's natural desisters, rather than being 'specialist' sexual offenders, had engaged persistently in various offence types, and may therefore demonstrate offending trajectories more similar to non-sexual offenders, albeit ceasing to offend later than the age-crime curve demonstrates.

The remaining 18 participants in Harris's (2014) study demonstrated evidence of cognitive transformation, which proceeded on a continuum beginning with the recognition of harm caused

and followed by a desire to deeply understand the nature of their offending. The powerful impact of treatment was then highlighted in preparing the individual to live an offence free life. In those who had been released the longest, "a new identity was forming where redemption had been found or seemed within reach" (2014: 1566). Four participants had formed new relationships and only three had a job. Respondents discussed the barriers to employment experienced and the fact that they were unlikely to form a new romantic relationship due to their conviction/s. Harris (2014) suggests that informal social control had little influence in CSOs desistance given that many of the participants had the relevant social capital prior to their conviction, thus, she argues that social capital is largely irrelevant. However, given that previous desistance research (with non-sexual offenders) indicates that the strength of the bond and the meaning of the source of informal social control to be significant (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Rutter, 1996), informal social controls, combined with the desire to change and the internal resources to achieve this may prove influential in alternative samples of CSOs.

Whilst Harris's study is similar to the present study and offers valuable insights into desistance in CSOs, her sample differs in its focus on offenders with both adult and child victims. Given the acknowledged heterogeneity of sexual offenders (Kemshall & McIvor, 2004) and the observed differences between sex offenders of children and sex offenders of adults (Blumenthal et al, 1999) it is arguably important to study these separately due to the potential of differing desistance trajectories.

Farmer et al (2015) explored desistance in a sample of 25 desisting and seven persisting sexual offenders convicted of offences involving children and under the supervision of the probation service in England and Wales. Farmer et al imply that respondents had served prison sentences and been 'at risk' in the community for between three and five years. Desisters referred to their offending as situational and temporary, rather than the 'persisters' whose offending was pre-meditated and actively sought. The early stages of desistance involved the necessity of a positive sense of self, which was often achieved through a process of neutralisation. Rational choices were made as the disadvantages of crime continuation were realised. Some respondents expressed concern over being apprehended, whilst others recognised the harm they had caused. Detection and conviction carried a deterrent effect which initiated the process of cognitive transformation. Arrest had served as a turning point for some desisting respondents. Farmer et al suggest that parallels are drawn with the 'feared self' identity theory of desistance (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Respondents' 'offender' identities had become less satisfying; however, rather than the new identity serving as the catalyst for change as Paternoster and Bushway propose, Farmer and colleagues' sample "said they reverted to a previous, non-offending and conventional lifestyle" (2015: 328). Many of the desisters discussed the utility of

probation and were appreciative of probation officers' input. This, together with sex offender treatment, assisted respondents' desistance. Employment was also of significant benefit, providing happiness and life satisfaction, and also important for keeping occupied. Those whose relationships had continued despite their conviction acknowledged the importance of these significant others. However, Farmer and colleagues make little mention of the formation of new relationships for those whose previous relationship terminated following their conviction. Their findings highlight the significance of internal change in combination with external factors, including the utility of formal criminal justice such as probation supervision and sex offender treatment. However, whilst detection and conviction were said to serve a deterrent effect, no mention is made explicitly of the effects of imprisonment on CSOs' desistance (or if indeed participants had been incarcerated).

This section has explored the small body of empirical work relating to desistance from sexual offending, which highlights similar findings to the literature exploring desistance from non-sexual offending. The significance of cognitive change, the role of agency and, for some, the role of informal social control, are illustrated in the accounts discussed. Such findings are thus likely to be of relevance to desistance in the present sample of adult male child sex offenders. The following section considers models of interventions designed to promote rehabilitiation for CSOs.

### 2.3.2 Interventions for sexual offenders

This section focuses on rehabilitation frameworks for sexual offenders, beginning with the Good Lives Model (GLM), a strengths-based approach. Further to discussion of the latter, a model of assessment and treatment for CSOs (the GLM-D) is presented. This combines the GLM with desistance theory to provide a model which holds practice implications. Circles of Support and Accountability, an intervention for some high risk sexual offenders, are then discussed.

The GLM (Ward, 2002) is a strengths-based offender rehabilitation framework which takes a holistic approach based on the premise that human beings are naturally inclined to seek particular experiences or 'primary human goods', in order to achieve a sense of wellbeing. The retrospective nature of treatment programmes for sex offenders has been articulated by Raynor (2004: 212) as a 'deficit model' "which sees offenders as characterised primarily by deficiencies to be corrected and needs to be met by others". In contrast, the GLM's approach goal focus aims to provide individuals with the tools to achieve positive outcomes, thus focusing on what can be achieved rather than what must be avoided. Introduced by Australian psychologist, Tony

Ward, the GLM has been developed since its inception to currently include 11 primary goods (Willis et al, 2013). These include: relatedness (including romantic relationships but also familial relationships); community (connection to wider social groups); excellence in work; excellence in agency (involving autonomy and self-directedness); and inner peace (freedom from emotional turmoil and stress). These primary goods are secured by 'secondary goods' which relates to the means of achieving the primary good, such as work or relationships. Clearly some individuals will place greater weight on one 'good' over another and the model can incorporate this, thus making treatment more individualised. Criminal behaviour results when offenders seek primary goods in maladaptive ways. For example, the primary human good of relatedness may achieved by sexual offenders through sexual contact/intimacy with their victim.

Laws and Ward (2011: 212) note that the "GLM is a rehabilitation theory *not* a treatment program" but state that it does have significant practical implications for sex offender treatment. They developed the GLM further to incorporate desistance theory and termed this the GLM-D (Laws & Ward, 2011), a framework for the assessment and treatment of sexual offenders which aims to encourage desistance from sexual offending.

Tony Ward, in conjunction with Richard Laws, published '*Desistance from Sex Offending: Alternatives to throwing away the keys'* in 2011, the first book to explicitly address the topic of desistance from sexual offending. Whilst not based on empirical research per se, both authors have extensive clinical expertise from years of working with sex offenders. Noting the similarities of the GLM and theories of desistance, namely human agency and social capital, Laws and Ward (2011) propose an integrated framework of the GLM and Desistance theories (the GLM-D), focusing on the ideas of Laub and Sampson (2003) and Maruna (2001), which holds practice implications for encouraging desistance in sexual offenders. Arguing that treatment focusing on psychological factors is insufficient for sexual offenders who require support in obtaining social capital, Laws and Ward (2011) propose that the GLM-D model of treatment should involve an individualistic focus, with a comprehensive assessment and intervention plan, encouraging offenders to identify social and personal circumstances in their lives with the aim of connecting them with valued social and personal networks to assist them in building more fulfilling lives. The development of individuals' skills whilst undertaking GLM-D focused interventions can assist reintegration into the community, considered necessary to encouraging desistance. Both the theoretical perspectives of the GLM and desistance recognise offenders' value as human agents, and combined, can focus on achieving human goods in socially acceptable ways (Laws & Ward, 2011). Laws and Ward (2011) discuss 'practical identities' which are shaped by social, cultural, and personal experiences and are associated

with primary goods. Laws and Ward provide the example of the good of knowledge residing at the centre of a researcher's practical identity. Individuals will typically possess a number of practical identities although one will be of particular significance in reflecting the primary human good most heavily weighted by the person.

The GLM is suggested to complement and enhance the Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR) model and is particularly useful for improved client engagement (Willis et al, 2013). The approach of the GLM-D to the rehabilitation of sexual offenders is argued by Laws and Ward (2011) to promote constructive, more positive intervention options for sexual offenders than traditional RNR type programmes.

Reflecting a restorative justice approach to the reintegration of CSOs, Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) is a model of intervention to assist with monitoring and community reintegration of some high risk CSOs (Sacro, no date). The principles of restorative justice lie at the heart of CoSA, with their focus on mutual responsibility (Wilson & Hanvey, 2011). The individual is held accountable for their behaviour and its effects on others. CoSAs comprise a number of volunteers, ordinary members of the public with some training but no professional qualifications in the field, who work together with criminal justice agencies to support the 'core member' (the CSO) following his release from prison (Hanvey, Philpot & Wilson, 2011). CoSAs address external factors, in seeking to promote social inclusion, and internal factors, in holding sexual offenders accountable for their own behaviour, which appears to encourage self-efficacy and positivity (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2008). Originating in Canada and beginning in the Thames Valley in the UK, predicted recidivism rates in the latter area were significantly reduced during the three year evaluation period (Quaker Peace and Social Witness, 2005), indicating that successful reintegration is a contributory factor in aiding sex offender desistance (Quaker Peace & Social Witness, 2005; 2008; Wilson et al, 2007). Although in its infancy, the success of this model illustrates the beneficial effects of encouraging the development of CSOs' individual agency together with social controls in desistance from sexual offending. CoSA volunteers provide support in both practical and emotional ways (McAlinden, 2007) and the holistic, strengths-based approach of CoSA may assist core members in achieving the primary human goods identified within the GLM, whilst also serving as a form of monitoring CSOs behaviour.

Whilst the interventions for CSOs discussed in this section do not explicitly provide an explanation of desistance, they highlight the factors which assist rehabilitation from sexual offending. The present project explores the role of sex offender treatment in desistance in sample members, and therefore it was considered pertinent to explore both the GLM, as a

rehabilitation framework, and the GLM-D, as a model of assessment and treatment in this review. Furthermore, the GLM underpins theorising on desistance from sexual offending, discussed in the proceeding section.

### 2.3.3 Theorising desistance from sexual offending

Göbbels et al's (2012) comprehensive theory is the only theory to focus explicitly on desistance from sexual offending. The *Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending* (ITDSO) incorporates the work of Laws and Ward (2011) and also acknowledges previous explanations of desistance from non-sexual offending including those of Giodarno et al (2002); Vaughan (2007); Paternoster and Bushway (2009); Laub and Sampson, (2003); Maruna (2001); and Farrall and Calverley (2006); in addition to Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) Transtheoretical Model of Behaviour Change (TTMBC), which models recovery from addiction.

The ITDSO includes the temporal ordering of variables through four phases: decisive momentum, rehabilitation, re-entry and normalcy. The authors claim that their theory:

> …conceptualizes desistance as an interaction between internal and external variables, and incorporates environmental, social, and psychological processes. In addition, the ITDSO acknowledges the role of human agency in the complex process of offender desistance (Göbbels et al, 2012: 461).

The beginning of the process, decisive momentum, is said to replace the concept of turning points, which imply a static, discrete point in time, whilst decisive momentum encompasses the first phase of desistance. "The offender must possess the cognitive and emotional capacities necessary to profit from desistance opportunities" (Göbbels et al, 2012: 454) and, importantly, (and comparable with Giodarno et al's (2002) theory) be open to change in order to capitalise on decisive momentum. Phase two, rehabilitation, emphasises the necessity of a changed practical identity in desistance. Drawing on the GLM, primary goods are closely aligned with practical identities, thus those which are most important to the individual will be realised in more adaptive ways through prosocial actions. The optimal outcome of this phase is a successful reconstruction of the self and a practical identity as a non-offender. The third phase of the ITDSO, re-entry, acknowledges that CSOs are likely to face challenges to integration, and their maintenance of a commitment to change is essential. Successful re-entry is problematic for sex offenders who often have difficulties obtaining accommodation and employment, which may prevent attainment of the primary goods package. Göbbels et al (2012) suggest that facilitators to re-entry, such as mentors who encourage prosocial modelling, may be helpful in combination with other supports. The authors acknowledge the benefits of a close working relationship between probation officer and offender, noting that such a relational aspect is

important for narrative identity reconstruction. Phase four, normalcy/reintegration, is an extension of the re-entry phase and requires social capital together with a sense of hope for the future. "If the ex-offender is able to maintain his commitment to change despite all barriers, and is able to profit from facilitators to re-entry, he can 'become' a non-offender…" (Göbbels et al, 2012: 461).

This section has explored the limited theorising of desistance from sexual offending. The ITDSO, developed by authors with extensive knowledge of sexual offenders, is potentially applicable to the desistance journeys of CSOs in the present sample. However, given the evident issues faced by some of Brogden and Harkin's (2000) sample members, successful community re-entry can be particularly difficult to achieve and thus, the third phase of the ITDSO may be problematic. The subsequent section explores additional concepts considered of potential relevance to explaining desistance from sexual offending.

### 2.4 Deterrence, rational choice and compliance

Given the evident similarities between the concepts of deterrence, rational choice and compliance with community penalties, these will be discussed within the same section. These three concepts may potentially assist in explaining desistance from sexual offending.

Deterrence theory proposes that the prospect of punishment will deter criminal actions (McLaughlin, 2006). General deterrence is intended to influence the total population by preventing criminal activity through the threat and fear of punishment, whilst specific deterrence is targeted at an individual known offender with the intention of deterring them from further involvement in crime (McLaughlin, 2006). In order for deterrence to be effective, the certainty of apprehension is necessary, together with the severity of punishment, which must be seen as greater than the benefits of crime. Furthermore, the clarity of punishment must enable the offender to link it with their behaviour (McLaughlin, 2006). The deterrent effect of punishment is often a contributory factor in desistance, identified in Shover's (1983) research (see section 2.2.1). Shover's respondents' desistance involved the deterrent effect of prison, also significant in Cusson and Pinsonneault's (1986) respondents' desistance. The sex offender register (SOR) aims[9] to serve as a deterrent to potential reoffenders (Home Office, 1996, cited in Hebenton & Thomas, 1997) through enhanced detection of offences committed by those subject to its terms and conditions.

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[9] Other aims were also specified by the Home Office and are discussed in Chapter One.

Several studies discussed in this chapter illustrate the deterrent effect of formal criminal justice sanctions (Meisenhelder, 1977; Shover, 1983; Farmer et al, 2015). Registered sex offenders are likely to be aware of the increased probability of both detection and punishment, together with the likely severity of punishment and thus, specific deterrence may feature in sexual offenders' desistance.

Linking with deterrence, and rooted in the classical school of criminology, the rational choice perspective assumes that individuals are free to choose their behaviour, motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). Individuals make a cost-benefit analysis of whether or not to commit an offence. Empirical studies conducted by Cornish and Clarke (1986) are mainly limited to offences involving financial gain, which are presumed to be the most rational of crimes. Highlighting similarities with deterrence theory, rational choice theory proposes that offenders seek to advantage themselves through crime and make decisions to proceed only if the resulting rewards are greater than any potential punishment, although rational decisions are constrained by the limits of time, ability and the availability of relevant information (Cornish & Clarke, 1986). Rational choice theory has generally been employed to provide an explanation for commiting crime, rather than an explicit theory of desistance from crime, however, Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986) highlighted its relevance in a study of desistance in ex-armed robbers. Interviews with 17 men who had committed recidivist armed robberies and had not been arrested over the five preceding years, revealed that these men made conscious decisions to give up crime, exhibiting an agentic, rational choice. Their decision was generally triggered by some kind of shock, resulting from an unpleasant experience when committing robbery, or a delayed deterrence process, which involved recognition of the inevitability of apprehension and fear of imprisonment. Cusson and Pinsonneault (1986: 76) define delayed deterrence as "the gradual wearing down of the criminal drive caused by the accumulation of punishments". Participants realised that punishment was probable, and likely to become harsher due to their previous convictions. Furthermore, Cusson and Pinsonneault's respondents felt that ageing presented greater difficulties to serving a prison sentence, in accordance with Shover's (1986) sample. Neither an interesting job nor satisfying family ties played a role in Cusson and Pinsonneault's respondents' decision to quit crime, however, these helped respondents to resist the temptation to commit further crime. In this sample, desistance was based on an avoidant motive (to avoid further incarceration) rather than a positive decision, such as the desire to become a better person.

Beauregard and LeClerc's (2007) interesting study adopted a rational choice perspective to explore the decision making involved in the offending process in a sample of sexual offenders.

Thus, rather than a study of CSOs desistance, the focus related to the applicability of rational choice theory in sexual offending. Interviews with 69 serial sexual offenders explored their decision making in relation to a number of situational factors, both in the preparation of, and during the offence involving a stranger victim. Participants had committed two or more sexual crimes on a victim of any gender and any age, with 30 having assaulted adult women, 17 having assaulted children and 22 both. The majority of offences were pre-meditated, although some were triggered by situational cues, such as a woman walking alone at night. Among the offenders who took the risk of apprehension into account, forty one per cent committed sexual assaults when the risk was assessed to be low, such as an isolated crime location and little or no victim resistance. However, 39% of offenders still committed assaults when the risk of apprehension was perceived to be high, for example, in a public location or the victim's home. The authors conclude that sex offenders are "situationally aware" and, "…even if traditionally described as 'irrational' and compulsive individuals, are capable, up to a certain point, of an analysis of the costs/benefits related to their actions" (Beauregard & LeClerc, 2007: 115). The fact that some offenders committed their crimes in a situation perceived as high risk is hypothesised to result from "the severity of their sexual deviance", resulting in a lack of self-control (2007: 127).

This finding indicates that some sexual offenders are able to make a rational decision when considering the commission of an offence and as such, further to conviction, may demonstrate the ability to desist from further offending through rational decision making. Whilst rational choice theory has generally been employed to provide an explanation for committing crime and is thus not an explicit theory of desistance, Farmer et al's (2015) desisting child sexual offenders were found to exercise rational choice, resulting from the deterrent effect of further sanctions or the realisation of the harm they had caused. Furthermore, in accordance with Cusson & Pinsonneault's (1986) sample, CSOs in the present sample have experienced imprisonment which may serve as a deterrent, thus a rational choice to avoid further crime and further imprisonment may feature in their desistance.

A further theoretical resource of potential relevance to explaining desistance from sexual offending is Bottoms' (2001) framework for understanding compliance with community penalties. This framework involves four mechanisms underlying compliant behaviour, the first of which relates to instrumental/prudential compliance, whereby individuals comply with the 'rules' as a result of disincentives or incentives. For example, the consequences of further offending may serve as a disincentive, prompting a rational calculation to avoid offending. Alternatively, incentives for good conduct may include early discharge from supervision requirements (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). Instrumental compliance can thus be seen to

highlight similarities with deterrence and rational choice. The second type of compliance, normative, includes three subtypes: the first involves a moral commitment to and acceptance of a set of norms; the second involves attachments to people; and the third relates to legitimacy. Attachments to people provides normative compliance, and reflects the significance of 'social bonds' identified by Hirschi (1969), whereby individuals who have formed attachments to significant others avoid reoffending rather than risk losing these significant social bond/s. Legitimacy proposes that compliance with a rule occurs when the person (or body) with legitimate authority acts in a way that is considered fair and reasonable (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). The third type of compliance relates to constraint, which includes the subtypes of physical restrictions on the individual which are either natural (such as illness), or imposed (such as electronic tagging). Alternatively, situational crime prevention strategies restrict access to the target of non-compliance, resulting in another subtype of constraint-based compliance. This type of compliance may be of relevance to desistance from intra-familial sexual offending as CSOs, following their conviction, are often denied further contact with their victim/s and thus lack the opportunity to offend against their chosen victim/s. Fourthly, habitual compliance occurs unthinkingly out of habit. Whilst a rational calculation or a normative commitment may have been the original mechanism of compliance, conformist behaviour becomes part of everyday life with the passage of time. This type of compliance may feature in the desistance of CSOs who have been living in the community for lengthy periods post-prison release.

Building upon Bottoms' (2001) concept of short-term compliance (within a community order), Robinson and McNeill (2008) identify the additional dimensions of formal and substantive compliance. Formal compliance occurs when individuals simply adhere to the legal requirements imposed upon them, without any real engagement. This is contrasted with substantive compliance, which applies to individuals who exhibit a desire to change and actively engage with the terms and conditions of their community penalty. Robinson and McNeill (2008) note that shifts in, or changing combinations of, compliance mechanisms may occur. An example is presented in which an offender commences their community order seeking only formal compliance, further to which the formation of a bond with their probation officer leads them to engage in substantive compliance. Legitimacy is required if offenders are to move from formal to substantive compliance - the order must be perceived as legitimate, not overly harsh or unfairly imposed (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). Substantive compliance may, over the course of time, develop into habitual compliance.

Bottoms' (2001) explanatory framework of compliance with community penalties, together with the additional dimensions of compliance identified by Robinson & McNeill (2008) have the potential to translate to CSO desistance, given that such individuals are required to adhere to

the terms and conditions of the SOR, and furthermore, may believe that they are 'under surveillance' through this. Hence, the possibility of instrumental compliance arises if the CSO views the deterrent effect of punishment as a disincentive. Additional compliance mechanisms may also be of relevance to CSO desistance. For example; the acquisition of social/structural bonds, to which the individual has formed an attachment, may lead to normative compliance. Constraint-based compliance may underpin desistance in CSOs who have become physically unable to offend, or as a result of restrictions imposed by the criminal justice system. These compliance mechanisms may then develop into habitual compliance. In addition, formal compliance may influence desistance in CSOs aware of the multitude of controls imposed by the criminal justice system. Alternatively, short-term substantive compliance may develop into desistance in the longer term. Similarities can be observed between deterrence, rational choice theory and instrumental compliance, whereby a disincentive (threat of further punishment), may lead to desistance through a rational calculation (the desire to avoid negative consequences).

### 2.5 Discussion

This chapter has explored a number of published sources of relevance to explaining desistance from sexual offending. The purpose of this review is twofold: firstly, an understanding of the extant empirical and theoretical literature served to assist preparation of the interview schedule for the present project. Secondly, knowledge of the literature provided a theoretical lens through which to analyse respondents' narratives in order to develop existing knowledge on desistance from sexual offending.

The chapter began by exploring the widely recognised finding that the majority of non-sexual offending peaks in adolescence and declines in the early 20s, (Farrington, 1986), although small groups of chronic offenders persist until later life (West & Farrington, 1977; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Moffitt, 1993; Farrington & Wikstrom; 1994). Decreasing sexual recidivism in CSOs is demonstrated from around the age of 45 (Langan et al, 2003) upwards, and indeed Harris (2014) found evidence of 'natural desistance' in three members of her CSO sample. These men were tired of living the criminal lifestyle and had engaged in persistent and varied offending, demonstrating more similarities to general offenders rather than being 'specialists' within sexual offending. A decline in testosterone as an explanation for reduced sexual recidivism is not particularly convincing and thus, whilst 'natural' desistance is said to be that occurring in the absence of formal or informal social controls (Laws & Ward, 2011; Göbbels et al, 2012), Shover's (1983; 1985) identification of the 'criminal calculus' offers a more convincing explanation for 'natural' desistance. Changes in identity and self-concept which

accompanied ageing were found by Shover (1983; 1985) to explain ageing offenders' desistance and may be of relevance to desistance from sexual offending.

The role of informal social controls in desistance was considered in this chapter, found to aid desistance by Meisenhelder (1977), Shover (1983), and developed further in Sampson and Laub's (1993) age-graded theory of informal social control. Social bonds providing meaningful attachments are beneficial to desistance from both non-sexual and sexual offending (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Farmer et al, 2015). The presence of social bonds in which CSOs invest may assist in desistance from sexual offending. The risk of losing these could prevent reoffending, thus reflecting the mechanism of normative compliance within Bottoms' (2001) framework. However, Brogden and Harkin's (2000) research indicated that whilst non-reoffending was influenced by families and partners, this did not result from the formation of social bonds, but rather, operated via coercive practices whereby significant others acted as a form of surveillance.

The influence of formal social controls in sex offender desistance currently remains inconclusive. Sampson and Laub (1993: 253) argue that incarceration is likely to be criminogenic, resulting in a 'structural labelling' effect, limiting the acquisition of social capital. Formal social control in the form of sex offender treatment was found to aid desistance from sexual offending by Kruttschnitt et al (2000), Farmer et al (2012), Harris (2014) and Farmer et al (2015). However, exploration of the role of incarceration and the SOR in desistance from sexual offending currently appears absent and will thus be examined in the current project. Both Meisenhelder (1977) and Shover (1983) found prison to serve a deterrent effect in their samples of non-sexual offenders. Farmer et al (2015) found that detection and conviction served a deterrent effect, although it is unclear whether all desisting sample members had served prison sentences and thus the effects of prison upon desistance are absent. These findings highlight the relevance of deterrence theory, rational choice theory and the mechanism of instrumental compliance (Bottoms, 2001).

The 'turning point' concept was highlighted as significant in redirecting trajectories and facilitating long-term behaviour change (Sampson & Laub, 1993), although perhaps has limited utility unless studied retrospectively. Farmer et al's (2012) retrospective study identified sex offender treatment as a turning point, with similar findings identified by Harris (2014). Arrest also served as a turning point in some of Farmer et al's (2015) desisting sample members. The concept of diachronic self-control identified by Shapland and Bottoms (2011) may also be of relevance to CSO desistance, drawing parallels with the relapse prevention element of treatment programmes, through which CSOs learn to avoid situations which may trigger relapse.

Laub and Sampson (2001) identified 'knifing off' as being significant in allowing offenders to extract themselves from their environment through a turning point such as marriage or military service. The concept of 'knifing off' is further described as symbolic separation from, or denial of some parts of the past (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011), and was found of little relevance in Maruna's desisters. Rather than rejecting their troubled past, this was rewritten "…into a necessary prelude to a productive and worthy life" and thus "'making good' involves more self-reconstruction than amputation" (Maruna, 2001: 87).

The role of agency, cognitions and identity change are significant to desistance from non-sexual offending (Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Bottoms et al, 2004; Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Bottoms & Shapland, 2011) and sexual offending (Laws & Ward, 2011; Farmer et al, 2012; Göbbels et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015). The current academic consensus acknowledges the role of both external and internal factors in desistance from offending. What is unclear however, is the chronology of these factors. The majority of authors suggest that subjective factors precede structural events (Giodarno et al, 2002; Vaughan, 2007; LeBel et al, 2008; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Göbbels et al, 2012), whilst others refer to a triggering external event resulting in the desire to change (Bottoms & Shapland, 2011). Bottoms et al (2004) identify three possible mechanisms through which these factors interact, whilst Farrall et al (2011) suggest that the temporal ordering of external and internal sources is likely to differ between individuals. Bottoms et al (2004) question whether conscious awareness of change is apparent in desistance and provide several explanations to account for this, whilst Laub and Sampson (2003: 278) propose that actions to desist are below the surface of active consciousness, referred to as "desistance by default". Others imply an intentional, conscious, shift in the individual's sense of self as the first phase within the desistance process (Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farrall, 2005; Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Desistance from sexual offending is considered likely to include an intentional shift in the individual's sense of self in the first phase of the desistance process, due to the intense stigma attached to this offender type.

This review of the extant literature relating to desistance from both non-sexual and sexual offending provides a theoretical lens through which to explore desistance in the current sample. The development of knowledge to date has resulted in the current academic consensus which indicates that a combination of both internal and external factors are necessary within the desistance process. Despite the identified differences between non-sexual and sexual offenders highlighted in Chapter One, this review provides support for Laws and Ward's (2011: 163) assertion that "…desistance from sexual crime proceeds in the same manner for sex offenders as it has been shown to do with criminal offenders". However, the stigmatisation and exclusion of

this offender type and the challenges this presents for the acquisition of social and structural bonds indicates that the process of desistance from sexual offending is likely to be particularly protracted.

The following chapter proceeds to present the methodology employed within the present project. The numerous ethical considerations involved in research with vulnerable populations are discussed in depth. Few sources of existing literature explore the nuances of interviewing sex offenders - stereotypically manipulative and deceptive individuals. My own experiences of doing so are reflected upon, together with the potential influence of my own personal biography in the situated context of the interviews with men convicted of sexual offences.

# Three: Research Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology underpinning this empirical study which explores the experiences of 15 men self-reporting desistance from further sexual offending. These men had been convicted for sexual offences involving child victims, for which they had been incarcerated and since released into the community. Qualitative narrative interviews were conducted whilst the men had been living in the community for varying periods of time.

The chapter begins by discussing the aims and objectives of the project and the central research question to which the study sought to respond. The project's exploratory qualitative nature involved loosely structured interviews designed to elicit respondents' narratives in order to examine the interaction between the external and internal sources found previously to be significant within the desistance process. Numerous ethical issues required careful consideration due to the nature of the sample type - a 'vulnerable' and stigmatised population. Thus, anonymity and confidentiality were particularly pertinent and presented difficulties in terms of interview venues. In order to provide the reader with an understanding of the difficulties inherent in negotiating access to CSOs, the challenges encountered in relation to this will be discussed chronologically. The characteristics of the sample which were ultimately accessed for interview will then be presented. Further to this, I consider the importance of my own personal biography and the effects of this on participant interaction. I also reflect upon the challenges (and rewards) of interviewing those who are stereotypically viewed as manipulative and deceptive individuals. The chapter concludes by describing the approach to data analysis utilised within the current study.

## 3.2 Research question, aims and objectives

The current project explores the experiences of CSOs living in the community following a period of incarceration, with the aim of addressing the central research question 'which internal and external factors are involved in the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders?'. Whilst desistance research has developed considerably over previous decades, this has generally focused on non-sexual offenders. However, recent years have seen the development of a small body of research exploring desistance from sexual offending. The current research sought to provide a contribution to this through consideration of the following aims and objectives:

**Aims**

- To provide empirical insight into the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders
- To provide a contribution to the development of effective public protection policies and practices regarding the community management of child sex offenders.

**Objectives**

- To explore the effects of formal and informal social controls on the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders
- To explore the cognitive/agentic processes involved
- To gain insight into the interaction of the above.

## 3.3 Research design/instrument

The research question suggested an interpretive approach, with the collection of qualitative data, in order to explore the importance of both the internal and external factors involved in the mens' desistance processes. Research indicates that the simple existence of external factors such as a spouse or employment is insufficient for desistance, but rather, it is the meaning that individuals ascribe to these which is significant (see Chapter Two). As such, when considering the philosophical underpinnings of research, an interpretivist epistemology linked with the ontological position of constructivism allows for exploration of the understandings and meanings which social actors ascribe to a particular social phenomenon (Matthews & Ross, 2010). The collection of quantitative data, given the positivist epistemology underpinning it, excludes assessment of the role of agency and identity change found to be salient factors within the process of desistance (Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002). The ontological position of objectivism underpinning quantitative research deems that social phenomenon are considered as a reality external to the social actors involved (Bryman, 2004) and was therefore unsuitable for addressing the central research question of this research project.

A longitudinal design provides the ideal approach to exploring desistance, given that desistance involves a maintenance process (Maruna, 2001) which was predicted to be particularly protracted in CSOs. A longitudinal design allows for revisiting participants on several occasions at pre-defined points in time and as such, would provide greater insight into the time order of variables (Bryman, 2004) within the desistance process. However, this design was prohibited due to the time constraints of a PhD research project. Therefore, a cross-sectional design was employed to facilitate interviews with subjects at a single point in time.

The benefits of narrative research for exploring desistance are widely acknowledged, evident in previous empirical research which often employs the use of life hi/story narratives (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014). Maruna (2001: 39) argues that the "…self-narrative is increasingly understood as a critical part of an individual's personality and inner self" and is viewed as more than simply a "…retrospective record of life events". Individuals construct and reconstruct their identity through their self-narratives (Maruna & Copes 2005). Eliciting respondents' self-narratives can therefore provide an insight into the fluid nature of identity, a significant factor in desistance, which involves the development of a new prosocial identity (Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002). Narratives "organise sequences of events into a whole so that the significance of each event can be understood through its relation to that whole. In this way a narrative conveys the meaning of events" (Elliott, 2005: 3). Narratives place events in chronological sequence, which distinguishes them from simple description (Elliott, 2005), making them ideal for understanding the journeys of CSOs since the time of their convictions, and allowing for the exploration of both the internal and external factors involved in desistance, thus enabling the research question to be addressed.

The life story interview (McAdams, 1995) was initially considered the most appropriate instrument for the collection of data given its previous use in desistance research, often in a modified format (Maruna, 2001; Farmer, Beech & Ward, 2012; Harris, 2014). Laws and Ward (2011: 166-169) adapted McAdams' (1995) life story interview for use with sex offenders, and propose that interviewees be asked the following:

- Begin by thinking of your life as a story with a few different chapters and describe briefly the contents of each chapter
- Concentrate on a few key events that stand out. Focus on a high point, a low point, a turning point, your earliest memory, an important childhood scene, an important adolescent scene, an important adult scene and one other important scene
- Describe the single greatest challenge you have faced in your life and how you handled this
- Identify a positive and negative influence on your life story. This may be a person, a group of people, or an organisation
- Consider both a positive and a negative alternative future
- What are your fundamental beliefs and values?
- What is the central theme running throughout your life?
- Is there anything else I need to know to understand your life story?

This interview protocol was the instrument utilised in the first interview, with the exclusion of specific questioning on turning points given that value of these in desistance research is considered dubious (discussed in Chapter Two). The first interview was conducted in March 2013 with 'Alan', who proved with hindsight to be the most difficult interviewee. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to focus the interview on the prepared schedule. Alan wished to guide the content of the interview himself and preferred to discuss topics he chose which were often of little relevance to the research question. However, I was able to obtain some information of relevance. This interview lasted for around two and a half hours, at the end of which Alan offered a further interview. I agreed to this in the hope that I was able to elicit the remaining information required. The second interview was conducted around a month later.

As the original interview schedule had proved unsuccessful when interviewing Alan, this was revised to form an interview guide (see Appendix C), rather than a list of questions to be posed in the same order to each participant. This commenced with a standardised section to collect demographic data and basic information regarding the offence/s (for example, gender of, and relationship to victim). Further to this I presented the interviews as an informal discussion, explaining to participants that I was interested in hearing about their lives from the time of their conviction. Wilkinson (2009) proposes that the narrative approach indicates a loosely structured approach to interviewing, beginning with a broad question and following with the use of prompts if particular issues requiring scrutiny are not touched upon. My desire was for the men to tell me their story in their own words, focusing on particular issues of importance to them. In order to facilitate this, and in accordance with Wilkinson (2009), the loosely structured interview guide contained a list of subjects to be addressed, including experience of prison, treatment programmes, probation, the SOR and the social and structural elements within their lives. Interviewees generally addressed these topics without prompting. As Noaks and Wincup (2004) point out, it is useful to conclude interviews with neutral topics, particularly pertinent when research involves sensitive subjects. Hence, participants were asked to summarise the factors they believed to be important in their desistance journey, in the hope that this would empower and provide them with a sense of pride in their achievements, thus concluding the interview on a positive note.

The revised interview guide was utilised in the second interview with Alan, who again wished to direct the focus of the interview. Nonetheless, most of the topics to be addressed were eventually covered in a lengthy three hour interview. With hindsight, the use of Laws & Ward's (2011) modified life story interview and failure to collect the relevant data in Alan's first interview was due to the nature of the participant, rather than a flaw in the instrument. However, the difficulties encountered in accessing a sample deemed that the use of the same

instrument was too risky. Participants were located in various areas of England, requiring my travel by train to interviews. It was thus considered that further use of the initial instrument had the potential to result in interviews which were too lengthy, or required more than one visit. Hence, the risk of losing participants following the first interview was too great. It was also financially problematic to revisit participants due to the costs of train travel and the limits of the research budget. The revised interview guide ultimately served as a useful instrument in collecting the data necessary to address the central research question. This was utilised in subsequent interviews and allowed participants to tell their story by providing their subjective experience of events in chronological order of occurrence. The guide contained a list of prompts to be employed if necessary, together with areas to be addressed, in order to ensure that the qualitative data obtained could be comparable across individual cases.

Discussing the skill set required for conducting interviews, Noaks and Wincup (2004) emphasise the importance of active listening, with good communication skills and attention to non-verbal cues. The potential issue of memory decay and the influence of hindsight may arise when individuals are asked to provide retrospective accounts of events from some time ago (Noaks and Wincup, 2004). However, the men were often discussing significant events in their lives and significant points in their desistance process, thus arguably these events may retain some clarity when considering the psychological literature concerning autobiographical memory. Past events that direct present behaviour (referred to as 'analogous events') are a form of 'event specific memory' which resist memory decay (Pillimer, 2001).

Given that participants had been living in the community for various time periods following prison release, they were at various stages of a desistance process at the time of interviews. For this reason, whilst some may label the current project as a retrospective study, I would argue in accordance with Maruna that "this [was] a study of people who were actively making good or going straight right before my eyes as I interviewed them" (2001: 38). However, given the stereotypically deceptive nature of this offender type (Waldram, 2007), together with the fact that large amounts of sexual offences are likely to remain undetected, a degree of scepticism regarding their self-reported desistance was retained. As with any research exploring desistance, one cannot be certain of desistance until death (Maruna, 2001). Some may question the validity of CSOs' self-reports, however, it is not possible to explore the internal factors involved in desistance from sexual offending unless we consult those with subjective experience of it. As Waldram (2007: 969) acknowledges, "…we need to hear from them if we are to avoid being harmed by them".

My experience of conducting interviews had previously taken a semi-structured approach working with police public protection officers. Given that these also required active listening and the necessity of prompts or follow up questions, the major difference related to participant status. It was unlikely that police officers would demonstrate any distress, as the interview questions related to their job. Furthermore, they were potentially less challenging than ex-sexual offenders. However, having worked in prison with this offender type,[10] I felt as prepared as possible to conduct the interviews. The following section of this chapter proceeds to describe the research process in the chronological order in which it was addressed.

## 3.4 The research process

This section begins with a discussion of the numerous ethical considerations involved when researching individuals who may be deemed 'vulnerable'. The term 'vulnerable', when referring to research participants, often relates to children, sexually victimised individuals, and older people (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010). It is perhaps not a term that one would immediately ascribe to CSOs. However, CSOs in the community are often stigmatised and excluded, rendering their access to support and social networks somewhat limited and thus determining them socially vulnerable (Liamputtong, 2007). When research involves CSOs, any identity revelations may be potentially catastrophic and as such, the sensitive information they share with the researcher renders them vulnerable, together with the potential this carries for generating emotional effects to both interviewee and interviewer. Careful consideration and meticulous planning was necessary. The lengthy and frustrating process of obtaining access to a sample population is then described, followed by the characteristics of the sample ultimately accessed for interview. Further to this, I reflect upon the challenges (and rewards) of interviewing this offender type and conclude this section with a discussion of how analysis of the data ensued.

### 3.4.1 Ethical considerations

Prior to commencing the fieldwork, it was necessary to apply for ethical approval to conduct the research from the University of Sheffield's School of Law. This required addressing the potential risks of harm to both interviewees and myself as the interviewer, together with how these risks would be minimised. Anonymity and confidentiality (and the limits of this) were of particular significance due to participants' CSO status. The numerous ethical issues are discussed in this section.

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[10] My previous voluntary role relates to a Ministry of Justice appointment, as a member of the Independent Monitoring Board in a large prison. This involved visits to the vulnerable persons wing (where sexual offenders resided) to ensure inmates were treated with fairness and respect.

Research suggests that marginalised individuals may welcome participation in research as an opportunity to be listened to by someone interested in hearing their story (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007). As such, the narrative interviews involved in the current project had the potential to be a cathartic experience for participants. A research interview was considered to provide a somewhat more informal arena than the context within which CSOs will have previously discussed their offending behaviour, for example; in prison, treatment (if applicable) and during probation supervision. The fact that I was not affiliated with criminal justice agencies assisted in reinforcing my non-judgemental approach. This, together with my particular interest in the mens' stories and my lack of moral agenda was reinforced, both in the information sheet (see Appendix B) and at the beginning of interviews. However, research on sensitive topics also carries the risk of emotional responses with the potential that participants may find discussion of particular aspects of their lives distressing. It was important to be mindful of this and aim to conclude interviews with neutral topics to allow for any emotional recovery prior to exiting the field (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). I also attended interviews with information for participants on accessing support if required.

In an attempt to minimise psychological harm or distress to participants, the information sheet simply stated that I wished to hear about their life since conviction and that any topics they preferred not to discuss would be avoided. The information sheet also noted that the interview may be terminated at any stage without providing a reason, their involvement may also cease at any stage. Should they wish to withdraw following interview, information already provided would be duly destroyed. The information sheet emphasised that interviews were to be conducted purely for the purpose of collecting data for my research, not for counselling or therapy. Any current contact which individuals had with police or other criminal justice agencies would not be affected.

In addition to the potential of psychological harm to participants, the effects of sensitive topic research may also impact negatively upon the researcher's psychological wellbeing (Allnock, 2011). Having previously worked with sex offenders in a prison environment, I felt able to separate the act of the sexual offence away from the person in order to minimise psychological harm to myself. Although interviews involved little focus on participants' previous offending behaviour, it was envisaged that individuals may have experienced difficult and upsetting issues in their lives which had the potential to cause emotional distress to both parties. Whilst distancing oneself from disturbing narrative content is likely to aid psychological wellbeing in the short term, qualitative health researchers with experience of conducting interviews on sensitive subjects warn of 'desensitisation' (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007). This relates to becoming distant from one's feelings and immunity to being shocked by the difficulties faced

by some individuals (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007); a response to stress which has been noted to have potentially health damaging effects (Pearlman, 1995, cited in Dickson-Swift et al, 2007). In order to combat any negative emotions, Blagden and Pemberton (2010), emphasise the necessity of developing coping strategies such as taking time out with friends, debriefing sessions with supervisors and if necessary, counselling sessions. Debriefing sessions with supervisors were available together with access to the university's counselling service should emotional distress become problematic. Given that interviewees would be those who claimed to be desisting from further sexual offences involving a child, it was considered that the nature of their previous offending should not render them a physical threat to myself as a mature female researcher.

Participants were also informed that it was not necessary to discuss their offences in detail during the interviews as the research focused on the factors involved in the cessation of offending. This was also an attempt to avoid any possibility that revisiting their offending behaviour in detail had the potential to initiate relapse. Therefore the men were asked several questions at the beginning of the interview to determine the offence type for which they were convicted, together with victim gender and relationship to enable comparisons/contrasts to be made in data analysis.

The issue of interview location was particularly problematic. Public venues such as cafes and libraries were considered unsuitable due to the sensitive subject area. At the time of seeking ethical approval, it was unclear how access to the sample would proceed, but it was felt likely that this would be negotiated in the local area. Thus the application to the university ethics committee noted that interview venues would be negotiated with the relevant agencies acting as 'gatekeepers', with the potential options of the participant's home or a room within the University of Sheffield. Should the interviews be conducted off university premises, steps were to be taken to ensure my personal safety. One of the research supervisors would be informed of the times and locations of interviews, and arrangements would be made for myself to check in and out with one of the research supervisors when attending interviews. I was to carry a fully charged mobile phone (switched on but on 'silent' mode) when attending interviews. The mobile phone was purchased and used solely for research purposes in order to avoid providing my own personal phone number to participants. I was acutely aware of the need to exercise 'common sense' and caution when conducting fieldwork and was prepared to terminate the interview and vacate the research field should I feel that my wellbeing was threatened in any way during an interview.

Verbal informed consent was favoured over signed informed consent for a number of reasons. CSOs have experience of formal interviews under police caution, possibly on numerous occasions. It was considered pertinent to avoid reminding participants of this type of interview as I was keen to reinforce my neutrality and non-affiliation with criminal justice agencies, in an attempt to obtain participant trust and to enhance the quality of data collected. Roberts and Indermaur (2003) note that the use of written informed consent in criminological research can have adverse effects on response rates and argue that obtaining this may serve to reduce the human rights of participants as identifying information is required. Hayman et al (2001) found that verbal explanations of the research by researchers was rated as the most useful source of information about the research, thus consent is truly informed. Therefore, the information sheet was discussed with participants at the beginning of interviews with the dictaphone recording, I would then ask if they were happy to proceed. This method bypassed the need to obtain participants' signatures and thus afforded them greater anonymity.

Potential participants were provided with an information sheet prior to arranging a date for interview. My reasons for wishing to record interviews were noted in the information sheet and discussed further at the beginning of interviews. Recording interviews ensures greater accuracy, in order to "…privilege the participants' own accounts, views and thoughts" (Hudson, 2005:10) and also allows the researcher's full attention to be focused on the interviewee.

The information sheet assured participants of confidentiality but also emphasised the limits of this in relation to any previously undisclosed sexual offences, or any suggestion of risk of harm to themselves or others, which would be relayed to the relevant police sergeant in the sex offender management team. In order to ensure confidentiality, recordings were uploaded and saved on the University's secure server, to be deleted upon completion of the project. Dictaphone recordings were to be deleted after uploading. All transcription was to be undertaken using a university computer. Each transcript was anonymised through the use of pseudonyms to protect participants' identities, together with any other potentially identifying information such as place names, prison names, and names of any other individuals mentioned. I reiterated this at the beginning of the interviews, however, I did state to interviewees that they may be able to identify themselves should they read the final thesis.

No financial incentives were offered for participation but interviewees were reimbursed reasonable out of pocket travel expenses for short train or bus journeys. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they wished to be informed of the findings once the thesis was complete. The majority were interested in receiving this information in the form of a short

report summarising the findings. Several were reluctant to provide email or postal addresses and were thus happy to receive no further information.

### 3.4.2 Access/participant recruitment

A purposive sampling approach was necessary given that participants were required to meet particular criteria in order to respond to the central research question. Statistics relating to sexual reconviction in sexual offenders were reviewed, together with the criminal careers of this offender type (discussed in Chapter One), in order to guide the sampling criteria for the current project. Given that the majority of sexual reconvictions occur within six years post-prison release (Hood et al, 2002), it was considered pertinent to sample those at least six years post-prison release in an attempt to ensure desistance. The literature consistently indicates that individuals with male extra-familial victims demonstrate the highest rates of reconviction and therefore, in an attempt to explore the desistance process in those at greatest risk of reoffending, the following criteria were identified:

- Adult male receiving at least one conviction for a sexual offence involving an extra-familial male victim under the age of 16
- Received a prison sentence of at least 30 months (to ensure indefinite sex offender registration)
- Released and residing in the community for at least six years with no further sexual or violent reconvictions.

Difficulties in obtaining access to undertake primary research prevents numerous projects from beginning (Bryman, 2008). Obtaining access to sex offenders in the community is acknowledged to be particularly problematic given that such stigmatised individuals may wish to remain anonymous (Hudson, 2005; Burchfield & Mingus, 2008); a factor perhaps in part responsible for the paucity of existing empirical research exploring sex offender desistance. Whilst being well aware of the difficulties inherent in identifying and accessing suitable participants, it was anticipated that access would be granted via a MAPPA contact known to one of the research supervisors. Contact was initiated in February 2012 with the regional MAPPA coordinator to request assistance with accessing suitable individuals. A meeting was arranged during which the rationale for the project and its design were discussed, following which the above criteria were revised further as the coordinator felt that such stringent criteria were unlikely to result in a sample of 10-15 CSOs for interview. It was suggested that men with extra-familial victims of either gender should be targeted in order to allow for a larger pool from which to sample. The coordinator kindly agreed to make enquiries requesting my presence in their office for one day a week in order to access their database in an attempt to identify

individuals matching the sample criteria. Access to such confidential material required security clearance, together with training on operation of the database. Unfortunately, after several months I was informed that the organisation were unable to help due the presence of other research students, and the demands that my presence would place on their limited resources.

Numerous police force areas were then approached. I was able to obtain contact information for named individuals in some force areas through liaisons with my own professional contacts. On other occasions, consultation of a force area's website provided electronic or postal generic contact information, allowing me to send requests for access. The majority of these requests either failed to generate a response or resulted in the force area's inability to assist due to lack of resources. I had, perhaps naively, presumed that police would simply input my sample criteria to the SOR database in order to generate matching individuals whom the police could then contact on my behalf, providing details of my research and requesting the CSOs participation. However, I was informed that identifying suitable individuals formed a lengthy task requiring the cooperation of police PPOs to access the records of individuals they were responsible for supervising.

Ultimately, after a protracted process, one police force area was willing to assist. My contact was the forensic psychologist working within the force who agreed to liaise with their PPOs, asking them to identify individuals whom they were responsible for supervising and who matched the sample criteria. The next issue arose regarding the location of the interviews. The force who had agreed to help were not the force local to my working base, therefore, the forensic psychologist kindly provided me with a contact at a university in their force area who was able to confirm the availability of a room for interview. However, the detective inspector (DI) raised an ethical issue relating to the university interview location and requested that the sample criteria be altered to include only individuals with victims under the age of 12, given the fact that young people would be present in the university grounds. The DI felt that, should offenders have selected victims around the age of 15, these may have looked similar to those attending university and could therefore increase the individual's risk of relapse/reoffending. Therefore, the sample criteria were duly altered and information sheets sent for approval of the DI in readiness for distribution to those identified as potential participants. The DI also reinforced the necessity of reporting to the relevant police sergeant in the sex offender management team should any disclosures be made by participants relating to unconvicted sexual offences.

Despite initially contacting the police force area willing to cooperate in April 2012, the number of individuals matching the sample criteria remained unconfirmed by October 2012, due to

difficulties in engaging PPOs. By January 2013 only three PPOs had responded, who were responsible for the supervision of 308 sex offenders. However, it was claimed that only nine men matched the sample criteria and only one of these was willing to be interviewed. The force area believed that issues related to the six year post-release period and the desire to identify those with extra-familial victims. In the particular police force area, the significant majority of CSOs six years (plus) post-release had targeted intra-familial victims, thus supporting the literature on reconviction rates (discussed in Chapter One), which indicates that incest offenders are significantly less likely to be reconvicted than those with extra-familial victims (e.g., Seto et al, 2015). Therefore, sample criteria were again revised to include CSOs with extra-familial victims (of either gender) who were at least two years post-release. By this stage, only one of the PPOs was willing to assist and was ultimately unable to identify any further willing participants. The PPO provided me with the contact details of the willing potential participant ('Alan') initially identified and suggested that the interview should take place at Alan's home due to his chronic ill health, which prohibited his travel to the university interview location. Following my contact with Alan and the arrangement of a suitable date for interview, the PPO was informed. To ensure my safety we arranged that I would telephone her both upon my arrival at Alan's flat and again within two and a half hours to inform her that I had left his premises.

A public protection unit located within a different police force kindly arranged for me to meet with them to discuss the possibility of their assistance. They were able to identify four potential participants matching the revised sample criteria. However, it transpired that the force area required sight of the full interview transcripts (with participants' signed consent). Further to discussions with supervisors it was agreed that this may be likely to limit participation and also, should individuals volunteer to take part, the information they may be willing to discuss in interview. Hence, access negotiations with this police force area also concluded.

Contact was initiated with a particular Probation Trust in February 2013 further to which I was provided with the contact details of probation officers responsible for supervising CSOs. The majority of probation officers were keen to help and sought to identify individuals matching the revised sample criteria. Despite lengthy communications and discussions regarding sampling criteria, the majority of individuals identified by probation officers were ultimately unsuitable for the research, as they either failed to fulfill all the sample criteria (for example; having been released from prison for very short time periods), or were unwilling to participate. One CSO in receipt of my information sheet made contact, however, during my telephone conversation with him repeatedly denied that he had committed the offence/s and was therefore deemed unsuitable for the project.

The prospect of accessing CSOs for interview became increasingly bleak and thus, it seemed pertinent to consider a back-up plan. I therefore contacted the probation officers who had attempted to assist in identifying a sample, enquiring whether they would be willing to be interviewed regarding their views on the desistance process in CSOs. All were willing to assist if necessary. At this stage, a further information sheet was prepared for the probation officers and approval sought from the university ethics committee, which was ultimately granted. A review of the literature indicated an absence of previous research with this focus, however, it was preferable to interview the CSOs themselves, who I felt were better placed to provide in-depth subjective information on their experiences of the desistance process, rather than the accounts and perceptions of their supervising professionals.

A journal article authored by Aresti et al (2010) referred to recruitment of a sample of desisting (non-sexual) offenders via Unlock (the National Association of Reformed Offenders).[11] I learned from Unlock's website that Andreas Aresti was involved with the organisation at the time. I therefore contacted him to enquire about the possibility of obtaining a sample via this route and was informed that I should contact Unlock directly to enquire about the possibility of placing an advertisement for participants in their newsletter.

As a final attempt to recruit a sample of desisting sex offenders, and prior to resorting to interviews with probation officers, an advertisement was placed via Unlock (see Appendix A) in the form of an electronic mail shot to all members at a cost of £100 in April 2013, seeking individuals to participate in interview. Given that only one interview had been conducted by this time, and the extensive difficulties faced in obtaining participants, the sample criteria were relaxed and revised to simply specify "…research at the University of Sheffield aims to find out what stops men who have previously committed sexual offence/s against children from reoffending. If you have previously served a prison sentence of 30 months or more and been released for at least a year, we would like to hear how you have moved on".

The advertisement quickly generated 14 responses and resulted in a further eight interviews, therefore nine in total. One example of snowball sampling occurred as one of the participants, Terry, had retained contact with a previous fellow inmate. After his interview, Terry had contacted Nigel who emailed me expressing his willingness to participate and thus became the tenth participant.

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[11] At the time of my contact with Unlock, (2013) they were referred to as the National Association for Reformed Offenders, however, this has since changed to 'Unlock - for people with convictions' (http://www.Unlock.org.uk).

In the absence of any financial incentive for participation, a self-selecting sample is likely to include those with strong opinions on the phenomenon in question and therefore, self-selection bias may occur. Conversely, a self-selecting sample may ensure the recruitment of true desisters, who, whilst experiencing or having experienced the process may wish to share their success stories. My inability to triangulate participants' accounts with official data for the majority of participants may be considered a limitation of the current research. However, this was ultimately unavoidable due to the extreme difficulties encountered in accessing a suitable sample population.

Whilst the Unlock advertisement proved invaluable in recruiting participants, some unforeseen (and unpleasant) consequences resulted. My advertisement for participants somehow appeared in the May 2013 edition of 'Inside Time', the national newspaper for prisoners and detainees. Despite my best efforts I have been unable to determine how this occurred. It came to my attention following receipt of a letter from a prisoner (the advertisement contained my email and postal contact information). The letter explained that it was in response to my Inside Time advertisement and that the author was currently imprisoned for *"this type of offence"*. He was not due to be released for a further four years but was interested in reading the results of my research and provided an email address for his father to send my findings to. This was the first of a total of seven letters, most offering to participate whilst imprisoned and one who was about to be released and was willing to participate in the community. However, one particularly lengthy letter was somewhat disconcerting. The prisoner questioned my authenticity, explaining that he was a paranoid schizophrenic who was *"psychopathic disordered"* and believed that I was attempting to deceive him in order to obtain his credit card details: *"I would probably feel like hurting someone if they deliberately deceived me…"*. The letter contained ramblings regarding the likelihood that I was not an *"…authentic, serious researcher…"* and concluded:

> *Nonetheless if this whole episode is real, reply to this letter because in doing so I with my paranoid self will detect if your [sic] serious and not just some incompetent wanna be whos [sic] into deception OK?...If I don't hear from you I will inform Inside Times of your deception and put an end to your reign of manipulation.*

The tone of the letter created some anxiety. Further to discussing this with one of my supervisors, it was agreed that I should write back, informing the prisoner that I was not aware of the presence of my advertisement in Inside Time and, following discussions with Unlock, they too were unable to explain how the advertisement had come to be published there. I apologised for any inconvenience this had caused him. Unfortunately, this resulted in my receipt of a second letter shortly after my response. This four page letter was written in a similar tone to the first and contained a number of somewhat incoherent ramblings. It was decided best to ignore this rather than continue communication.

With regard to the other letters received as a result of the advert in 'Inside Time', which were offers of help, a standard letter was returned acknowledging receipt, thanking the men for their offers of help but with an explanation that the research focused on men who were currently living in the community (which the advertisement had stated) and was to take place imminently. The prisoner who was due to be released was considered potentially suitable, given the small numbers of participants secured at the time. A letter was sent to his address upon release, with a pre-paid return envelope to return if he still wished to participate, however, care was taken not to include any details regarding the focus of the research (that is, sexual offenders with child victims), in the event that the letter came to the attention of someone other than the potential interviewee. Shortly after, the prepaid envelope was returned by the potential participant, who had now relocated to another area of the country and expressed his desire to participate. I then forwarded an information sheet providing further information on the project but failed to receive a response.

It was necessary to place a second advertisement in November 2013 in an attempt to obtain five further participants. This ultimately resulted in the achievement of a final sample of 15, two of whom did not strictly fit the advertisement's sample criteria. John had received a prison sentence of nine months and thus failed to fulfil the advertisement's criteria of being released from prison for at least a year. However, due to the difficulties accessing suitable respondents he was included in the final sample. Howard had been convicted of an offence relating to the age of consent: he had been engaged in a relationship with a male who was aged 18 at a time when the age of consent for homosexual relationships was 21. The offence had also involved a breach of trust as Howard had met the young man through his occupation. Howard had received a prison sentence of four years. It is perhaps therefore questionable that Howard was included in a study of adult male child sexual offenders. However, due to the fact that he responded to the advertisement, therefore defining himself as 'having been convicted of an offence involving a child', he was considered suitable for inclusion in the sample.

The fact that the majority of participants were ultimately recruited via my advertisement meant that they were located in various areas of England and Scotland. This required consideration of interview venues. I therefore contacted criminologists located in universities close to which participants resided. This approach resulted in the availability of a room for interview in three universities, where four interviews were conducted. On occasion, when criminologists were unable to assist, alternative venues such as community centres, libraries, and a Quaker meeting house were secured for interviews. On three occasions, respondents were willing to travel to Sheffield and were interviewed at the university. Three of the 15 participants were interviewed by telephone, either due to their geographical distance, or in the case of Terry, his desire to

remain visually anonymous. The following section presents brief characteristics of the sample (comprehensive sample characteristics can be found in appendix D).

### 3.4.2.1 The sample

The sample ultimately comprised a heterogeneous group of 15 adult male child sex offenders, rather than the initial desired sample of extra-familial offenders with male victims. The 15 men (100% white) had an average age of 50.6 years (range = 28-79). The most recent custodial sentence length was on average 58 months (range = 9 months-12 years) for various sexual offences involving a child (both contact and non-contact). Ultimately, all participants had been living in the community for between one and 15 years, with a mean of six and a half years. The tables below present the ages of the sample, post-release periods and offence types.

*Table 3.1: Ages of sample (10 year intervals) (n=15)*

| Age bracket | Frequency (*n*) |
|---|---|
| 20s | 3 |
| 30s | 0 |
| 40s | 4 |
| 50s | 3 |
| 60s | 4 |
| 70s | 1 |

*Table 3.2: Post-release periods (n=15)*

| Time since release (months – years) | Frequency (*n*) |
|---|---|
| 1-11        less than a year | 0 |
| 12-23       one – two years | 3 |
| 24-36       two – three years | 3 |
| 37-48       three – four years | 1 |
| 49-60       four – five years | 1 |
| 61-72       five – six years | 0 |
| 73-84       six – seven years | 0 |
| 85-96       seven – eight years | 0 |
| 97-108      eight – nine years | 2 |
| 109-120   nine – 10 years | 1 |
| 121-132   10 – 11 years | 1 |
| 133-144   11 – 12 years | 0 |
| 145-156   12 – 13 years | 1 |
| 157-168   13 – 14 years | 0 |
| 169-180   14 – 15 years | 2 |

*Table 3.3: Offender types (n=15)*

| Offender type | Frequency (*n*) |
|---|---|
| Contact | 10 |
| Extra-familial | 4 |
| Intra-familial[12] | 6 |
| Non-contact | 5 |
| Extra-familial | 5 |
| Intra-familial | 0 |

### 3.4.3 Interviewing sexual offenders

The specific challenges of interviewing sexual offenders and the potential effects of this on researchers are noted by several authors (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010; Allnock, 2011; Roberts, 2011). Further to their experience of conducting interviews in prison with sexual offenders, Blagden and Pemberton (2010: 274-5) note that "Research participants need to both trust and feel comfortable spending time with the researcher in order to enable them to talk openly about their lives and offending behaviour". The authors also suggest that, in order to build a rapport with this type of participant, the researcher's moral position must be reconciled. Sexual crimes, particularly those involving child victims, are considered repugnant and morally wrong, thus, individuals committing such crimes are often reviled. Researchers portraying this attitude to participants risk a potentially hostile response, which is unlikely to facilitate successful interviewing. It is therefore necessary for the researcher to adopt "a humanistic approach where one separates the act of the sexual offence away from the person" (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010: 272). Similarly, Colton and Vanstone (1996: 5), who also conducted interviews in prison with men who had sexually abused children, note the necessity of consciously inhibiting their "…natural reactions to some of the discourse of the men and to limit overt challenging of attitudes…in order to facilitate a process that enabled their stories to be told".

The importance of building a rapport with interviewees is frequently referred to in the literature, however, the concept is rarely questioned. Does the interviewer 'know' if they have achieved rapport? Would the interviewee agree? Does a lack of rapport result in a lack of data? Mitchell-Miller & Tewkesbury (2001: 55), experienced researchers of deviant populations, expand the concept of rapport:

> Becoming trusted and seen as someone with whom research participants are comfortable spending time, talking, and sharing their lives is called 'establishing rapport'. In order for a researcher to truly understand the world from the perspectives of those being studied and to see how persons being studied think about their world it is critically important for rapport to be established.

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[12] Includes step-children.

Mitchell-Miller and Tewkesbury (2001) argue that the establishment of rapport is often more difficult, and of greater importance, when researching those stigmatised by society, who are likely to be suspicious of researchers. Whilst it is likely that CSOs have discussed their offending behaviour on numerous occasions within the criminal justice arena, a comfortable research interview devoid of a criminal justice agenda may be more likely to encourage the individual's open discussion of their experiences. Employing the Oxford Dictionaries' (2016) definition, whereby rapport is defined as "a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016: no page), I believe that rapport was achieved with the majority of participants. Interviews with Alan were particularly difficult. I feel this was due in part to Alan's personality and also the fact that he was the first interviewee, a time when I was perhaps more naïve and made the mistake of challenging some of his statements. Alan appeared somewhat wary of me and the purpose of my research. He became increasingly hostile, potentially due to my failure to collude with him as he persistently criticised the injustice of the system and used derogratory comments to describe various professionals involved in his management. Simon's interview was also difficult as he appeared to be a quiet and shy individual and thus, it was difficult to encourage him to elaborate on some issues despite the use of prompts. Thus, although the researcher must be reflexive and adapt their style of interviewing to the subject's personality style, ultimately it is common in everyday life to have more affinity with some individuals than others, and this also applies to research interviews.

Some of the participants may agree that we achieved rapport given that some volunteered at the end of interview that the experience had been enjoyable. Nigel also acknowledged this in an email sent subsequent to the interview:

> *Many thanks for your consideration at our meeting on Thursday. I enjoyed the opportunity to discuss my experiences, and trust it will prove to be helpful to you. If I can be of further help, then I will be happy to respond.*

It was not necessary for interviews to explore participants' offences in detail, hence I was not subjected to distressing accounts of child abuse, with the exception of Terry, who provided explicit information on the nature of his abusive behaviour. This interview was conducted over the telephone using a device which facilitated recording. Despite my assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, Terry was keen to avoid a face-to-face meeting and was only willing to participate via telephone. Given the difficulties in obtaining a sample, I agreed to proceed despite my concerns that this would prohibit observation of body language, potentially limit development of rapport, and thus potentially limit the amount of rich data collected. Any concerns were ultimately unwarranted as this interview was perhaps the most insightful. The lack of visible contact appeared to provide Terry with a sense of anonymity, such that he was

comfortable in discussing sensitive issues, potentially for reasons cited by Noaks and Wincup who suggest that during telephone interviews "respondents who may be concerned about being judged by the interviewer feel less exposed, and thus more able to answer honestly" (National Opinion Poll, 2000, cited in Noaks & Wincup, 2004). Terry's telephone interview, occurring early in the fieldwork, also provided an opportunity for me to adjust to any further potentially disturbing narratives in the forthcoming interviews, whilst eliminating any of my visible natural reactions to the graphic detail provided. Two further interviews (with Vic and John) were conducted via telephone due to their geographical locations. There were no problems with building rapport whilst conducting John's interview, thus I do not feel that the telephone interviews proved detrimental in relation to the quality of data collected. Vic's interview was perhaps the least useful due to his chronic alcoholism and the fact that he appeared to be inebriated at the time of interview, hence the validity of the data collected is potentially dubious.

Referring to participants in criminological research, who may often be termed 'vulnerable', Noaks and Wincup's (2004: 84) assertion is perhaps particularly pertinent in research involving highly stigmatised CSOs: "It is important that the interviewer acknowledge and maintain an awareness that they will frequently be dealing with personal sensitive issues that can generate emotional effects for the individual being interviewed". Indeed, some of the men became tearful when recounting their stories, which initially felt somewhat awkward. Had this been a friend or relative my natural reaction would be to comfort them, which of course was not appropriate in this context. I would therefore pause for a short period, hand them a tissue and ask if they wished to take a break or change the subject.

Kirsty Hudson, further to conducting research with imprisoned sexual offenders, acknowledges the emotional challenges of such an endeavour, arguing that "Every researcher must be affected by their research" (2005: 10). I myself found some of the participants' narratives to be particularly emotive, particularly those who volunteered stories of difficult childhoods. Furthermore, interviewees' distress became apparent when several revealed that they had attempted suicide following detection of their offending. Their narratives of despair invoked feelings of sympathy, despite the nature of their offences.

In the early stages of the fieldwork, it was common for me to wrestle with conflicting emotions, an issue which resolved itself as the research progressed. The majority of the men were personable and intelligent and I found myself liking some of them. How could I like someone who was guilty of committing sexual offences involving children? Hudson (2005: 7) admitted that she too came to like some of her (CSO) participants. She articulates my feelings effectively:

> On the one hand I could justify this safe in the knowledge that these men had multiple identities…and hence it was possible to like them while simultaneously maintaining a strong repulsion for what they had done in the past. But on the other hand it was hard to hold on to this balance when the popular view is to reject everything about them.

It was necessary for me to travel by train to the majority of interviews and I found the return journeys useful for digesting the interview experience. I often made notes of the interview and my feelings at the time, which helped me to offload any troublesome emotions such that by the time I returned home I had emotionally 'recovered'. I believe that this 'time-out' was necessary due to the cognitive load created by conducting interviews (which often left me somewhat drained), as much as the nature of the subjects. Whilst it was always possible to arrange a formal debriefing meeting with supervisors, this was never considered necessary. As the research progressed, some degree of desensitisation became commonplace, although this arguably served as a self-protective mechanism rather than presenting a problematic effect, given that normal emotional responses to everyday situations were still present.

Whilst the term 'sex offender' tends to equate with the media-influenced image of the "hideous monster" (Marshall, 1996: 318), participants' offence types reflected heterogeneity, apparent on a continuum of severity. All had been convicted of a sexual offence involving a child victim, although the offences varied and included contact and non-contact (internet images/grooming), different gendered victims and different victim relationships. The offence for which Howard was convicted 14 years prior to our interview had since ceased to constitute an offence, however, he was still subject to the terms and conditions of the SOR. He had received a four-year sentence for consensual intercourse with his male partner who was 18 at the time and with whom he cohabited. Following a disagreement his partner reported their relationship to the police. The age of consent for homosexual sex was 21 at the time. The diversity of offence types within the sample reflects the heterogeneous nature of sexual offenders and, I argue, reinforces the fact that not all 'sex offenders' are "hideous monsters" (Marshall, 1996: 318).

The researcher's gender may be a pertinent issue in the situated context of interviews with CSOs. Blagden and Pemberton's (2010) prison research with CSOs illustrates the dual techniques employed by interviewees dependent upon the interviewer's gender. Appeals to masculinity in seeking collusion is likely to be sought from a male interviewer, as Nick Blagden found when one interviewee sought support when discussing justification for his offence of rape, by suggesting that all men like rough sex. Sarah Pemberton interviewed men convicted of victimising adult females and encountered sexualised comments from participants regarding her physical appearance. In situations such as these, Blagden and Pemberton (2010) advise that the subject be quickly changed; in the former example to avoid potential collusion and in the latter, to avoid undermining the female researcher. Similar potential issues are noted by Hearn,

Andersson and Cowburn (2007), who suggest terminating the interview should it become uncomfortably sexualised or feel dangerous in any way. My own position as a female interviewer minimised any issues of participants' attempts at offence collusion, noted by Blagden and Pemberton (2010). Fortunately, I did not encounter any sexualised comments from participants, perhaps due to their convictions for offences against children, rather than those with adult victims interviewed by Sarah Pemberton. My previous experience of working with sexual offenders in a prison environment reminded me of the necessity of wearing non-revealing clothing in order to avoid provocation of any sexualised behaviour or comments. This issue was also pertinent in relation to power dynamics. I avoided wearing formal clothing in favour of smart casual dress in order to avoid invoking perceptions of authority which may have limited the men's free expression. I wished to empower participants and asked them towards the end of the interviews whether they felt there were any other important factors in their desistance which we had not discussed, given that they were the 'experts'.

Sexual offenders are notoriously manipulative and deceptive (Waldram, 2007; Blagden & Pemberton, 2010), essential for their offending behaviour. The researcher must be aware of the potential for manipulation and the potential that CSOs may employ the use of explicit sexual language and graphic detail of offences in attempts to deliberately shock the researcher (Roberts, 2011). It is wise prior to interviewing this offender type to enter the research environment with an awareness of such potential techniques. Within the current project, the latter technique was evident in Alan's interview, as he employed the use of explicit sexual language, clearly attempting to shock me. I was aware of the need to minimise any visible reaction to this, as to have done so would demonstrate vulnerability, however, I cannot claim that this was a comfortable scenario.

Becker's (1967) seminal work 'whose side are we on?' discusses neutrality and objectivity in sociological research and suggests that studies of deviance usually involve sympathy with those studied. Becker (1967) believes it inevitable that the researcher takes sides as research cannot be value free. In this respect I was on 'their side' with the aim of establishing a rapport in an attempt to obtain rich data. As the men became less likely to trouble me emotionally, rapport development became easier and I often felt sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by participants. Liebling (2001) questions whether acquiring sympathy for those we study undermines or adds to our professional integrity. However, she also acknowledges that empathy is important in interviews – the capacity to feel, relate and become 'involved' is a key part of the overall research task as an act of human engagement. Roberts (2011) acknowledges the difficulties of retaining control of an interview when confronted with disturbing narrative content, and suggests that this requires a form of 'disciplined empathy' (Medlicott, 2004, cited

in Roberts, 2011).  This term succinctly summarises what is required – one must retain a humanistic approach whilst avoiding the development of a 'friendship'.

Ultimately, the "challenge in conducting qualitative research with convicted sex offenders" (Blagden & Pemberton, 2010), in my experience, was balanced by the rewards, as the majority of interviews proved to be enjoyable, insightful and rewarding.

### 3.4.4 Analysis

The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and included pauses, sighs, laughter, any 'erms' and 'filler' phrases such as 'you know'.  This approach was deemed necessary in order to obtain a feel for the attitude of the narrator at the time.  Transcription was undertaken personally and, despite being an experienced audio typist, proved to be a time consuming process.  The interviews lasted between one and two and a half hours, with an average of around two hours.  Undertaking one's own transcription is recommended as it allows for commencement of the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).  Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.  In addition, specific place names, people, or other identifying features were also anonymised.

Due to the small sample size, analysis was undertaken without the assistance of computer software packages such as NVivo, therefore, following transcription, the iterative process of close reading and re-reading of the transcripts ensured familiarisation (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). In accordance with Braun & Clarke's (2006) guide to conducting thematic analysis, themes were identified when several accounts contained the same or similar experience or feeling. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis offers a theoretically-flexible approach to the analysis of qualitative data.  As such, the existing literature on desistance from non-sexual offending together with the small body of research exploring desistance in sexual offenders guided the potential themes.  However, it was important to keep an open mind in relation to new, previously unrecognised themes.  Whilst the research area of desistance from sexual offending was previously under-researched, one may assume that an inductive approach to analysis was more appropriate.  However, due to the large body of literature on desistance from general offending, it was difficult to remain 'atheoretical' (Matthews & Ross, 2010) and avoid influence from previous literature reviews and research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, a combination of both inductive and theoretical (deductive) approaches to analysis were employed. Common themes emerged in the data, which included both previously recognised and new unanticipated themes.  Subsequently, data were coded and organised into meaningful groups of information. The transcription and coding process was informed by adaptive theory, which "both shapes, and is shaped by the empirical data that emerges from the

research. It allows for the dual influence of extant theory (theoretical models) as well as those that unfold from (are unfolded in) the research" (Layder, 1998: 133). Thus, adaptive theory appears to bridge the gap between inductive and deductive approaches to analysis.

### 3.5 Discussion

This chapter has addressed the methodology employed in the current research which involved qualitative interviews with CSOs. The ethical concerns in conducting research with vulnerable participants have been discussed, including the steps taken to minimise harm to both interviewees and myself as the interviewer. Confidentiality and the limits of this were carefully considered, together with the necessity of assuring anonymity of respondents. The protracted and frustrating process of securing access to a suitable sample has been also been presented in this chapter. My own personal biography and its potential impact upon interviews was considered, together with my own experiences of conducting interviews with CSOs, which I found on the whole to be a particularly rewarding endeavour.

The following three chapters present the findings from analysis of the interview transcripts, from which three prominent themes arose. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the contemporary penal climate and its approach to the treatment and management of CSOs, the overriding theme was that of 'control'. Chapters Four and Five address the prominent sources of external control identified in respondents' narratives. As such, Chapter Four addresses the theme of formal social control, referring to the penal controls to which the men were subject, and includes their experiences of prison and community supervision and management. Further to this, Chapter Five presents findings relating to the theme of informal social control in the community, focusing on accommodation, employment, support networks, romantic relationships and constructive activity. Chapter Six explores the theme of internal (re)sources of control, focusing on respondents' ability to exercise agency, their negotiation of stigma and identity, and positive feelings such as hope and trust, upon which the men drew to support and maintain their desistance. Chapter Seven proceeds to synthesise these three themes and unravel the complex process of desistance from sexual offending. Chapter eight concludes the thesis through discussion of key findings and their implications for policy and practice, together with suggested avenues for further research.

# Four: Formal Social Control

## 4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the first of the three prominent themes emerging from respondents' narratives. These three themes relate to the external and internal forms of control assisting desistance from sexual offending. There is a somewhat artificial separation between the three analysis chapters of formal social control, informal social control and internal (re)sources of control because it is unlikely that each form of 'control' is in operation in isolation, but rather that these overlap and interact. The themes are presented separately to aid clarity prior to addressing these in combination in Chapter Seven.

The formal social controls discussed in this chapter refer to the penal/legal sanctions to which CSOS are subject, and follow the chronological order in which they were experienced. As such, the chapter begins by exploring participants' experiences of prison and the role of this in their desistance, a factor which does not appear to have been addressed in previous research on desistance from sexual offending. Sampson and Laub's (1993) research on non-sexual offenders led them to suggest that incarceration is likely to be criminogenic and may lead to a 'structural labelling' effect (1993: 253), by limiting the acquisition of social capital known to be beneficial to desistance.

Previous research has consistently highlighted the efficacy of sex offender treatment in desistance (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; 2015; Harris, 2014). The majority of participants in the current study undertook sex offender treatment whilst in prison, and the role of this in their desistance is also considered in this chapter. Further to their release from prison, most participants were subject to supervision whilst on licence. Their experiences of supervision are presented and discussed in relation to their desistance.

Finally, this chapter examines participants' experiences of interactions with the police, via the terms and conditions of the sex offender register (SOR), together with any civil orders to which they were subject. Previous research appears to have neglected any focus on the role of the SOR upon desistance from sexual offending. The SOR represents a form of surveillance, thus registrants are more likely to be apprehended through such a 'monitored existence' (Garland, 2000: 350), which may serve as a deterrent to reoffending.

### 4.2 Prison

Michael Howard's [13] infamous claim in 1993 that 'prison works' contrasts with the high recidivism rates of non-sexual offenders following incarceration (Burnett & Maruna, 2004; and discussed in Chapter One). Whilst imprisonment is useful for addressing the penal philosophies of incapacitation and retribution for those whose sexual offence/s are severe enough to warrant it, its rehabilitative and deterrent effects are unclear. Sexual offenders account for 15% of the prison population in England and Wales (Evans, 2014). The reported shortage of treatment programs in prisons and the lengthy waiting times to access these (Evans, 2014) indicate that some CSOs receive little in the way of rehabilitation and as such, the rehabilitative effect of imprisonment may be lacking. However, the transformative narratives displayed by some of Schinkel's (2015) non-sexual offending participants were unrelated to the intended rehabilitative aspects of prison. Prison appeared to serve as a turning point in prompting narratives of transformation which were argued to be "a strategy adopted by some men, under certain circumstances, in order to make sense of their imprisonment and their desired future" (Schinkel, 2015: 7), which is suggested to aid desistance if supported by personal and social supports upon release. Several studies of non-sexual offenders find prison to serve a deterrent effect (Meisenhelder, 1977; Shover, 1983) and assist in individuals' personal transformation, thus highlighting a beneficial contribution to desistance (Aresti et al, 2010; Barry, 2006; Comfort, 2008). However, Sampson and Laub (2003) argue that imprisonment is likely to disable desistance due to its resulting barriers to accessing social capital.

The extent to which imprisonment contributes to the low recidivism rates of CSOs is unclear. Previous research neglects explicit exploration of this factor. Whilst Farmer et al (2015) found arrest to be a turning point and the effects of detection and conviction to act as a deterrent, the effect of prison upon desistance is not explored in their paper. Research focusing on sex offenders' experiences of prison is also limited, focusing on differing factors. Ievins' (2014; Ievins & Crewe, 2015) research, conducted in an English prison solely accommodating CSOs, explored their attempts to develop an equal moral community. Waldram's (2007) ethnographic research in a prison-based sexual offender treatment unit focused primarily on the necessity of the establishment of trust in the research relationship. The current study explored participants' experiences of prison in relation to their desistance, a theme notably absent in the previous literature.

Sexual offenders tend to be housed separately from mainstream offenders within prisons (on a vulnerable prisoners unit – VPU) due to the potential of victimisation, but arguably also

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[13] Conservative Home Secretary 1993-1997.

reflecting the stigmatisation they experience in wider society (Hudson, 2005). Members of the current sample had served their sentences on VPUs in several mainstream prisons, and often also spent some of their sentence in a dedicated sex offender prison[14] (solely accommodating CSOs). The latter were considered by participants to be preferable to VPUs. Derek described the dedicated sex offender prison in which he spent part of his sentence as having *"a less harsh regime"*, than mainstream prisons, with ample opportunities to keep busy. The fact that all residents had committed sexual offences led to feelings of greater safety:

> *…the ethos of that place was that, erm, nobody knowing me could point a finger and level any accusation at somebody else having done worse than them because…they had committed crimes of the same nature* (Derek).

Vic also referred to greater feelings of safety in the dedicated sex offender prison in which he spent part of his sentence. He contrasted this with his time spent in a mainstream prison where he claimed to have experienced physical violence and believed that the food was tampered with.

Time spent on VPUs, for some, created feelings of fear. Pete discussed various issues with other inmates, one of whom he claimed made sexual advances; another he described as being manipulative and having stolen from him. Russ spent the last few months of his sentence in the segregation wing due to threats to his safety from other prisoners on the VPU. Nigel described bullying, gangs, drugs and the hierarchical structure of the VPU:

> *…so a guy who'd raped a woman… would put himself higher in the hierarchy… and therefore he was better than someone who had offended against a child.*

Kevin also experienced violence whilst on a VPU in a mainstream prison, again relating to the hierarchy of sexual offenders:

> *So… erm…on three occasions…the first occasion was a prisoner… who decided that since I was on remand and he was a convicted prisoner he was a better bloke than me, and since I was a child sex offender and he was just an adult sex offender, he was a better bloke than me and he was going on and on and on, and at one point when they unlocked us I threw him onto the safety net…and strangely enough from that moment on, prisoners who knew me left me alone unless they actually wanted to be part of my inner circle, so to speak.*

The benefits of a dedicated sex offender prison noted by participants in the present study support Ievins' (2014) findings in which inhabitants of HMP Whatton, a dedicated sex offender prison, noted greater feelings of safety, fewer restrictions on movement and a decreased likelihood of victimisation than the mainstream prisons in which they had previously resided. The hyper-masculinity often found among mainstream prisoners (Jewkes, 2005) was notably absent in HMP Whatton (Ievins, 2014). However, despite the prison's aim of promoting equality, inhabitants struggled to avoid making moral judgements concerning others' behaviour.

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[14] Eight sex offender only prisons exist in England and Wales, due to the growth in this offender type which has become the fastest growing part of the British prison population (Barrett, 2014).

Although they claimed to reside in an equal moral community, this masked an underlying culture of judgement, in which 'paedophiles' were considered as the worst offenders, situated at the bottom on the hierarchy (Ievins, 2014). This was suggested to be "a consequence of the strong negative feelings most people have towards sex offenders" (Ievins, 2014: 27). This finding was not corroborated by respondents in the present study, who noted greater feelings of equality in dedicated sex offender prisons. This difference is likely due to the differing focus of the two studies and the fact that interviewees in the present study were not probed specifically in relation to this.

Sexual offenders are often rejected and disowned by friends and family once their offending is realised (Brogden & Harkin, 2000), and this was true of several participants in the current study (discussed further in Chapter Five) who received few visits whilst incarcerated. The sense of isolation, loneliness and desperation was tangible in a number of the mens' accounts. Their feelings of desperation were apparent in the all too common attempts at suicide closely following their apprehension. Feelings of depression tended to continue into the early days of imprisonment. Derek summarised the experience of prison and the subsequent effects of a conviction for a sexual offence as *"catastrophic"*. Ian discussed being completely disowned by his family which led to a suicide attempt prior to his incarceration and resulted in the early months of his imprisonment being spent on the prison's mental health wing. Similarly, Derek was on suicide watch during the first few months of his incarceration. Simon's attempt at suicide resulted in a lengthy hospital stay. The mens' suicide attempts took place shortly after their apprehension and resulted from the realisation that their lives would never be the same again. Terry recounted attempting suicide by laying on a railway track, although at the time of interview was able to find some humour as he described the train coming down the adjacent track.

The men were acutely aware of the damaging effects of the 'sex offender' label and how others would perceive them: *"...it's the public perception that everyone who is on the sex offenders register is a paedo, we'll grab the nearest child off the street"* (Terry). Those who managed to maintain contact with family and/or friends were particularly grateful for their support. Howard's friends and family all stood by him, writing regularly and visiting whilst he was imprisoned. Pete, although visited infrequently by his mother and sister, retained regular telephone contact with them. Russ and Adam, the youngest participants, received regular visits from their parents.

Despite the feelings of isolation and desperation pervading a number of participants' accounts, they were generally able to find some strength and positivity, such that most summarised prison

to be better than expected. Pete discussed resigning himself to incarceration and managing to "*...make the best of the situation...*". Nigel's account of his first night in prison, sharing a cell with a relative,[15] reflects the approach to incarceration that most participants adopted:

> *I think by then I'd come to terms with it and decided that the only way to deal with this was to get on with it, embrace it and make something of it, and that period of time in prison was the time with [relative] that we were in the same cell for the same period of time, I think we mentally agreed on a strategy. There was not a damn thing we could do to change that, except to accept it, acknowledge what we were going to face and get on with it, make something positive of it...I just thought well, that's my life over and I've got to adjust to this and make something of it, I've got to find... something... that will give my life purpose over the next six years and that is the key, you have to find something positive that you can develop out of that.*

A daily structure and keeping occupied were key to coping with the 'pains of imprisonment' which are arguably enhanced in stigmatised CSOs, particularly in mainstream prisons. Pete discussed obtaining some enjoyment whilst in prison:

> *When you're in prison you have a structure. You get up at a certain time, you go to bed at a certain time, doors are unlocked at a certain time, you eat at a certain time, you go to work at certain times...there are times when you can associate. Everything around your daily business is done according to a plan...I enjoyed a job because it got me out in the fresh air...I wouldn't say that I hated every moment of my time in prison because that is the wrong attitude. If you go in with that attitude... you're gonna have a really bad time...I went in and said right, these guys are my keepers, I'll show them all the respect they deserve and I'll get on with it. And I did. I got on alright with everybody and in a way, yes, I did make the best of the situation...but I wouldn't wanna go back, erm...because I did my crying that weekend of the bank holiday when I first went in...it was a shock and that, got over that and just admitted to myself, right, I'm here, I gotta deal with it...*

Similarly, Patrick highlighted the importance of routine in prisons:

> *...now I know it's not the horror that you imagine it to be before you've been...I tell you, the routine is a blessing...if I look back on it, it wasn't that bad you know?.*

Kevin also noted that routine was beneficial to maintaining a sense of normality:

> *...the point is by having that routine, get up at 7.30, do this by 8.30, do this, do this, do this, lunch at this time, bang bang bang, supper at this time, bang bang bang. Even down to the TV programmes that you've regularly watched. Exactly the same as on the out. The idea...this is one of the things that people miss about prison. Prison is not for punishment, prison is as punishment and once you're inside the gate, it's that the gate that's the punishment. You should live as normal a life as possible and they should facilitate you living as normal a life as possible within that community...ultimately if you don't take part in prison you're not gonna get anything out of it. You're in there anyway, you may as well do what you can to enjoy it. You know, once that door is closed behind you there's virtually nothing you can do about it.*

All participants engaged in various types of work whilst in prison, some also undertaking educational courses. Derek's awareness that he was unable to return to his previous profession (which involved working with children) prompted his development of new skills such as

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[15] Nigel and two of his relatives were sentenced for the sexual abuse of other relatives during childhood.

decorating and plastering, in order to prepare himself for his release and the search for new employment. Ian worked whilst in prison and also obtained qualifications in maths, english and computing. Howard worked as wing cleaner and undertook an Open University course. Kevin obtained an A level in law. Terry gained maths, english and computing qualifications and felt that engaging in education was very useful:

> *...because it keeps you together. If you sit doing nothing that's when your mind goes wayward, er...and you start thinking why me?.*

Perhaps surprisingly, but again demonstrating the positive approach to prison adopted by participants, Howard described his incarceration as a cathartic experience as his absence from mainstream society ensured the termination of his relationship with an abusive partner:

> *I think well, I wonder if I hadn't actually gone to prison for a couple of years whether I'd be alive today. There's several reasons for that. My so-called partner would have come back to me and erm, my mental health would have deteriorated even further, cos he was not a very nice person. He'd hit me as well if he didn't get his own way and um...I would have been self-harming...so I feel positive about prison. And being in [prison name] was very positive, it was like being in a huge family.*

Imprisonment appeared to have served as a turning point which allowed Howard to 'knife off' his abusive relationship. Whilst he was unable to extract himself from his relationship prior to incarceration, Howard realised its value in enabling these changes to occur. Laub & Sampson's (2003) elderly participants narrative accounts also identified incarceration as a turning point, which they believed had prevented their lives from becoming much worse.

Highlighting the relevance of deterrence theory, Pete discussed the certainty of apprehension and punishment should he continue to offend:

> *I will **never** forget the time in prison...that's my motivation to never reoffend because I know that would happen again and there were times when I was really frightened in prison.*

Similarly, Kevin implied that prison served as a deterrent to *"most sex offenders"*:

> *The majority of them will hear that [prison] door slam behind them and never want to hear that door slam behind them again, ever.*

Reflecting the difficulties that CSOs experience with accepting the 'sex offender' label (see Ievins, 2014), Kevin tended to distance himself and often referred to 'sex offenders' as a group of which he was not part.[16] When questioned further about whether he felt that prison had acted as a deterrent to him, he said:

> ***yes.*** *Regardless of what anyone claims, being remanded...the majority of sex offenders get remanded, simple as that. Even if they're found not guilty, they've been in prison and when I say sex offenders I mean in that scenario people who have been accused of sexual offences.*

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[16] Participants' identity negotiation is explored in Chapter Seven.

Whilst all of the participants found their time in prison to be reasonable once they had accepted it, formed friendships and engaged in work and education, it was generally presented as a deterrent to further offending. Ian discussed the loss of liberty:

> *...you know although prison wasn't anywhere near as bad as I thought it was going to be, at the end of the day going to prison has still taken away my liberties. Yeah, I'm still locked up behind me door from six o'clock onwards till eight in the morning.*

Apprehension for their offending and subsequent incarceration appeared to come as a shock to several respondents, who had believed they were likely to remain undetected. Kevin explained:

> *Sex offenders are terrified of going to prison and they think they're clever enough to not do so, and when that door slams behind them and they realise they aint that clever, that's normally when the offending stops and when I was doing what I was doing I didn't think I was offending. It was only after the door slammed behind me that I realised I might be...[offending].*

His account included repeated references to the slamming of the prison door, reflecting the painful loss of liberty discussed by Ian, together with other symbolic references, apparent as he discussed how the dedicated sex offender prison was better than the others: "*If you have to be in a prison that's got a wall round it, [prison name] is a good place to be*". Kevin also engaged in a number of symbolic rituals, which appeared to be his method of ensuring closure of the prison experience. He visited four of the prisons in which he had been incarcerated in one evening, simply to touch their gates:

> *I decided one evening that I was to clear myself of the northern prisons that I'd dealt with so in one evening, leaving home at eight in the evening I did [names four prisons] before going home.*

In a further symbolic gesture and taking a menthol nasal stick from his pocket, Kevin described sniffing this should he need a reminder not to reoffend:

> *What it reminds me of is the day the prison door slammed behind me, 'cos it's the only thing I had. It's the only thing I had left that they would let me walk in the door with other than a book. This....is about my sixteenth Vicks since coming out of prison and if I need a reminder at any point of exactly why I'm not offending today...[sniffs it] that.....well you can see the quiver cant you? See me shaking?*

Patrick's account echoed Kevin's belief that he was unlikely to be apprehended for his offending behaviour. Both believed that apprehension and punishment were unlikely and thus, conviction came as a shock. When Patrick was asked if he felt that prison was a deterrent to offending: "*erm, yes it is I wouldn't go back [laughs]*". However, upon further elaboration, I was unconvinced that prison acted as a deterrent and was influential in his desistance:

> *It's less of a deterrent than it was if I'd considered it a possibility...I mean I didn't consider it a possibility 'cos I didn't consider in my erm, reasoning that there was a possibility that I'd ever go to prison...yeah, well I mean who'd complain about me? I wasn't doing anything that wrong, they weren't objecting that much to me so....so erm, got that wrong didn't I? [laughs] but if I'd considered it a possibility then, prison would*

*be more of a deterrent than it would be now, now I know it's not the horror that you imagine it to be before you've been.*

Others implied that prison served as a deterrent:

*The prison system makes you feel like you're a piece of shit… if somebody enjoys prison then there's something wrong with society, fucking prison is shit* (Terry).

*…nobody wants to go back to prison* (Russ).

Despite feelings of loss and despair experienced whilst imprisoned, participants were able to draw on the positives to conclude retrospectively that imprisonment was not as bad as they expected, particularly when serving time in a dedicated sex offender prison. However, the 'pains of imprisonment' were apparent and are arguably amplified in those convicted of a sexual offence. Prison was a significant factor in the desistance process of the present sample, and appeared to act as a turning point which provided time for reflection and prompted a re-evaluation of their lives. It is not possible to identify within the current study whether respondents' narratives of transformation began whilst imprisoned (Schinkel, 2015) due to its retrospective nature.

The majority of participants felt that prison served as a deterrent to further offending. Indeed, the deterrent effect of prison was still apparent in the narratives of those who had spent the longest periods post-release. The following section explores participants' experiences of sex offender treatment and the role of this in their desistance.

### *4.3 Sex offender treatment*

Thirteen of the 15 men in the present sample had undertaken the SOTP whilst in prison. One of the respondents, Terry, had also completed treatment in the community further to prison release. Of the two who did not undertaken treatment - John's prison sentence was too short to allow for it, and Kevin was deemed unsuitable due to being in denial. He had begun treatment whilst on licence but failed to complete this as he claimed it resulted in a deterioration of his mental health.

In England and Wales, lower rates of sexual reconviction are demonstrated by treated CSOs (undertaken either in prison or a community setting) compared to untreated CSOs (Ministry of Justice, 2010a). CSOs reporting a positive treatment experience are more likely to internalise its messages and remain motivated (Beech et al, 1998) to desist. Wakeling, Webster and Mann (2005) found that 39 out of 46 men who had undertaken sex offender treatment whilst in prison reported this to be a positive, worthwhile experience. They reported having learned how to

cope differently in the future, due to gaining understanding of their offending behaviour and the effects of this upon victims. The victim empathy role play component of the programme was reported to have caused the greatest distress, however, this was also reported to be the most helpful part of the programme by Wakeling et al (2005) and is supported by participants in the current study. Pete's account of treatment reflects this:

> *It's quite intensive, very distressing at times because in one of the situations they actually put you into the position of the abused and they get somebody else to play the part of the abuser and, it was not uncommon for people to shut themselves away for a few days afterwards, dealing with those emotions and it was quite...it did actually really put you into the position [of the victim].*

Similarly, Derek became tearful when discussing his experience of treatment, describing the programme as *"harrowing"*. He had struggled to understand that what he saw as a consensual relationship with an underage girl was instead grooming of a vulnerable victim, and thus acknowledged the value of treatment, particularly the victim empathy component, in helping him come to terms with this. Harris (2014) also found sex offender treatment to assist with cognitive transformations related to understanding of the harm caused through respondents' offending behaviour.

Nigel also found treatment beneficial, albeit disturbing. His offences were committed as a child and treatment led him to question his sexual motivations in later life:

> *I think I understood better. Erm…but I also…I needed to accept as well…..or to be able to verbalise and mentally come to terms with my guilt and my offences. I didn't want to be making excuses for my offences, which I had made excuses for. I was responsible, I was the one that did it. Yes I was only a child but still it was me that did it. That's what I needed to get...was there something broken in my psyche? Was there something that was likely to erm, suddenly rear its head again at some point? Was it possible that I could even offend again? And that was absolutely abhorrent for me to think about, bearing in mind I'd been a teacher, worked closely with very young children, I'd had two, I was a partner of a woman with two young daughters. Had I...had there been any unconscious thinking about my offences or about offending?, all this, things like, you know you open that cupboard door and have a look and think, I wanna close that quickly. Was there any of that still in my head? Did I pose a risk, did I really pose a risk? And I tested my thinking erm, I....challenged my thinking on a number of occasions in order to try and be sure it was ok.*

Similarly, whilst Ian found treatment helpful, it was also difficult at times. He described keeping a diary from his victims' perspectives which was particularly *"hard-hitting"*:

> *..some of the assignments were very rough…'cos the whole course makes you sort of rip everything away layer by layer till you get down to the bare bones and it can hurt, it can be very tough and very emotional, but you know, it was very useful at the same time. It really makes you have a good look at your whole self, not just your offending behaviour but your whole package.*

However, those convicted of non-contact offences found it difficult to relate to victim empathy, often being unable to accept that they had created 'victims'.  Russ was convicted of two non-contact offence types including the collection of online images and online grooming of an underage girl, in which sexually explicit photographs were exchanged.  He discussed his difficulty with this:

> *For me the point is more that, in the list of things that stop me reoffending, victim empathy isn't necessarily erm...right up there...I don't necessarily subscribe to the myth that if there weren't people looking for the images, they wouldn't be created.  I don't imagine that somebody sits there and thinks "right, I'm going to abuse a young girl and take pictures of them to benefit everyone else".  I would imagine that they're already abusing said girl and the pictures are a by-product for their own gratification and then to share with others.*

He went on to describe how he felt the significance of victim empathy most likely relates to the offence type:

> *There's placing so much emphasis on the victim and victim empathy, it's not a bad thing but I would question how effective it is as a tool for people erm to prevent reoffending.  I think it's gonna be relevant depending on their offence, you know.*

Mike, also convicted of non-contact offending which involved the collection of online images, felt that he had obtained little benefit from treatment and claimed it to be:

> *...an exercise in self hate, because you were constantly being told you're not going to ever be forgiven by your victim.*

He also experienced the difficulties articulated by Russ, struggling to accept that his actions had created victims:

> *We had to do some exercises, one was we had to write a letter to our victims and I said "well, it's going to be very hard for me to write a letter to my victims because I don't know them and because **I didn't take the photograph**...".*

However, on the whole, the utility of treatment was a common theme in the present study, reflecting previous findings (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014 - see Chapter Two).  Most participants welcomed treatment, particularly Terry and Ian who were keen to begin as soon as possible after entering prison. Resonating with Harris's (2014) findings, some of the participants in the current study expressed a desire to understand why they had committed such crimes. Terry was:

> *...determined to find out why I erm destroyed a beautiful family basically.  And it still haunts me now.  I love my [ex-wife, daughter, stepdaughter] so much that I wanted to find out why I did it.*

However, when asked whether treatment had aided his understanding, he claimed it was the residual effects of meningitis which caused his offending, together with the ease of access to his victims (daughter and stepdaughter); arguably neither of which demonstrate depth of understanding.

Ian felt that treatment should be available to those without convictions. Whilst being aware of the support provided by the Lucy Faithful Foundation (Stop it now!, no date) he was unwilling to access this due to admission of offending resulting in conviction:

> *I knew I had a problem long before I was arrested and if there was somewhere I could go without basically getting myself arrested then I would have done so.*

Therefore, due to his enthusiasm for treatment, he commenced this soon after his incarceration.

> *I said straight away I need the help, I don't want to offend again…when my probation officer came up, I had my first meeting with my probation officer like…and I said, you know, I know I've got a problem, I know I'm attracted to children and it's a problem I need help with, it's something I can't deal with meself. So I said the main thing is that I want to do the SOTP yeah?*

Through undertaking treatment, and unlike Terry, Ian appeared to demonstrate more realistic insight into the causes of his offending behaviour, which he related in part to early sexualisation. He reported having sex with other children from an early age and although he had engaged in sexual relationships with adult females, *"it stuck in my mind that [children] was the sort of sexual type I liked".* This led to his reliance on cannabis to blank out the pain:

> *SOTP helps….by identifying a lot of the root causes yeah? 'Cos there's loads and loads of different factors that go together, that lead up to somebody like me becoming a sex offender…also we done a lot on emotions and dealing with emotions and problems and erm, basically my cannabis use was basically me running away from the problems that I'd had rather than confronting them and getting help to deal with them.*

The narratives of those who had undertaken and completed treatment were strikingly different to those who had not. In particular, victim empathy appeared completely absent in the accounts of the latter. John demonstrated a complete lack of responsibility for his offending behaviour which involved the collection of online images of underage children. He attempted to shift responsibility to parents:

> *It's very painful to accept it but maybe parents need to do more to educate their children of the dangers of the internet and perhaps stop these sort of things happening. Now we've got mobile phones it's even more difficult and you need to think well are they mature enough to look after the internet, to use the internet or you know, we could be…you know it's a form of child neglect really.*

Kevin was convicted of online grooming of underage girls and when discussing his 'index victim', showed little acknowledgement of victim harm:

> *I know to a certain extent, I don't necessarily understand, but I know to a certain extent that I harmed her. If I harmed her I sure as hell harmed other people, therefore, bang! Big bad me.*

Discussing the community treatment programme which he commenced further to prison release (and ceased shortly after due to claims that this exacerbated his mental health problems), Kevin added:

*...they said there'd be a victim empathy session where you'd be asked to consider the victim's side of things and I said OK, well how do you expect me to do victim empathy when the judge said there are no victim impact statements therefore we cannot assume harm? If the judge can't assume harm, I'm sure as hell not going to.*

It is perhaps however, unsurprising that Kevin failed to accept that he had harmed his victim/s, given that, at the time of interview, he was engaged in a relationship with his 'index victim' who had since turned 18.

Whilst participation in prison treatment programmes is voluntary, Brown (2005) argues that offenders perceive that they will be viewed positively by professionals if they complete treatment, and that non-participation may have a detrimental impact on their release. Several participants acknowledged that they felt under pressure to participate, expressed by Nigel:

*It's not meant to be compulsory, however, well, if you don't do it the chances are you certainly won't get your erm, you won't progress through the system very quickly. There's no doubt about that. I know people would argue alternatively but then your chances of getting early release are minimal, to say the least.*

Participants were acutely aware of the inherent focus on risk within treatment, and were keen to do what was necessary in order to present themselves as a reduced risk, thus, if undertaking treatment would aid this, they were willing to comply:

*I mean they're voluntary [treatment programmes] but if you don't engage with your sentence plan then obviously that counts against you and stuff, erm...you know your risk will be deemed to be higher, so it's an implied sort of...you know...* (Russ).

The group work approach involved in treatment programmes is considered useful for reducing feelings of isolation and abnormality, together with a supportive environment. Peer confrontation and challenging is seen as being more credible and effective than that by facilitators, and also more likely to encourage individuals to accept responsibility for their offending behaviour. Participants are encouraged to discuss their offence/s and other group members challenge any distorted cognitions apparent in the offence accounts (Hudson 2005). However, group work was considered problematic by Derek, given that groups included various types of sexual offenders. He became tearful when discussing this:

*...in group sessions you had to listen in detail...to the offences of other people and I found that really upsetting...My impression was...there's no differential between the person who has perhaps kissed a 15 year old girl and the man who has raped his seven year old child, or murdered and raped somebody...so yeah, it was difficult.*

Similar experiences were articulated by participants undertaking the prison based SOTP in Colton, Roberts and Vanstone's (2009) sample. They felt that the group work approach was inappropriate for those considered high-risk, as other group members were disturbed by listening to accounts of what were perceived as worse crimes. Group work led some of the

other group members to suggest that Derek's seemingly consensual relationship with a pupil was of little severity:

> *...a couple of the guys who were on the course, I recall both independently were saying, you shouldn't be on this 'cos what you've done's nothing and that didn't help me and...and I can recall saying that to them you know, look that doesn't help me, you've gotta help me to challenge what I'm thinking in the same way that I will with you...I really did find it difficult to....deflect my thoughts from the consensual relationship.*

Howard also felt that group work involving different types of CSOs was problematic, for different reasons:

> *You see the problem is that doing it with a group of people then they've got to tailor it to the whole thing, and this thing about lumping all sex offenders together as sex offenders with very different reasons for their offending, and very different types of offending...*

Treatment programmes' assumption that sexual offenders plan and fantasise about offending beforehand (Mann & Marshall, 2009) is criticised in Lacombe's (2008) study. Lacombe found that individuals denying any current sexual fantasising were believed to be deceptive and thus considered to be at higher risk of reoffending. However, those revealing their sexual fantasies leading up to their offending were considered to be 'talking the talk' by agreeing with everything therapists present to them and thus, such 'people-pleasing behaviour' was considered to be a high risk factor (Lacombe: 2008: 65). Hudson (2005) notes that 'talking the talk' is common in sexual offenders undertaking treatment, whereby group members agree with everything said by the facilitators without actually making the internal change. Hudson (2005) suggests, however, that by 'talking the talk', potentially, group members are reflecting the difficult task they face in order to make a cognitive shift, rather than making no cognitive shift at all.

Patrick (convicted of contact offences) was ambivalent when asked if he found treatment helpful:

> *Well it just makes you think about it, erm....I mean...[sighs] yeah, it...the thing they want you to get is empathy, now, yeah? and you do... The main thing is that it's aimed to give you empathy and also aimed to give you thinking skills. Well I don't think I was particularly lacking in thinking skills.*

Asked whether he felt that treatment helped him to understand his offending behaviour, Patrick's account reflects similarities with Finkelhor's theory of child sexual abuse,[17] which he appeared to have internalised as a script. He implied that he was already aware of his offending cycle prior to undertaking treatment:

> *No. er no, I know exactly why it happened. I mean it was my own self-gratification is why it happened and how my thought processes allowed it to happen, because you give yourself permission to do it, yeah? because, well you couldn't do it if not. If your inner*

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[17] Influential in sex offender treatment programmes in England and Wales (Brown, 2005).

*self thought this was wrong, you…well I wouldn't be doing it. Erm, you have to sort of do a cost benefit analysis yourself and you end up deciding then whether it's worth doing. Yeah? "Don't really hurt them that much".*

Finkelhor's integrated theory of child sexual abuse proposes that four preconditions must be present for an offence to take place (Brown, 2005). Firstly, the offender possesses the motivation to abuse children, for whatever reason. Secondly, they must overcome their internal inhibitions which act against their motivation to abuse. This can be done by denying that to do so would result in negative effects on the child, or through the use of alcohol or drugs. Thirdly, any external inhibitors must be overcome. Obtaining access to a child in order to sexually abuse them is likely to involve barriers, such as parents, therefore the offender may groom the child and manipulate situations in which they can be alone with the child. Finally, it may be necessary to overcome the victim's resistance. Often offenders are able to identify suitably vulnerable children, reflecting a subtle form of 'force' separate from physical force.

The first of Finkelhor's preconditions, motivation, is evident in the self-gratification to which Patrick refers. The second precondition, overcoming internal inhibitions, is achieved through his minimisation of harm to the child, which gives him "*permission*" to continue. Therefore, although Patrick claimed to be aware of his offence cycle prior to treatment, it is likely that treatment enhanced his awareness and understanding, given that his account contains 'therapy speak'. Maruna (2001) suggests that individuals who have attended particular organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous promote consistencies in their language of reform, and the same may result in sexual offenders who have undertaken treatment programmes.

Nigel's account implied that caution was necessary during interactions with treatment facilitators:

> *The reports always seem to be so utterly jargonised and very rarely looking for the positives and if you say anything that is in the least, even if it's honest, it becomes a very big issue to the point where you wonder if you're ever going to find your way out of it. I remember one guy saying "well maybe I did think about it, I don't know" the next thing he knows he says he "may have been thinking about" he didn't say that, he'd say "well maybe I don't recall I've got no recollection of it, maybe I was thinking about it", the next thing "he believes he might have been thinking…", as oppose to "maybe I was but I don't recall anything of that sort at all", you know so it's very difficult…*

Similar findings are evident in previous studies, in which CSOs undertaking treatment claimed that facilitators looked for criminality where there was none (Lacombe, 2008; Ievins & Crewe, 2015). Such an approach encourages CSOs to internalise the sex offender label and implies that their "criminal identity as a sex offender constitutes the pivot around which all other aspects of their personality revolve" (Lacombe, 2008: 72), which does little to assist in the reconstruction of a new, non-offending identity.

Russ's account echoed Nigel's in relation to the caution required in treatment interactions, which becomes ingrained:

> *I think a lot of people are conditioned by the process that you go through to give the right answers…you kind of become conditioned to talking about things in a certain way because you have to.*

The approach of treatment described by the above participants reflects the overriding focus on risk assessment in contemporary criminal justice. The new penology (Feeley & Simon, 1992) embraces increased reliance on imprisonment and merges concerns for surveillance and custody that shifts away from a concern with punishing individuals to managing aggregates of dangerous groups. The language of probability and risk is paramount. Groups are classified on a continuum of 'dangerousness' and control strategies applied accordingly. Crewe (2009) argues that the traditional 'helping role' of psychologists has been replaced with that of risk assessment, which has resulted in psychologists' loss of legitimacy (Maruna, 2011).

Nigel and Russ's discourse demonstrates the facilitator's transformation of needs to risks in the interests of public protection, summarised by Maruna (2011: 672): "In short, prisoners feel dehumanized by a risk assessment process experienced as stigmatizing and unjust, and feel unable to turn to psychology for assistance when such expressions of vulnerability could be turned against them". Thus, sexual offenders may provide dishonest accounts which renders treatment (and risk assessment) counter-productive, and reinforces the stereotypical view of sex offenders as manipulative and deceptive.

To summarise this section, the utility of sex offender treatment was more pronounced in the contact offenders in the present sample. Treatment served to assist cognitive transformations in relation to understanding of their offending behaviour for some respondents. A number of respondents found treatment distressing as they came to terms with the harm caused by their offending behaviour. The non-contact offenders who had undertaken treatment struggled to develop victim empathy, tending to view their internet offending as devoid of victims. The narratives of the two men who had not completed treatment displayed a complete lack of empathy and rejection of responsibility. Those who had internalised treatment messages and were able to identify and manage their own risk factors were equipped with the tools to aid desistance. The following section continues this chapter by exploring the role of community supervision in participants' desistance.

### 4.4 Community supervision

Upon release from prison, CSOs are supervised in the community via Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA, discussed in Chapter One). Those released on licence will be supervised in the community by probation services for the duration of their licence period. Following this, the police are responsible for monitoring CSOs in the community via the terms and conditions of the SOR. Individuals assessed as MAPPA level two or three receive additional supervision from other agencies. Participants in the present study were not directly questioned regarding their MAPPA level, although some volunteered this information. Ian claimed to be a "*MAPPA two*" and thus presumably deemed high risk and subject to supervision by several agencies. Russ and Kevin claimed to be assessed as low risk, whilst Adam stated that upon leaving prison he was assessed as being a very high risk of harm to others.

The changing nature of the probation service role in working with sex offenders on licence was reflected in its Sex Offender Strategy (National Probation Service, 2004),[18] which presented a list of nine strategies for managing such offenders. This list features the terms 'monitoring', 'restrictions' and 'surveillance' in abundance. Indeed, the Home Office (2001, cited in Thomas & Tuddenham, 2002: 11) stated that it was necessary for the probation service "…to fulfil a fundamentally different role from before as a law enforcement agency and as an integrated part of the criminal justice system", highlighting the move away from "the welfare and helping end". This approach is indicative of "…the ethos of the new penology with its emphasis on accountability, risk and effective practice…", which replaced the probation service's previous approach of "advise, assist and befriend" (Healy, 2012: 382). However, the National Probation Service 'sex offender strategy' document noted that the probation role should also incorporate assistance with finding offenders accommodation: "Areas will be required to place offenders in appropriate accommodation, commensurate with assessed risk and the protection of the local community" (National Probation Service, 2004: 6). This reflects the utilitarian perspective underpinning contemporary criminal justice (Robinson, 2008) discussed in Chapter One, whereby rehabilitative efforts are primarily focused on victims (Garland, 1997).

Probation supervision whilst on licence was experienced by all except one of the participants in the current study. Due to his short sentence length, John was not released on licence and thus not assigned a probation officer upon release.[19] His perception of the probation role appeared to

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[18] The recent restructuring of probation services is acknowledged, however, respondents in the present study were subject to supervision via previous probation structures.

[19] The Offender Rehabilitation Act, 2014 introduced supervision for the vast majority of offenders sentenced to under 12 months in prison (National Offender Management Service, 2015).

reflect the service's traditional welfare approach, and he believed their input would have been beneficial:

> *When you're released there's nothing, **literally nothing**…I did want a probation officer 'cos then you've got someone who's a bit more friendly than the old bill, who supervises you much more…*

Probation supervision was the type of formal social control that participants had the least to say about and were least likely to relate to their desistance. Only those who had an extremely positive or extremely negative experience volunteered information regarding probation supervision. Those who were most likely to speak positively of probation supervision were those who had received practical assistance, reflecting Healy's (2012) findings. Ian's narrative included frequent positive references to probation officers, whose input he had found invaluable. At the time of interview Ian was 18 months into his two year licence period. His current accommodation was secured by probation following his move out of the hostel in which he had resided since leaving prison. He referred to being a *"MAPPA two"*, and believed that this was the reason for probation's assistance in finding him accommodation:

> *…**they wanna know where I am**, yeah? You know, they don't wanna walk the streets trying to find me 'cos I'm sleeping rough. They wanna know where I am.*

Ian was also subject to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) which dictated where he was able to reside (an exclusion zone surrounded his victims' home), presenting additional difficulties in securing stable accommodation, which probation had assisted with. Having been disowned by his family and friends as a result of his conviction, Ian had had little in the way of social support and as such, referred to his support network as being *"mainly professional"*. This support related mainly to practical assistance, indicating that the welfare role of probation was evident and valued:

> *…my probation officer… she's an immense support, she really is you know, even when I went through a rough time a little while ago when I was transferring from one benefit to another, there was a four week gap where I didn't get any money. Alright it was backdated in the end but for that four weeks [probation officer] was very good, you know, she sorted me out a bag of food 'cos they have a food drawer at the probation office, so they sorted me out some food and she also gimme a voucher to go to the food bank. She gave me a couple of bus tickets to get there and back as well.*

Ian's positive account of probation supervision involving practical assistance supports the findings of Healy (2012), who explored the effects upon desistance of two types of supervision operating in Ireland, these she termed the 'welfare' versus the 'surveillance' model. Healy's study revealed that participants receiving the surveillance approach were spoken of less positively by participants. Both approaches were apparent in the current study whereby some participants noted receiving welfare and support, whilst the accounts of others indicated a wholly surveillance approach. Those noting the latter spoke less positively of their supervising officers, supporting Healy's (2012) findings. Despite receiving assistance from his probation

officer in securing accommodation, Kevin claimed that further support had not been forthcoming:

> In that regard [housing] I would say they were helpful but they haven't been helpful since in regard to seeing if I can move on or similar, and taking part in the community facilities that you're supposed to get as a housing association tenant.

Derek's experience of probation supervision was particularly negative. He felt that his probation officer had been a hindrance rather than a help and stated that he had a *"horrendous"* time with her, stating that she was *"really, really horrible"*. As such, Derek claimed that:

> The two years on licence was nearly as bad as being in prison because…I got treated very, very badly by a member of the probation service.

He believed it was his probation officer's responsibility for his ultimate failure to rebuild a relationship with his children:

> I was trying to get back a relationship with my children, and probation and social services in my home town made a real mess of the whole situation and I still hold, within myself, animosity towards a couple of people in particular who I think were….erm……were quite responsible for me not being able to re-develop the relationship with my children.

Despite being 15 years post-prison release at the time of interview, this episode was clearly still raw and upsetting for Derek, who had no contact with his (now) adult children, for which he blamed his probation officer. He claimed to have received no practical support despite having financial difficulties whilst seeking employment, thus for Derek, the probation service approach appeared to have involved little welfare support.

The majority of participants had no strong views about their probation supervision and simply viewed this input as appointments they were required to attend. Patrick failed to see the point of regular meetings with his probation officer:

> You just turn up and give your name and that's about it…and if they say "is everything alright?" and you say it is, then I guess they got to take your word on it…they're pretty busy…but then again things were pretty alright so…

Patrick's simple conformity with the legal requirements imposed upon him is indicative of formal compliance with the law, rather than the active engagement involved in substantive compliance (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). Indeed, Patrick admitted that in order to cease offending he simply selected male sexual partners aged 18 and over, which allowed him to fulfil his desires by engaging in sexual behaviour with young men to whom he was strongly attracted, without breaking the law. Thus, for Patrick, desistance did not appear to involve the formation of a new prosocial identity (Maruna, 2001), but simply, formal compliance with the law. Research indicates that good probation supervision is active and participatory and more likely to encourage offender engagement (Rex, 1999; Weaver & Barry, 2014). Individuals lacking a

strong relationship with their probation officer are more likely to demonstrate formal, rather than true (substantive) compliance (Healy, 2012), a factor which potentially underpinned Patrick's formal compliance.

In support of the welfare model of probation (Healy, 2012), Pete acknowledged the practical support of probation whilst on licence in helping him to obtain employment. Terry also found probation helpful, as their links with an employment agency ultimately assisted him in securing employment. However, he lamented that probation services had deemed it necessary for him to undertake a further sex offender treatment programme whilst on licence which, given that he had already undertaken a prison based programme, he felt was:

> *…a complete waste of time and money and effort…I didn't see the point of doing it again on the outside with probation…it's just a load of bollocks.*

Terry felt that the cost of undertaking additional community treatment would be better invested into additional practical assistance.

Howard spoke positively of probation supervision, describing this as supportive. His probation officer had arranged weekly counselling for his depression upon prison release, which he acknowledged was part of their traditional welfare role at the time:

> *We are talking 10 years ago and they've had to change their role very much…it's more of a policing role now than a befriending, advising, assisting role…I know that in the past, probation have tended to be seen as more of the social worker side of the criminal justice system and the police there to enforce the law. I know those boundaries are a little more blurred now.*

His narrative indicated a strong relationship with his probation officer, who was influential in providing him with a positive outlook and the belief that he could achieve: "*Be as positive as you can…neither regret what's happened but just learn from it…*". Her words had remained with him despite him being 12 years post-prison release at the time of interview. Howard's account supports the findings of Farmer et al (2015), whose desisting CSOs found the role of probation to be a significant factor in their desistance. Farrall et al's (2014) longitudinal study of non-sexual offenders highlighted that the impact of probation supervision takes time to realise; its benefits often manifesting later in the desistance process. The present study's cross-sectional design prohibited exploration of Farrall et al's finding.

Adam said that his probation officer had tried to help him find accommodation but believed that his high risk status had prevented the assistance of any housing association. He felt that the police had assisted his desistance to a greater extent than probation. Russ's experience of probation supervision involved monitoring rather than support (indicative of the surveillance model (Healy, 2012)), and thus he did not speak of her positively. However, this likely relates

to his prison recall for which his probation officer was responsible and which he perceived as unfair. He found his probation officer to be inflexible and discussed her attitude to a mobile phone he had at the time:

> *I had an old camera phone when I got out [of prison] and she was like "well you're not having that" and I thought well it doesn't say anywhere on my restrictions on my SOPO or my licence conditions that I can't, and obviously being on licence I was obviously like "well I'll play ball". Now if I was in that situation I'd fight it because I've been out a bit. You can still pick up cheap phones without a camera. It was just the attitude, not a case of "look, you've just come out, I don't know you, I'd prefer if you didn't have a camera phone". If she'd approached it like that I'd think "well ok, I don't really agree but can see where you're coming from and I'll play ball and maybe we can review it"...I think they like to try and scare people. 'Cos you're on probation, you don't wanna rub anyone's noses up the wrong way because nobody wants to go back to prison, so there is the sort of well "if you don't play ball, we'll just recall you". She actually said "if you give us any reason to then we will", you know?*

Russ believed that this transgression of his licence conditions failed to link with a return to offending behaviour and thus perceived his additional sanction as unfair. In support of Digard's (2010) findings, Russ's perception of procedural unfairness led him to question the legitimacy of his probation officer. Digard found that CSOs' experience of the prison recall system, when perceived as procedurally unfair, was likely to lead to disengagement with future probation officers, and thus, to result in formal, rather than substantive compliance.

Given that the majority of participants had little to say regarding probation supervision, this appeared to play little role in their desistance. Ian was a notable exception, having clearly found the probation service's input to be an invaluable source of support, and a significant contributory factor to his desistance, in support of Farmer et al's (2015) findings. Respondents in receipt of the welfare approach to supervision were more likely to speak positively of their probation officer's input than those in receipt of the surveillance approach (Healy, 2012). The differing approaches of probation officers highlights the discretion they are able to exercise in their supervision of CSOs and relates to the 'governmentality gap' identified by McNeill et al (2009: 419). This concept refers to the gap between governmental policy and actual policy in practice and is also evident in the supervisory role of the police experienced by respondents. The following section continues by exploring participants' experiences of interactions with the police via the terms and conditions of the SOR.

### 4.5 The police: The "Sword of Damocles"

Public protection officers (PPOs) are the representatives of the police responsible for enforcing the legal structure and with whom registered sexual offenders have regular contact for the

duration of their registration period (see Chapter One). It is these officers with whom participants had contact in relation to both the SOR and any SOPOs to which they were subject.

Participants were not explicitly questioned regarding the child sex offender disclosure scheme (discussed in Chapter One) however, none volunteered that they had been subject to any disclosures relating to this.

The requirements of the SOR have become progressively more stringent, leading scholars to question whether this has shifted from being a public protection measure to a punishment in its own right (Thomas, 2008), despite the Home Office's assertion that the SOR was not intended to be an additional penalty for offenders (Home Office/Scottish Executive, 2001). Focusing on the approach taken by PPOs responsible for managing respondents, this section proceeds to explore the role of the SOR and SOPOs in relation to participants' desistance. Whilst the existing literature finds that probation supervision may more enabling for desistance if a participatory approach is adopted (e.g., Digard, 2010; Healy, 2012; Weaver, 2014), few sources consider the role of PPOs' management of CSOs. Wood & Kemshall (2007) found that MAPPA offenders valued and benefitted from attention paid to their social and personal problems, rather than a rigid enforcement approach. However, this research focused on MAPPA management as a whole, rather than a sole focus on input provided by the police.

Alan's account was replete with animosity and a lack of respect towards all representatives of the criminal justice system he had encountered. Subject to indefinite registration requirements, Alan referred on numerous occasions, to the police *"constantly hounding and harassing"* him. He was dissatisfied with the way he had been dealt with by the legal system and although he accepted that his prison sentence was warranted, he implied that indefinite sex offender registration constitutes an additional punishment by providing the police with the powers to visit him regularly:

> *…if you go into prison and you're being punished in accordance with the law and at the end of the day you're released and you're left alone… maybe the police keep an eye on you for a year or two, fair enough, can't argue with that. But to be hounded and harassed continually after you come out…*

Alan was a difficult interviewee and presented as hostile, challenging and manipulative. He was also deceptive when questioned regarding his offences and referred only to his most recent prison sentence, implying that this was his only period of incarceration, when in fact he had

previously been imprisoned twice for the same offence type.[20] He articulated quite different views to other participants in relation to the police and the aims of the SOR:

*...if anything, they try to drive me to reoffending [the police]. They'll never succeed. They'll never succeed 'cos of who I am and what I am and what I've decided a long time ago. It aint gonna happen again...I know I done wrong and I've been punished for it in accordance with the law. But instead of the law saying right, you've been punished, you do a prison sentence, come out and behave yourself – OK I'll behave myself. No, they're hounding and harassing in an attempt to force me to reoffend. They won't succeed. And I'm more determined now than ever that they won't succeed...the only job of police is to arrest somebody, get 'em convicted and that's brownie points on their record for their promotion...so they go out of their way to arrest as many people as they can...the police have never liked me and have gone out of their way to try and arrest me for minor things that I've never been involved in..…they can come here anytime they like and accuse me of anything and arrest me and take me off, and question me and grill me on suspicion of christ knows what, they just make it up.*

Whilst clearly questioning the legitimacy of the police, and indeed the criminal justice system, Alan's defiance (contra Sherman, 1993[21]) is presented as underpinning his desistance, claiming that police want him to reoffend and therefore, he will not. Acutely aware of the surveillance effect of police monitoring and the likelihood that further offending would be detected, the SOR appeared to serve as a powerful deterrent.

Alan produced a copy of the form he received each time he went to sign the register at the police station, which was quite basic and required little information. Discussing the SOR, he stated:

*It's a waste of time from the public's point of view. You show me any evidence that the Sex Offenders Register has prevented anybody from having a crime committed against them or anybody they know, and there isn't any.*

He claimed to have questioned his PPOs on the evidence of the SOR's efficacy, and stated they were unable to provide a response. It is however, difficult to prove a negative and indeed later in the interview, Alan acknowledged this:

*The police, when they charge you, you're assumed to automatically be guilty, it's just a question of did you do it deliberately or not? If it wasn't then you would have the choice of innocent, right? ...all they have to prove is they were suspicious of whatever they charged you with and you've gotta prove that they were wrong to be suspicious. But you try to prove a negative. It cannot be done. If you say "I saw that man having a pee outside there", if you went to the police and said that, they'd go and arrest him, lock him up in a prison cell, go to his house looking for dirty pictures and material like that just because you said you saw him having a wee, right? They don't check you to*

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[20] Given that Alan was ultimately the only participant accessed via the police, it was possible to check his conviction history with official records.

[21] Sherman's defiance theory proposes that the legitimacy of punishment is essential for the achievement of deterrence, whilst "punishment perceived as unjust can lead to unacknowledged shame and defiant pride that increases future crime" (1993: 445).

*make sure you're speaking the truth or whether you've ever made any false allegations before, and this is the problem with it because then you've gotta prove that you weren't there having a pee. How do you prove that you didn't, that you weren't having a pee?*

Although he complained bitterly about the police, it is likely that their input served as a formal social control assisting in the prevention of reoffending, thus reflecting a mechanism of instrumental compliance (see Chapter Two). However, given that Alan was the oldest participant in the study, his advancing years and chronic ill-health appeared to have prevented any reoffending and therefore influenced his desistance. The latter is indicative of constraint based compliance whereby 'natural' constraints on human conduct are imposed by way of physical limitations.

Mike also displayed animosity towards the police and believed they had treated him badly. He had begun a relationship with a woman with three children and claimed that, despite her knowledge of his conviction and desire to continue their relationship, his PPO demanded that contact cease. Mike claimed this resulted in his depression together with additional mental health problems which led him to quit his job. A SOPO was then imposed, which prohibited contact with under 16's. Thus, although Mike's conviction meant that he was required to be subject to sex offender registration for 10 years, which had, at the time of interview, expired, the imposition of the lifetime SOPO meant that he must remain on the SOR indefinitely. Mike was particularly bitter about this and felt it to be an unfair sanction. He failed to understand the purpose of PPOs visits and appeared to adopt an obstructive attitude to interactions with the police, claiming that they failed to focus on or believe in rehabilitation. His antagonistic approach is apparent in the account below:

*They don't believe in it, they don't believe in it [rehabilitation]. I mean they might mention, they go into your offending again...and then they go into what have you been doing, "how do you gratify yourself now?". It just goes round and round, they will not move on...I said "my last offence I actually committed is now 13 years ago. I said erm if I'd been a shoplifter would you still condemn me as a thief?" And they said, "well everybody's nicked something from a shop". I said "well I haven't and are you saying you have?" He said "well as a kid I might have stolen a bar of chocolate". I said "well, I don't entertain thieves in my house". He said "well I'm not a thief", I said "well you are", I said "because you just branded me".*

Both Alan and Mike viewed the SOR as an additional punishment, perceived as lacking legitimacy and resulting in their antagonistic and obstructive attitudes to their PPOs. Mike went on to discuss his mother's funeral which took place shortly after the imposition of his SOPO, which specified no contact with under 16s. He claimed that the police put him under surveillance to ensure that he did not attend if under 16 year olds were present. In accordance with Alan, Mike perceived his punishment as unfair and adopted a defiant approach to interactions with the police. However, the deterrent effect of PPO's monitoring appeared to be

significant to his desistance, due to his awareness that any further offending was likely to result in apprehension and punishment.

Several participants made a valid and interesting point in noting that the title of the SOR was problematic, by implying that those subject to its terms and conditions are current offenders:

> *I don't like that title they give it of 'sex offender'. It's present tense. I did commit an offence of a sexual nature but that's in the past…*(John).

> *One thing I do disagree with and I say it every time on my registration. I always put ex-sex offender, I said "I'm not an offender, a sex offender is someone who's offending at the moment, it's in the present tense", I said "this has to be put into the past tense and the only way I can do that is put ex.....". No one on the sex offender register is actually a sex offender unless they're offending still. You've gotta move on….*(Mike).

> *…even the sex offender register implies that you're still offending* (Terry).

The title of the SOR indeed serves to reinforce (to those subject to its terms and conditions) the popular view shared by professionals, the media and the public alike, that sexual offenders have a lifelong propensity for reoffending and are unlikely to change (Laws & Ward, 2011). This may further impede individuals' ability to negotiate and manage their identity, by perpetuating the label ascribed to them. Participants were acutely aware of the "…pain induced by being labelled a sex offender" (Ievins & Crewe, 2015: 486) and were keen to attempt re-labelling in accordance with Ievins & Crewe's (2015: 489) participants who stated "I'm not a sex offender. I committed a sex offence".[22]

Reflecting the contemporary criminal justice focus on risk and public protection, Mike found the repeated questioning by PPO's intrusive:

> *I'm never sure and I never am to this day sure what the purpose of their visits are you know, whether it's to reassess your risk or it's to see how you're coping erm, 'cos all they ask me over and time and time again is, "how often do you masturbate?" You know "what do you think of?" You know and erm, because I've never been very sexually driven anyway I tell him the truth well, "I don't actually, I'm in my 50's now but I don't really have that urge" and they say "oh come on…". They can be quite obtuse at times. This police woman that comes round says "oh don't you wake up with the morning willy" or something and I said "what are you on about?".*

Despite being 11 years post-prison release at the time of interview, Mike found the retrospective focus of PPOs questions to be detrimental to his progress. As Nigel noted in relation to treatment programmes (see section 4.3), Mike felt that he could never say the 'right thing' as his words were interpreted to imply enhanced risk:

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[22] Participants' attempts at 'de-labelling' and identity negation are discussed further in Chapter Six.

*...they will never treat you as rehabilitated, they will never, if you say, if I tell 'em, "I haven't got this interest in boys and I haven't got this interest in anyone who's pre-pubescent" they always turn around and say, "come on you're in denial".*

The theme of risk assessment and its focus on sexual fantasies and deviant sexual interest found in prison treatment programmes by Lacombe (2008), is thus recurrent in sex offender management. This approach is likely to prove counter-productive by encouraging offenders' deception in their attempts to reduce their perceived risk.

The SOR and civil orders such as SOPOs represent late modern society's 'tough on crime' politics, which Garland (2000) argues have resulted in distinctive punitive policies which convey public sentiment and as such, punishment and denunciation are paramount. Strategies of punitive segregation including lengthy prison sentences and a 'monitored existence' once released, are apparent in both the SOR and SOPOs as a source of 'penal marking' (Garland, 2000: 350), which serves to enhance and perpetuate stigmatisation and 'othering', noted by participants. Such 'penal marking' may serve to perpetuate labelling, resulting in a negative self-image, likely to delay or prevent the construction of a reformed identity and one that is worthy of redemption.

Terry's lifetime SOPO was proving problematic in specifying no deliberate contact with under 16's, which prevented him from visiting his partner's home as she was a parent of two children under the age of 16. He did, however, acknowledge the possibility of applying for review of his SOPO terms, which he felt was something he may pursue in the future. He spoke positively of his PPO but found visiting the police station for annual registration challenging:

*...and you've gotta say, er…"'scuse me officer I've come to sign the SOR", and he'll look at you and say, "oh what's the SOR?".*

He claimed there was a lack of private space in which to do this and conversation would often be overheard by others in the police station.

*I learned the hard way. The second time I wrote it on a piece of paper, the third time the officer came round and I signed it at my home.*

Howard also found this unpleasant due to the lack of discretion noted by Terry. He described it as *"horrible, really horrible".* However, he felt that all of his PPOs had been supportive and his overall experience of the SOR was a positive one.

A recurrent theme in participants' narratives was that of differing approaches taken by police PPOs, whose approach to supervision appeared to vary both within and across police force areas. Their approaches appear similar to those of probation officers discussed in the previous section, with some adopting the surveillance and control model, whilst others adopted the welfare model (Healy, 2012). This reflects the 'governmentality gap' identified by McNeill et

al (2009), within which governmental rationalities often differ from penal practice in actuality, which is "often renegotiated, restructured and even potentially softened in practice" (Ievins & Crewe, 2015: 485).

Adam's SOPO prohibited unsupervised contact with under 16s unless their parent/guardian was aware of his conviction. Following his release from prison, he spent a period living in a hostel and subsequently went to live with his parents, which meant that a different police force were responsible for his supervision. Whilst the PPO in his original area had been happy with his engagement in chess tournaments despite the potential of under 16s being present, when the new police force area became responsible for his supervision, Adam described them as "*...a nightmare*":

> *I went to chess club and the police were aware of it and the MAPPA were aware of it and I started going, when my curfews were less I could go and play some one day competitions so I did that and it was all fine. And then when I moved to this new area they [the police] came to see me to do a risk assessment and I just mentioned...I didn't wanna not say about it, it's a big part of what I do, so I said "look, I go and play chess" and I explained to them "yes there's sometimes under 16's there, sometimes I have to play one occasionally" and you know, she like hit the roof about it, this police officer. I said "the contact is only playing a game, shake hand at beginning, shake hand at the end" and when I said about shaking their hand, the way she looked at me, she looked at me like "you do what?! Shake their hand?!" And she had a big problem with it...caused me big problems.*

Recognising that playing chess was important to his desistance, Adam appealed for changes to the conditions of his SOPO, which was successfully amended:

> *...if it's an independent competition and where I haven't picked my own opponents and as long as there's two adults in the room...well it's integrity isn't it?.*

Despite the difficulties experienced by Adam, he accepted the necessity of the imposition of particular conditions:

> *It depends how you look at these things because obviously you have these restrictions in place to help you but at some point....got to be able to move on.*

Reflecting the concept of diachronic self-control (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011; see Chapter Two), Adam had changed his lifestyle to avoid further criminal temptation. He felt that regular visits to the gym and chess playing had been useful for occupying his time and thus taking his mind off any thoughts of reoffending:

> *...and you'd think the police would've known that, but they just wanted...well unrealistic and take it away from me...and now it doesn't matter any more. It's great [referring to the SOPO amendments]...it's sometimes nice to get your frustrations about the police out. I mean I can just see how different it can be just from one area to the other. In some ways it's remarkable, or even just different officers...*

The changes to Adam's SOPO reflect the potential of flexibility within the criminal justice system and that discretion may be exercised when a particular activity is deemed beneficial to

the individual's desistance. Russ served half of his 30 month sentence and was recalled after three months of being released. At the time of interview he had been living in the community for around two years. Echoing Adam's comment, Russ described his PPO as:

> *...a nightmare, really difficult...it's almost like they're looking for a reason...it doesn't really help...it's a very adversarial sort of thing rather than a supporting thing, you know and that's gonna, you know, for some people that might tip them more towards reoffending...*

Russ's comment implies that the approach of some PPOs may be criminogenic, indeed Sherman (1993: 445) suggests that "…crime might be reduced more by police and courts treating all citizens with fairness and respect than by increasing punishments". However, as Russ was particularly aware of the likelihood of apprehension and punishment should he reoffend, the police appeared to act as a deterrent, serving to encourage instrumental compliance.

Russ was in receipt of an indefinite SOPO prohibiting unsupervised contact with under 16's. However, following a protracted process with social services, this was amended so that his baby daughter was able to live with him and his girlfriend. The potential flexibility of the system is highlighted in both Adam's and Russ's narratives. The possibility of appealing the terms of their SOPO and their success in achieving this is likely to have provided Adam and Russell with a sense of legitimacy, likely to reinforce their continued desistance. This appears to be possible when individuals have demonstrated their ability to acquire social capital and thus reduce their dynamic risk (as risk assessment tools recognise that enhanced social capital is beneficial in aiding desistance). The rigid enforcement practices typical of the new penology's preoccupation with the management of risk (Feeley & Simon, 1992) can therefore be balanced with a desistance enabling approach.

Adam and Russ provide an example of how formal social controls can adapt to support and build upon the informal social controls. Success in achieving changes to SOPO terms acts as a form of 'de-labelling', described as the 'certification' stage of desistance by Meisenhelder (1977: 329), within which "Some recognized member(s) of the conventional community must publicly announce and certify that the offender has changed…". Labelling is a significant issue for sexual offenders, who are consistently encouraged to accept the label of 'sex offender' as their master status – the overwhelming and most salient part of the individuals' character (Becker, 1963). Thus, Adam and Russ's desistance is likely to have been encouraged by the display of trust and belief in their steps towards reform acknowledged by the criminal justice system in the relaxed terms of their SOPOs. The fact that the criminal justice system, as a symbol of authority, recognised that Russ and Adam had made progress potentially reinforced to them that they were worthy of redemption and served to reinforce their desistance.

Furthermore, the fact that both Adam and Russ recognised the protective factors necessary to their desistance and exercised agency in their efforts to change the terms of their SOPOs demonstrates their own self-belief and internal locus of control, beneficial to desistance. These internal changes will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Six.

Pete also noted the different approaches taken by officers, stating that his previous PPO was *"obnoxious"*, whilst his current officer was particularly helpful and supportive. Given that he was almost 15 years post-prison release at the time of interview, Pete was planning to apply for removal from the register. He had difficulty remembering annual registration and found the necessity of notifying police of his recent travel arrangements to be complicated. Sex offender registrants must inform police of travel abroad, thus, as Pete was visiting two overseas locations, it was necessary for him to inform the police of the dates he would be staying in each location. Furthermore, he believed that notification requirements served as a reminder of his past and that removal from the register would allow him to put his past behind him and look towards the future. Removal from the register is also likely to serve a symbolic function in allowing individuals to complete the de-labelling process. Perhaps illustrating an awareness of the surveillance involved in sex offender registration, together with internalisation of his relapse prevention plan, Pete stated:

> *I now go and see my brother occasionally, he's got control of his five grandkids all under the age of 12, erm, he's [age] this year so it's quite a task for him [laughs], but I go round there sometimes because he trusts, he won't leave me alone and I don't babysit or anything like that, because that would be a stupid thing to even get myself involved in so I don't do anything like that.*

Pete also acknowledges above that his brother came to trust him around his grandchildren. The role of trust in desistance has previously been documented elsewhere and will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

For Simon *"...being on the register per se is no big deal, it's just the garbage that comes with it...".* The 'garbage' Simon referred to related to the necessity of notifying the police when travelling overseas, which requires seven days notice. Echoing the sentiments of other participants, Simon commented on the different approaches taken by PPOs, stating that should his previous officer visit while he was out, he would simply ring to enquire where he was and call on another occasion. However, Simon claimed that his current officer had made more of an issue of him being unavailable, such that he had lost two days pay through taking time off work to wait in for her. He contrasted the differences between officers:

> *...the chap that I first saw here, I was comfortable, if I had anything that I needed to talk to him about I could ring him up and say "listen mate, this and this" and we'd sit and chat. The person at the moment, if I was to turn around and say "this and this", I guarantee she'd be at the door enforced with back up and all that sort of stuff, and*

*they'd be searching the place and they'd be doing this and doing that, when all I want is some support. So...I have nothing to do with her other than what the law requires me to, you know.*

Simon believed that the supportive approach taken by his previous PPO had been particularly beneficial to his progress. Although he acknowledged the need for the SOR he felt that the "*'one size fits all' approach*" was problematic *"...there's no individuality with the programme...and there needs to be"*. Simon's narrative demonstrates that the inflexible approach of some PPOs is unlikely to facilitate desistance, but instead serve to enforce formal compliance, rather than the co-operation and active engagement key to substantive compliance with the law.

John, convicted of internet pornography offences, was somewhat bitter towards his PPOs and appeared to adopt an antagonistic approach to interactions with them, similar to that of Alan and Mike. He shared Alan's view that the SOR served as an additional punishment. John expressed animosity towards the police and the fact that they were able to intrude in his daily life. He made reference to PPOs management as a constant threat, apparent in the following excerpt from his narrative: *"it's just having that sort of 'sword of Damocles'[23] above your head"*. In common with some of the other participants' comments, he noted differences in the approaches of PPOs in relation to their bi-annual visits. He described one officer as taking an inflexible approach:

> *This other officer, the strict one...he would phone me beforehand and ask if it was ok to come round, "yeah sure, come at this time when I'm not working 'cos it's my office", some will just turn up unexpectedly and then if I don't answer the door...I say "you can either wait until I've finished this call or...come back another time". Usually they'll just sit there waiting and then say "well you took a long time" and I'll say "well I'm working, you know this is my place of work". The judge said if I work from home they're still allowed to have access, but if I worked in an office [they] couldn't just come in...they're meant to do their visits on grounds that...convenient times to you because otherwise it's a punishment...I can understand where they're coming from in some cases but I think on the other hand the punishment's been done so...you know society wrongly think that in my case well it's four and a half months [served in prison] and that's that, no it's not, it's 10 years of hell [on the SOR]. I know officially it's not meant to put any extra restraints on my life but it is absolutely horrific having them come and visit all the time, and you can't ever sort of get peace and depending on what mood they're in...I mean some of the officers are really nice, some of them are really horrible, you know.*

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[23] The 'Sword of Damocles' refers to the legend in which Damocles had to sit at a meal at the court of Dionysius with a sword hanging by a single hair above his head. It is therefore a phrase employed to refer to 'an extremely precarious situation', which symbolises constant threat and imminent danger (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2016).

John had experienced supervision via several PPOs since release and found the younger officers much easier to talk to. The first one he said was fine, but the second:

> ...has just been a bit nasty...just difficult...I call it a dick swinging contest, you know they'll come along and just invent rules.

John's job involved internet use both at his place of work and his work from home and the police had informed him that it was necessary to speak to his employer to inform him of his conviction:

> ...well that's not fair because you know, I've just managed to get past the criminal record nonsense, now you're saying that if I use any of their computers you're gonna come in and check them?, "yes that's right". So I went to court, erm and they said nope they're [police] not allowed in your place of work while you're at work unless there's evidence of a crime, so you know. The SOPO which says I can't delete internet history only applies outside of the work environment, if it's on work computers they will have their own protection and that I have a right to work. They [police] didn't like that. So they said "well we're gonna tell your boss unless you tell them", so I was put in that position.

Fortunately his employer was accepting of his previous conviction, which John believed was due to his proficiency in his role. Interestingly, he purchased "*some technology*" which he installed on his computer and which monitored his internet usage:

> …called Securas, which is like a net nanny…usually a court has to tell you to do that but I've done this voluntarily and fund it myself, it's £36 a month…it's not cheap and this psychiatrist, he has a call with me every so often to check everything's OK, he monitors it, so you've got a real person there monitoring it and the positive thing about that is that I'm now getting a proven track record of no offences, um, he [the psychiatrist] looks at every single website, even legal pornography would come up on their system so they just check and make sure, see if any patterns of behaviour…and I quite like it because that is a preventative tool, whereas I think the police and the sex offenders register is more about detecting the crime and this is more about preventing it before it starts. So if I'm having a conversation which has turned smutty and he [the psychiatrist] reads it and thinks that person could be underage based on the conversations you've had before, I would get a phone call. So before it's even anything illegal they're already sorting it out.

John suggested that Securas was likely to aid desistance in CSOs wishing to move on. He claimed that this had helped him *"to get on with things"* by giving him the confidence to prove to the police that his internet activity was legal. He questioned the efficacy of his indefinite SOPO which prohibited deletion of his browsing history, and pondered how officers could ever be trained to learn how every single internet browser works, given that the cache can only hold up to so many items, and thus old history will automatically be deleted when that threshold is reached:

> I just don't see how it protects the public because once I've visited that site, they failed, you know that's it I've done it, I've reoffended, so it doesn't prevent the crime. There has to be a different way of policing it, because you can't monitor me to that degree and you're not legally allowed, you're not allowed to tap my phone, you're not allowed to

> *tap my internet, you can't do any of that, so what I personally think is you need to stop the demand and that stops the supply…*

John referred to the register as a political tool and felt there was little benefit in it:

> *I don't think it works, I think it's very tabloid, it's very good for the politicians to write in the media, oh we're putting extra rules on sex offenders. Well, yeah, but if they don't work it's kind of pointless.*

However, he did accept the need for registrants to update their address with the police when necessary, and believed this to be fair. He failed to see how the SOR could serve as a deterrent given that individuals cannot be monitored 24 hours a day, and stating that *"the only person that's going to stop you from reoffending is yourself"*. John's purchase of Securas assisted his conscious decision to avoid reoffending and provided him with greater confidence to prove to the police that he was not engaging in behaviour that may indicate increased risk. Despite his rejection of the SOR's efficacy and any deterrent effect this may provide, he was also aware that apprehension and punishment were likely should he reoffend. Thus, the SOR and the monitoring of PPOs appeared to serve as a mechanism of instrumental compliance.

Kevin stated that he received notice of officers' visits:

> *They can't simply turn up, I'm working. So they will give me a buzz on a day and say, "we'd like to pop round" and I'll say, "today isn't convenient, any other time in the week?" And they say "we'd really like it today" and I say, "well if you take the place as you find it".*

He appeared to have a positive view of PPOs and noted that co-operation with them was beneficial. For example, pointing out that retaining his browsing history was not a requirement of his SOPO (which prohibited contact with under 16s), he allowed officers to view his browsing history upon request, if available at the time. He demonstrated extensive knowledge of the law and court cases relating to sexual offences. Kevin claimed that a recent court case raised questions relevant to his own SOPO and thus he was about to challenge its conditions. He had few other complaints regarding the SOR but noted that on one occasion he was late for annual registration by a day, for which he received a formal warning:

> *…they were on the phone the next day…they said "you haven't renewed". I said "oh my god"…I was at the police station 45 minutes later, I filled in the renewal forms, I signed them and I gave them all the information they needed and I faxed the copies to prove it back to my MAPPA officer and they said, "you are low risk, you do keep in touch, we were shocked…this is not you. We recognise that so here, have a formal warning…we aren't doing anything this time".*

Again, this indicates flexibility of the system when individuals have previously complied with conditions and demonstrated steps towards change. Only one of the other participants mentioned forgetting his annual registration, although Pete had failed to register on more than one occasion:

> *There's been some slip ups in the past when I've not notified in time and ended up in the magistrates court and luckily each time I've avoided going back to prison for any amount of time… well, I write it on the calendar, at the bottom of a particular month to say report in [two months later] and I've got a friend who says he's gonna beat the crap out of me if I miss it again [laughs].*

Ian was aware of the need to notify police of any address changes within three days. Following his move into his current accommodation he received a caution from the police for failing to notify within the three day period. He claimed that this was due to his own error in omitting to realise that the day of the move counted as day one. He had moved in on the Friday and notified the police on Monday, when this should have been done by the Sunday. Such confusion is perhaps understandable, as notification requirements are extensive and somewhat ambiguous, evident in a Ministry of Justice (2009) document available for public consumption. Despite this, Ian had found his PPOs to be supportive in both of the police force areas he had experience of since prison release. His narrative demonstrated their welfare approach to supervision and management:

> *A couple of 'em actually came up to see me the week before I got released and we sat down and had a really good chat about how things were gonna work when I got out so, so I didn't come out not knowing anything. Like I said they had a really good chat with me, explained how things work, what job they do and again they're very good. You know, like everytime I see her she always says to me "don't forget, if you're ever unsure of anything or need to talk something through, we're always there. We're not there just to keep an eye on you, we're also there to offer you support and help".*

Ian was subject to the conditions of an indefinite SOPO which specified two exclusion zones (victims' residences) that he was prohibited to enter. He stated that this created problems regarding public transport given that several buses from his home into town passed through one of the exclusion zones, therefore he ensured that he remained mindful of this, only travelling on the bus route which avoided passing through his exclusion zones.


Vic felt his PPO did nothing to help and described him as "*nothing more than a glorified social worker*", despite being unable to elaborate on his reasons for this. He stated that his PPO was against him taking part in this research project, which was untrue as I had spoken to the officer myself, who had no objections to Vic's participation. Vic's account was possibly the least reliable of all the participants due to his chronic alcoholism and apparent inebriation at the time of the telephone interview. He also attempted on several occasions to manipulate, asking that I inform his solicitor and PPO that he had stopped offending, despite the aims and boundaries of the current project being repeatedly reiterated. Vic's SOPO prohibited association with under 17s:

> *I'm allowed to say hello, goodbye, but I'm not allowed to associate in a sense of where I make contact and have any relationship, I'm not allowed to do that.*

Vic's account demonstrated awareness of his SOPO: "*if children are walking down the road, I will take the opposite road and walk away*".

Patrick, convicted of contact offences with extra-familial male victims, was subject to a SOPO which prevented unsupervised contact with under 18s. He was cautious in ensuring that no under 18s stayed at the shared house in which he lived. He discussed a new tenant with two young sons whom he had informed were unable to stay overnight, although they could visit. Wishing to conceal his conviction, he justified this to the new tenant by stating that it was inappropriate for kids to stay given that the property was a house full of adults. Patrick was a difficult interviewee and elaborated little when asked about the SOR.

> *...the conditions that they put on me are not onerous or...unintelligent, like prison seems unintelligent as there's a lot of petty rules in prison but [laughs] there to maintain discipline but like, it's not onerous, they [PPOs] come round my house now and again.*

He claimed their biannual visits were unintrusive, that the terms and conditions impacted little on his life and that his PPO was reasonable.

Derek highlighted both the physical and psychological impacts of registration on daily life:

> *...when you think about the various things that you have to do, or the various things that you're prohibited from, automatically it comes back into your mind...and you still go through a beating up process...and it's most days, you know... it never leaves you. If I'd shoplifted 15 years ago I'd have forgotten about it by now...but because of the nature of my offence, it has impacted so much on my life, and it still impacts to a degree because it excludes me from things that I think I could still do and would like to do, so it never leaves you.*

Derek's sentiments echoed those of Pete (discussed earlier in this chapter), who felt that registration served as a constant reminder of his offending behaviour. Both men had been released for around 15 years and therefore had the option of applying to be removed from the register. Removal from the register may help them to put their pasts behind them and provide the opportunity of living a 'normal' life, aiding their attempts at de-labelling.

### 4.6 Summary

This chapter explores one of the prominent themes within respondents' narratives. Extracts from interviewees' accounts are presented and explored in relation to their desistance. The hierarchy of sex offenders previously noted in the prison literature (Ievins, 2014; Ievins & Crewe, 2015) was evident in participants' experiences of prison VPU wings, although less so in dedicated sex offender prisons which created greater feelings of safety. Participants struggled with the form of labelling experienced within VPU wings, and some attempted to negotiate their

identities by distancing themselves from the label. For example, Kevin referred to 'sex offenders' as a group to which he did not belong.[24] However, despite some of the issues faced by respondents whilst in prison, the general consensus was that prison was better than anticipated – the key was to remain occupied through engagement in constructive activity such as work and education.

Reflecting Schinkel's (2015) findings, prison appeared to serve as a turning point for the majority of respondents. Although it was not possible, due to the retrospective nature of the present study, to identify whether respondents' narratives of transformation began whilst incarcerated, imprisonment appeared to instigate a process of re-evaluation. Prison appeared to serve as a deterrent for most of the men, whose narratives demonstrated an acute awareness of the 'monitored existence' (Garland, 2000: 350) imposed via the SOR. Indeed the narratives of respondents released for the longest periods illustrated the enduring deterrent effect of prison, highlighting that system effects persist. Prison, combined with the surveillance and management of PPOs, thus appeared to act as a mechanism of instrumental compliance – a disincentive to further offending.

The efficacy of treatment programmes was illustrated in respondents' narratives, in support of previous findings (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015). Treatment assisted respondents' cognitive transformations relating to understanding of their offending behaviour and in turn, internalisation of relapse prevention plans which assisted in identification of risk factors and thus avoidance of further offending. Cognitive transformations in relation to enhanced victim empathy were pronounced in contact offenders, with little effect demonstrated among non-contact offenders, who generally failed to acknowledge that victims were harmed through their actions. The narratives of those who had failed to undertake or complete treatment displayed a complete lack of understanding of the harm caused to victim/s and were keen to shift responsibility for their offending behaviour.

Distinct differences in management approaches both across and within probation and police force areas are highlighted in the men's accounts, which indicate that both PPOs and probation officers adopted either the surveillance or welfare approach highlighted by Healy's (2012) probation focused research. Those adopting the welfare approach, including the provision of practical support, were more valued, supporting Healy's (2012) findings. Both Ian and Howard found the support of probation services to be invaluable to their desistance, reflecting Farmer et al's (2015) findings. However, probation supervision was the topic on which the majority of

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[24] This theme is explored further in Chapter Six.

respondents had little to say, suggesting that this had little influence in their desistance. Some participants' simple conformity with legal requirements were indicative of formal compliance, rather than the active engagement involved in substantive compliance (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). The latter is unlikely to result from the surveillance model which is underpinned by coercion and fails to promote co-operation.

Indicative of the new penology (Feeley & Simon, 1992), the treatment and management of CSOs involves a preoccupation with the prevention of risk which fails to include a belief in the individual's capacity for change and is thus unlikely to promote desistance. The criminal justice system's retrospective focus and continued risk assessment is likely to prove counter-productive, encouraging deception as individuals struggle to provide the 'right answers' in their attempts to demonstrate reduced risk. Instead, and more likely to encourage desistance, CSOs should be treated as "…complex individual[s] with multiple identities and needs" (Lacombe, 2008: 57). As such, an 'approach-goal' focus (Mann et al, 2004) to both the treatment and management of sexual offenders is proposed to be more effective by providing individuals with motivation and self-belief in their ability to change, by looking toward the future rather than the past.

The flexibility of the system demonstrated in the narratives of Russ and Adam served to reinforce their desistance by acknowledging their attempts to change, reflecting professionals' discretion and highlighting the significance of the 'governmentality gap' (McNeill et al, 2009). The discretion available to individual criminal justice professionals demonstrates the reality of penality as practiced on the front-line and highlights the power of such individuals in determining the course of CSO's lives. Alternatively, penality may be potentially softened in practice (Ievins & Crewe, 2015), as Adam and Russ found in their successful attempts to obtain relaxed SOPO conditions. The system recognised their efforts to change, acknowledging that their attainment of sources of social capital potentially reduced their assessed risk level. This was reflected back to Adam and Russ in the 'certification' of desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977), which served as a form of de-labelling, portraying to the individual that they are 'believed in'. This, in turn, serves to enhance individuals' self-belief which is likely to assist with the internal changes beneficial to desistance (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farmer et al, 2012). These examples highlight the interaction between both formal and informal social controls and also internal controls. Russ and Adam had obtained social capital, which they realised was beneficial to prevent reoffending. This provided them with the agency to contest the terms of their SOPOs. Their rehabilitative attempts were then reflected in their success in achieving SOPO change. Indeed desistance in the current sample was achieved through the interaction of

formal, informal and agentic forms of control (that is, a combination of both external and internal factors).

For the purpose of the current study, desistance was defined as 'no further self-reported sexual offending since the most recent custodial sentence'. In accordance with this definition, desistance in the current sample is generally aided by formal social controls. These, however, largely fail to assist with identity transformation (eg. Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farmer et al, 2012) by perpetuating negative labelling, which may impede individuals' efforts at identity negotiation.

Having established the role of formal social controls in respondents' desistance from sexual offending, Chapter Five proceeds to consider the theme of informal social control. The barriers to accessing social and structural supports are widely recognised in relation to CSOs (e.g., Brown, Deakin & Spencer, 2004; Brown et al, 2007; McAlinden, 2009; 2011). For the purpose of this thesis the distinction is made between formal social controls, which refers to the formal criminal justice sanctions directed at CSO, whilst informal social controls refer to social and structural supports, including employment. The following chapter proceeds to explore respondents' attainment of informal social controls and the role of these in their desistance.

# Five: Informal Social Control

## 5.1 Introduction

> Arrest, conviction, and imprisonment are clearly stigmatising, and those so tarnished face structural impediments to establishing strong social ties to conventional lines of adult activity (Sampson & Laub, 1997: 16).

Sampson and Laub succinctly summarise the widely acknowledged fact that those convicted and incarcerated face an abundance of obstacles to reintegration. This issue is perhaps more profoundly realised in heavily stigmatised individuals such as sexual offenders, who may experience rejection by significant others, are often socially excluded, and subject to numerous restrictions. Social exclusion presents a risk factor for sexual reoffending as a coping mechanism for the individual (McAlinden, 2005) who has little to lose by returning to prison. CSOs are subject to numerous restrictions and community controls which may serve to impede their attainment of social and structural supports, potentially negatively affecting desistance.

It should be noted at this point that numerous terms adopting the 're-' prefix (such as re-entry, re-integration and re-settlement) are often unquestionably employed in the academic literature to refer to offenders leaving prison and returning to the community. This is arguably a contentious term, which implicitly assumes integration within communities prior to conviction (Robinson & Crow, 2009) when in fact sexual offenders are often lacking in social competency, resulting in loneliness and social isolation (Brown, 2005). However, the narratives of respondents in the present sample indicated socially integrated lifestyles prior to conviction, therefore the 're-' prefix will be used to refer to terms describing a return to the community.

Chapter Two highlighted that investments in, and attachments to, sources of social support are known to aid desistance from non-sexual offending (Gadd & Farrall, 2004). Research on desistance from sexual offending also highlights the benefits of informal social controls such as employment (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al; 2015), 'social groups' (Farmer et al, 2012), and 'significant others' (Farmer et al, 2015). Meloy's (2005) study of sex offenders on probation in the USA found that informal social controls, in particular a committed partner and stable accommodation, were important factors in ensuring success on probation.

This chapter explores the presence of informal social controls in participants' lives and the effects on of these on their desistance. Stable accommodation is widely acknowledged to be a

necessary factor in reducing reoffending in ex-prisoners (Williams, Poyser & Hopkins, 2012) and sexual offenders (Cowan et al, 1999). However, securing accommodation proved to be a protracted and difficult process for some respondents. Employment instability is consistently identified as a significant risk factor for sexual recidivism (Hanson et al, 2003). Obtaining meaningful employment is problematic for those with a sexual conviction, who are subject to restrictions regarding the types of employment accessible. The barriers experienced by CSOs seeking employment are highlighted in respondents' narratives.

None of the participants in the present study were married, although several were involved in romantic relationships, with two cohabiting, therefore the effects of these on desistance are explored in a section entitled 'romantic relationships'. Finally, the significant themes of 'support networks' and 'constructive activity' emerged in participants' narratives. Interviewees overwhelmingly cited the necessity of a support network in the prevention of reoffending. Sources of support related to friends, family, and criminal justice professionals. Some form of constructive activity was present in the majority of the men's lives, either through their job, or hobbies in which they engaged, which provided them with structured activity and a sense of meaning and purpose. The chapter concludes with a discussion of informal social controls and their role in participants' desistance.

## 5.2 Accommodation

The significance of 'place' and the potential influence of this on desistance is beginning to be acknowledged in the literature (e.g., Farrall et al, 2014; Farrall & Hunter, 2015). For example, social spaces such as bars or gambling premises may serve as criminogenic contexts (Meisenhelder, 1977), thus individuals frequenting these may be presumed to remain linked to illegal activity associated with their former offending behaviour. In contrast, positive social activities including reputable employment and a stable home life indicate that the individual is taking steps towards reform (Farrall & Sparks, 2006; Farrall & Hunter, 2015). Differential association theory, first formulated by Edwin Sutherland in 1939 and developed further through empirical testing (Warr, 2002), proposes that exposure to deviant norms leads adolescents to become delinquents. This theory highlights that 'place' is significant for continued criminal engagement, as offenders wishing to desist may relocate to avoid further associations with criminal contacts. Similar findings are found in relation to substance abusers who, wishing to desist from further substance abuse, relocate to reduce associations with drug abusing peers (Farrall & Hunter, 2015), reflecting the concept of diachronic self-control by changing lifestyle to avoid criminal temptation (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011; see Chapter Two). The significance of 'place' differs somewhat for CSOs, whose offending behaviour is more likely to be a sole

endeavour, unlikely to be influenced by peer abusers. Intra-familial offenders of their own children, and/or stepchildren, are likely to experience severed contact with victims and thus an inability to return to the family home, which may prompt relocation to a new geographical area.

In addition, the geographical locations in which CSOs are able to reside may be determined by the criminal justice system. CSOs are often relocated following prison release (McAlinden, 2007). Licence conditions may prevent a return to their original locality (Brown et al, 2007). Housing restrictions imposed within a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) can include specific exclusion zones, or specified distances from places frequented by children, such as schools and parks. CSOs' attempts to conceal their offending may prompt relocation due to fears of potential vigilante attacks, a possibility highlighted by the News of the World's name and shame campaign, which resulted in attacks on those identified as paedophiles (BBC News, 2001).

Stable housing is acknowledged to be an important factor in reducing reoffending in sexual offenders (Cowan et al, 1999). However, locating and securing stable accommodation for such individuals is often problematic. Cowan et al's (1999) research highlights the difficulties faced by housing providers (in collaboration with other agencies) in accommodating CSOs. With the focus on community safety, a balance is attempted between meeting the housing needs of the individual whilst attempting to locate them in a locality with low numbers of children. The SOR requires individuals to provide a registered address in an attempt to keep track of the individual, thus social housing (in providing greater security of tenure) is preferable to the private rented sector or bed and breakfast accommodation (Cowan et al, 1999).

The preceding chapter noted that the probation service role included assisting CSOs in finding accommodation (National Probation Service, 2004). Indeed, Cowan et al (1999) found that registered social landlords had networks with probation, which allowed for referral of sex offenders directly. Several participants in the current study discussed the help provided by probation in referring them both to housing providers and employment agencies.

The ease (or otherwise) with which participants obtained accommodation following release from prison was explored in interviews. Prior to their convictions, the majority of sample members ($n=10$) were married and living in stable accommodation; some owned, some rented. The two youngest participants were living with parents, one lived with his partner, and two lived alone. The majority of sample members returned to their original geographical locations upon release and had obtained stable accommodation despite experiencing delays or difficulties. This section begins by exploring the experiences of securing housing for participants returning

to their original locations, followed by those who relocated. The potential influence of stable accommodation in relation to desistance is then discussed.

Derek was able to return to his original location and, despite being a well-known figure in the local community due to his occupation prior to conviction, expressed his reasons for wishing to do so:

> *There's no reason why you shouldn't go back to near your home area because that's where your support is. That's where your friends are. That's where people might be able to help you to get into a job, to get accommodation, etcetera, etcetera.*

After spending several weeks in an approved premises (hostel) post-prison release, Derek was placed in a shared house with other (ex) offenders, which he described as a run-down place in the worst area of town and, having come from a *"nice background'* with a *"nice home",* found it was a *"culture shock".* He described his time in the shared house as being difficult:

> *...you were forever looking over your shoulder and wondering what's gonna happen next? or who's gonna walk through the door?, you didn't seem to have your own privacy.*

After around six months he moved into a friend's property, where he was able to live rent-free. This was approved by probation and was acknowledged by Derek to be a major factor in moving on, in both enabling him to live alone and also easing his financial difficulties at the time.

Those who chose to return to their home towns did so for similar reasons to Derek, expressing an awareness of the benefits of a nearby support network. Pete stated that he had no problems in obtaining accommodation and claimed to have secured this whilst in prison, such that he moved straight into his flat upon release. He had since moved several times during the 15 years since prison release, but had remained within the local area despite experiencing verbal abuse from locals regarding his offending. Russ also chose to return to his home town and although he stayed in bed and breakfast establishments for several weeks following prison release, he then managed to secure rented accommodation.

Despite Mike's awareness of local newspaper coverage of his conviction and his concerns that his name, address and occupation were included in the reports, he was keen to return to his original community upon release. Whilst initially nervous, he stated that he quite happily returned to his original area without any repercussions:

> *I was very wary at first, erm, looking over my shoulder and thinking you know, retribution, are people gonna come out looking for me?, erm......but then as time went on that sort of relapsed. I thought the only people who are really after me, funnily enough, are the police, you know.*

Adam's attempts to obtain housing through an organisation which provided supported accommodation to those with convictions were unsuccessful and he therefore returned to his parents' home, but:

> *I would have been happier if I'd got somewhere to live. Going back to my parents was obviously a step backwards...*

Adam stated that moving out of his parents would be his next step, although a move at the time of interview was prohibited by his unemployment.


Kevin claimed to have begun the process of seeking accommodation whilst in prison, contacting various local authorities to which he had links (areas in which family resided). With the assistance of MAPPA he managed to secure housing association accommodation within three months of leaving prison and returned to the town in which he had resided prior to incarceration. His reason for return related to employment prospects which he believed to be greater in his hometown, due to the abundance of companies engaged in his line of work within commutable distance. Kevin expressed his frustration over his inability to become an active community citizen, reflecting the difficulties of reintegration resulting from restrictive practices imposed upon CSOs:

> *For example they [MAPPA] won't allow me to join the tenant's and resident's association. Why not? Am I not a tenant or resident? Yes, but that could give you access to children. Yes and so could walking down the fucking street.*

Alan claimed to have rented out his owned home whilst incarcerated and returned to this upon prison release. He reiterated on numerous occasions that he *"never had any animosity at all"* upon return to the community and stated that neighbours welcomed him back into the community despite awareness of his conviction, which had received local newspaper coverage. He even stated that neighbours had taken their children to visit him whilst he was in prison, which was difficult to believe. He had since moved within the same geographical area into sheltered housing. Alan represented the stereotypical manipulative and deceptive 'sex offender', whose narcissistic narrative was somewhat unconvincing. He attempted to present himself as a popular individual surrounded by friends and family, however, when asked what his typical week would involve, no reference was made to contact with friends or family. This was somewhat surprising given that he claimed to be suffering from a terminal illness at our interview.


Ian wished to move away from his local area due to anxieties over encountering his victims. However, he stated that MAPPA housed him under the Homeless Act and their chosen location was situated just outside the two exclusion zones specified within his SOPO. He was prohibited from entering these areas, where his victims resided. Despite his initial anxieties, he had settled

well and formed social bonds with neighbours who were aware of his recent prison release but not the nature of the offence, which he was understandably keen to conceal. Those who chose to relocate did so not primarily due to anxieties over community reactions, but to avoid victim contact. Terry, convicted of intra-familial offences involving his daughter and stepdaughter, chose to relocate following prison release. His father lived in a village close to Terry's original home town and had offered him a room:

> *I didn't wanna go back…I could've gone back and lived with him [father]. He offered me a roof over my head. But…I didn't wanna, I didn't feel comfortable, I didn't feel safe. Er, it was too close to [ex-wife, daughter and stepdaughter] and I was erm….I didn't particularly want to go back because if I saw [ex-wife], she married again, erm, it would've just been heartbreaking.*

Although finding accommodation was difficult, Terry ultimately managed to secure a flat with the help of a housing charity which supported socially excluded individuals and was recommended to him through his probation officer. It appeared that his landlord was unaware of his conviction:

> *I had two female helpers [from the housing charity], I don't know what you call them, but they were both very good and one of them went with me to the estate agents and erm, basically lied through her teeth, she did all the talking, er and er, I think the estate agents were glad of the money in their pockets.*

His small divorce settlement was useful in enabling him to pay six months rent in advance:

> *Well, you know what I did, again finding accommodation it's an absolute nightmare, I was trying for six months while at the hostel to find accommodation, but you have to lie, but if you lie while you're on licence [laughs] you get recalled. So the remaining money I had I paid upfront to get a flat, so erm…that's all my divorce settlement gone. So if I didn't have that money I don't know what would have happened.*

Terry claimed the local community were unaware of his conviction. Aware of the potential consequences of public knowledge of his previous offending, he was anxious to ensure this remained concealed. He expressed concerns of vigilante attacks:

> *Gotta be very, very wary about who you confide in…cos it's your life. If my neighbours found out, my work colleagues found out... Oh there was a bit in the paper two weeks back where an ex offender was murdered 'cos two young men thought they were above the law and so they killed him. I mean I have a small circle of friends, I have a local pub over the road, I go in there, I'm friendly with the landlord and landlady, believe it or not, there are two people from [home town] who live within 100 yards of me…well, I've notified the police…just in case anything happens…so you've got to live a double life basically…*

Despite his court case taking place several hundred miles away from his home town, Nigel expressed similar reasons to Terry for wishing to relocate following prison release. His offences had received coverage in the newspaper local to the court hearing. He wished to avoid causing further embarrassment to his ex-wife and her children by moving back to the same area. Furthermore, he also had the opportunity to stay at a friend's home in a different area,

highlighting the beneficial nature of a support network, which provided practical assistance in addition to friendship and emotional support.

Simon's situation differed somewhat to other sample members.  Having left the UK to live in a different country at the age of eight, he was deported back to the UK following prison release. Faced with the daunting prospect of establishing a life in a country unfamiliar to him, Simon's choice of location in the UK was determined by the fact that a distant relative lived there who was particularly supportive and allowed him to stay until he had obtained his flat.  He stated that he had no difficulty in obtaining accommodation, although was fortunately able to make an advance payment of six months rent, as had Terry.

Whilst none of the participants related their desistance solely to obtaining stable accommodation, they saw this as an important start to 'building a new life'.  King (2013: 157) proposes that (ex) offenders securing employment displays to others a "symbolic expression of successful desistance".  Such symbolism of 'success' is perhaps of greater significance in stigmatised individuals such as CSOs and may also occur as a result of securing stable accommodation, as John's account suggests:

> *I felt very guilty [about past offending]…you don't feel deserving, but when people see you're getting on with your life as well, you find there's a lot more mercy…you know, when they see you got a…flat and you're rebuilding yourself, people are more likely to show that mercy.*

John was referring to the 'mercy' of both friends and family and also the criminal justice system.  Fortunate to retain the support of friends and family, he stayed with his mother upon release, until securing a flat in his original location.  Although he had encountered a number of PPOs with differing approaches to management, he felt that he was seen as a less of a risk by the criminal justice system due to his success in maintaining his flat and securing a job.  This reflects the interaction between several types of informal social controls and formal social controls.  His ability to secure and maintain stable accommodation resulted in enhanced support from family and friends and also, he felt, presented him as a reduced risk to the formal social control of the criminal justice system.

The narratives of the present sample highlight that the ability to secure stable accommodation tended to require assistance from other sources, such as probation services, friends or family and often necessitated the availability of finances in order to pay six months rent up front. Some of the mens' accounts illustrate the barriers to securing stable accommodation; most had experienced delays in finding suitable accommodation. It seemed that securing stable accommodation was a crucial step towards the establishment of a new, prosocial lifestyle. Demonstrating further interaction of informal social controls, stable accommodation provided

the men with the roots on which to build a stable lifestyle, and a permanent address provided a necessary base from which to apply for employment. Indeed, research recognises that individuals with a conviction are much more likely to secure employment if they have stable accommodation (Rhodes, 2008). Furthermore, a permanent address is beneficial in relation to the terms and conditions of the SOR, which requires address details to be registered and updated as necessary. The absence of a permanent address is likely to pose a risk factor for further offending in the eyes of the criminal justice system.

## 5.3 Employment

The importance of stable employment in relation to desistance is widely acknowledged in the literature relating to both sexual offenders (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; McAlinden, 2009) and non-sexual offenders (Laub & Sampson, 2001; Uggen & Staff, 2001; Farrall, 2002; Visher & Travis, 2003). However, it is not the mere presence of employment which aids desistance, but rather, the meaning attributed to this by individual (Sampson & Laub, 1993).

Employment serves several purposes in the prevention of reoffending. It provides financial assistance which may alleviate the issues that a lack of financial resources creates, and also provides a structured daily routine which may prove useful for preventing thoughts of reoffending in CSOs (Brogden & Harkin, 2000). The possibility of new social relationships arise through employment, which also assist in promoting self-esteem and fulfilment. Furthermore, securing employment following a conviction presents to others that the individual is attempting change, in providing a "symbolic expression of successful desistance" (King, 2013: 157).

Individuals with a sexual conviction are likely to experience numerous barriers to obtaining employment, more so than other offender types (McAlinden, 2009). In addition to employer and public antipathy, CSOs are prevented from roles involving access to children or the vulnerable, and also access to information concerning these groups. Employment roles requiring criminal records disclosure[25] are therefore unavailable to those with a conviction for a sexual offence, if their conviction is unspent.[26] These barriers are likely to impede CSOs from

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[25] The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) conduct criminal record checks for specific positions and professions included in the ROA 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, and those listed in the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) regulations (Disclosure & Barring Service, 2016). This practice was previously known as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.

[26] In accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, amended by the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014, discussed in Chapter One.

obtaining meaningful employment (McAlinden, 2009), indeed the majority of CSOs are likely to be employed in low status, low paid work (McAlinden, 2009).

The barriers to obtaining employment for those in receipt of a sexual conviction were evident in respondents' accounts and thus, it was somewhat surprising that nine had obtained full time employment. Three were not seeking employment due to being retired (Nigel & Alan), through ill-health (Vic), or unwillingness to undertake the low paid roles for which they were suitable (Mike). At the time of interviews, both Adam and Ian claimed to be actively seeking employment. Two participants had secured employment (in roles which did not compromise public protection) through personal contacts willing to employ them despite their conviction - a popular method of obtaining employment for those with sexual convictions (Brown et al, 2007). Rejection upon disclosure of criminal records was common. Some employers seemed to have been unconcerned by individuals' convictions, although these were roles which did not involve work with vulnerable groups. Some participants had not been requested to disclose criminal convictions and believed that, had they been required to do, they would not have been offered the job.

Several extracts are presented from the narratives of respondents which highlight the various difficulties encountered in seeking employment. The fact that low paid, low status jobs are the norm for those with sexual convictions (McAlinden, 2009), seemed to have led one of the respondents, Mike, to cease seeking further employment due his unwillingness to accept low pay. Those who were employed, although not necessarily attributing meaning to their job, recognised that this was useful in providing structured activity and occupying their time. In this respect, employment appeared to have aided their desistance.

Respondents were aware of the ROA and the changes due within the revised Act.[27] Eight of the men in the current sample had received custodial sentences of four years or more, which would therefore never be 'spent', meaning that disclosure to potential employers would continue to be required by law. Those who had received custodial sentences of between 30-48 months felt it was unlikely that they would benefit from the changes to the ROA, as although their sentence would become 'spent' seven years following sentence expiry, the fact that they were subject to the terms and conditions of the SOR indefinitely led them to believe that this in itself carried negative implications for employment. Those who had been released from prison for lengthy periods were also sceptical that, should they achieve successful removal from the SOR after 15 years, information held by the police was likely to perpetually hinder them when seeking new

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[27] At the time of interviews the changes had not been enacted.

employment. Indeed, Padfield (2011) notes that many organisations have access to data held by the police, and furthermore, there is no way that a criminal record can be deleted from the police national computer.

Maruna (2011) questions the notion of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and the fact that ex-offenders are encouraged to conceal previous convictions that have since become spent. To remedy this, he suggests that a 'certification of rehabilitation' is issued to reformed individuals upon a spent conviction, thus allowing the individual to acknowledge their past conviction and demonstrate to potential employers that they have since reformed. However, this notion is of little use to CSOs whose conviction will never become spent.

Participants were well aware that they were unable to apply for employment requiring criminal records checks, as the nature of their conviction rendered them unsuitable for such roles which include working with the vulnerable. However, Kevin expressed frustration that numerous job roles included CRB checks for positions which did legally require them:

> *Yes, well I've started to challenge it, if someone asks me for…if someone says in the process that they're going to require a CRB, I'll apply and I'll make it quite clear that unless they can demonstrate to me that it's an exempted thing, I won't comply with a CRB request.*

Russ had also experienced employers' requesting criminal records checks for positions which did not require them. Indeed, Nacro (2015) note that despite this being unlawful practice, many employers run checks on positions which are not exempt from the Act. Exempt roles are included in The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Legislation.gov.uk, no date d), within which Schedule one includes a list of the roles which require disclosure of both spent and unspent convictions and include positions such as teacher, dentist, medical practitioner and judicial appointments.

Despite experiencing difficulties, Kevin managed to secure employment within eight months of prison release. He furnished me prior to our interview with a lengthy disclosure document, which he provided to prospective employers when criminal records history was requested. He obtained his first job without being asked for criminal record information, however, shortly after beginning the job his employers enquired about this. Kevin provided them with the disclosure document he had prepared and claimed that this led to his resignation:

> *…they accepted my resignation on that day as against dismissing me …and paid me a week's notice so…it was generous of them. To be fair they really liked me and they said if it hadn't been for that there wouldn't have been any question.*

At the time of our interview, Kevin was employed by a contract payroll company which had failed to request criminal record information.  He believed this was the reason for his ability to secure employment.

> *I'm very lucky the nature of [job role] is that it's a CV application process and most people therefore don't ask, because they presume the agency has, and the agencies don't ask 'cos they want their commission.*

He stated that MAPPA conducted checks on the companies to which he was contracted in order to ensure minimisation of risk.  He also claimed that, with the assistance of MAPPA, he had compiled a rather elaborate story to account for the gap in his CV whilst serving time in prison.  According to Kevin, this explained that he was suffering from depression and as a result had spent time in a 'secure environment', following which the relationship with his partner came to its natural end.  He believed that potential employers would interpret this as:

> *…okay, so he went to a mental hospital, he was detained and then after that he got released and…his partner died.  That's what they hear.  That's not what I said.  At the end of the day I do have the mental health history, I do have the custodial for my own safety and the safety of others.  Obviously safety of others isn't the people you think, or they people they think, but ultimately I was remanded for public safety.  So therefore I can say I was taken into a secure environment for the safety of myself and others, and I'm not lying…every word has been approved by MAPPA and that is the official disclosure I give.  If someone asks me the exempted question I give the document you've seen.  Only once have I been asked for that document, unfortunately erm, the job did not continue.*

Kevin referred to a disclosure document which he had prepared for potential employees and which he had emailed me prior to our interview.  This detailed his offences, his good conduct whilst in prison and his assessed low risk of offending, which contrasted with the story concocted with MAPPA's assistance to account for the gap in his CV.  Such practices seem somewhat collusive and at odds with the message of treatment programmes which encourage honesty and disclosure.  Assistance from criminal justice system professionals in the concoction of a 'story' which accounts for gaps in a CSO's CV seems to encourage deception and contradicts the advice of Nacro (2016) who advise that job applicants should explain honestly at interview why they were unavailable for work.  This highlights further the discretion available to practitioners responsible for managing CSOs.  However, this form of 're-storying' (McNeill, 2004) may hold wider implications in terms of identity reconstruction, potentially beneficial to the achievement of a non-offending prosocial identity.

Kevin's narrative highlights the difficulties encountered by those with sexual convictions seeking employment.  Such individuals are required to adopt a determined stance to job seeking as persistence in the face of rejection is clearly required in order to secure employment.  Perhaps unsurprisingly, research on employers' views of hiring those with sexual convictions revealed that employers tended to equate 'sex offender' with paedophile (Brown et al, 2004).  Half of

those surveyed stated that they would not consider employing someone with a sexual conviction regardless of the circumstances (Brown et al, 2007).

Terry's account also illustrates the barriers encountered by individuals with a sexual conviction seeking work, and the impact this has on their confidence and self-esteem. He experienced difficulties obtaining employment but was ultimately successful, after an 18 month search, in obtaining a job despite disclosing his convictions. However, his employment was terminated following intervention by his probation officer who had concerns the role may involve contact with women, given that one of his convictions related to voyeurism. He described his convictions as creating major difficulties in his search for employment: *"...it's an absolute nightmare trying to find work..."*. He was ultimately put in touch with a recruitment agency via the probation service, who he found to be invaluable in his search for employment, stating that they were *"excellent",* treated him as a *"normal person"* and *"...they built my confidence up, because your confidence is...rock bottom. Absolutely rock bottom".* Terry had experienced several rejections further to disclosing his convictions at interview, and discussed the necessity of persistence in applying for jobs:

> *I went for a number of interviews because I used to work for [company name] as a warehouse manager and I went for an interview...and convictions were mentioned so I said "yes, I've got an unspent criminal conviction" and I carried a piece of paper around with me which was written with probation's [details]...and erm, I was using a company called [employment agency name], who were really good and together between us all we typed up a letter trying to explain in not such negative words about my convictions. And anyway [sighs] I produced this letter a couple of times and you could see the difference in the interviewer and the atmosphere of the interview change dramatically...*

The recruitment agency assisted Terry in obtaining a forklift licence, which ultimately enabled him to obtain a job, which he had held for two years at the time of interview. Echoing other respondents' views, Terry believed he was able to secure this job because his employer did not request criminal record information. He felt that, together with accommodation and social support, employment was a significant factor in his desistance in providing a structured routine and greater financial stability. Terry believed that individuals with sexual convictions should receive greater help from the criminal justice system in finding employment:

> *You get very, very little help finding work and finding accommodation which are the two biggest issues that you need to get sorted.*

He had found it difficult to forget the past and often thought of his daughter and stepdaughter (his victims), with whom he no longer had contact. As such, although he found his low status job somewhat unfulfilling, he acknowledged that it assisted in distracting his thoughts from his daughter and stepdaughter.

As noted previously, Simon was deported back to the UK following prison release. Attempting to adapt to life in a country with which he was no longer familiar, with the support of one distant relative, he had engaged in voluntary work in a church during his two year search for paid employment. Voluntary work serves to occupy a CSO's time, perhaps useful for preventing thoughts of reoffending. It may also assist in securing paid employment by demonstrating a work ethic and efforts to reform. Given that employment is seen as a protective factor for recidivism, CSOs unable to achieve work may find themselves in a 'catch 22' situation, struggling to demonstrate reform whilst unemployed. Voluntary work serves as an alternative method of attempts to demonstrate reform.

The two years Simon spent seeking paid employment were clearly a difficult time for him and his feelings of desperation are reflected in an extract from his narrative below. In common with several respondents, Simon had attempted suicide prior to imprisonment and had considered this since, frustrated by his lack of social and structural supports. He discussed feeling depressed and receiving counselling:

> *... to help me get over the fact that I'm never going home, this is never gonna be home, but I'm never going home, I may never have a job, er, I may never have anything in life erm...you know maybe except the end of a rope [in an attempt to take his own life]*

Simon claimed that for two years, it was "*impossible*" to find a job, despite numerous applications. He ultimately obtained employment, which enabled him to utilise his skills as an electrician, in contrast to the other participants who were employed in relatively unskilled, poorly paid work, often the norm for those with sexual offence conviction/s (Brown et al, 2004; McAlinden, 2009). Simon believed, as did Terry, that it was his employer's failure to request criminal record information which ultimately enabled him to secure employment. Simon admitted to being a *"workaholic",* and felt his job was crucial to his desistance, providing him with a sense of purpose, structured routine and fulfilment. His job also provided him with a social network. Referring to his job, and the two years it took him to get this, he stated:

> *It's a meaning in life again, I've got a meaning in life again. I think as I mentioned before erm, one of the important factors of preventing recidivism is erm...having a meaningful lifestyle and for two years it was far from it and I didn't stray then, which gave me the additional strength to push forward now.*

According to Simon, he ultimately informed his employer of his conviction after being stopped by the police whilst accompanied in his car by his boss. Simon praised the police for being discreet and not discussing his conviction within earshot of his boss, however, this incident prompted Simon to reveal his conviction to his employer. He offered to resign and was surprised by his boss's positive response:

*You know what, you've had the balls to tell me, erm...you have proven yourself well and truly above and beyond what we ever expected of you, there is no reason I want you to go.*

Following his revelation, Simon was promoted, which reinforced his pride in his work and enhanced his self-esteem, highlighting Sampson and Laub's (1993) assertion that the nature of an individual's employment and what this means to them is important in desistance. Reflecting upon the importance of his job, Simon had begun to question whether he would in fact wish to return to the country from which he was deported if given the chance, which had always been his aim. Discussing the fact that he wished to return for Christmas, Simon stated:

*Well [sighs] I don't know, it's gonna be a tough decision now. You know, when I told my boss, what I said when he brought up the leave situation, I said look I want to ask permission from the three directors if I can defer this leave until the end of next year because I'd like to make a surprise visit to my mum in [home country] and he goes erm...what if you don't come back? And I was like well I have to come back 'cos they're not gonna let me stay, he goes what if they let you stay, will you stay? And I said that's a really tough decision. I said....because of the support you've given me and all that sort of stuff now I feel obliged to come back and see a few more years out with you, or at least come back and say, on such and such a date I'm moving back.*

Sampson and Laub (1993) noted that their sample had invested so much in a marriage or job that they did not want to risk losing these through re-offending. Simon's investment in his job developed further through the support his employers provided despite knowledge of his conviction. Simon claimed his employers had also expressed their desire to support him in his application for SOR removal after 15 years (which was over 10 years away at the time of interview):

*...this is where management at work have just been awesome because their plan is that we're gonna overturn this garbage. You know, wait your 15 years, tread your water, at the end of your 15 years let's go to court together and erm we'll be there by your side the whole time....*

Simon's desistance was underpinned by his employment, which served as a source of normative compliance with the law. His job allowed him to develop a prosocial lifestyle and a meaning in life so significant to him that he was unwilling to risk losing this through further offending. Simon's employment formed a large part of his identity. As a self-confessed 'workaholic', he obtained a great deal of satisfaction from the meaningful employment in the career for which he had trained. In accordance with the Good Lives Model, Simon's job provided him with a sense of mastery, which had been enhanced through his employer's acknowledgement that he had excelled in his role. His job had served to provide him with an enhanced sense of self-esteem and changed his perception of himself (see Farrall, 2002) and was thus useful for reconstructing his identity.

Various sources of informal social control interacted to influence Simon's desistance. The most significant of these was his job, to which he had a strong bond. His employer had invested in Simon and was willing to support him despite learning of his conviction. Simon's employer had accepted his convictions, was prepared to trust him, and had praised the quality of his work, which had empowered Simon further. Someone who Simon respected 'believed in him', providing him with a sense of self-worth which in turn supported his desistance, reflecting a further example of the 'certification' stage of desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977), which also serves to reinforce the individual's identity as a non-offender. Simon's employment provided him with additional social capital in the form of a network of friends with whom he socialised, reflecting Sampson and Laub's (1993) claim that strong ties to work influence desistance.

The importance of work in providing structure and routine, and also the possibility of new social relationships was acknowledged by Pete:

> *Something in your daily routine…to actually get up in the morning and go out and do something, and you also get to talk to people through work - I'd hate to be old and on my own.*

The majority of the current sample appeared well educated with previously stable employment histories, reflecting characteristics previously found by Seleznow (2002) and Sullivan and Beech (2002) but contrasting the characteristics of Brown et al's (2004) and McAlinden's (2009) samples. Russ perceived sex offenders as a whole to be intelligent:

> *The irony with sex offenders is erm, it seems to be that generally the level of intellect is higher than the average population, so it's not stupid people, it's not people that don't have skills, it's finding someone who's willing to give them an opportunity and go ok you're telling me that's a one off it's in your past lets move on from there…*

Sex offenders are perhaps unsurprisingly judged the most negatively by employers and likely to be rejected for 90% of vacancies (Brown et al, 2004). Two participants were unable to return to their previous careers as their sexual conviction prohibited it; one of the reasons why individuals with sexual convictions often find themselves in low status, low paid roles (Brown et al, 2004; McAlinden, 2009). Indeed, Mike, a train driver prior to his conviction, lamented the fact that all the roles he had managed to obtain since prison release were poorly paid. In contrast to the majority of participants, he appeared to have obtained little social capital despite being released from prison for 11 years. Brown et al's (2007) respondents also expressed frustration in their inability to return to jobs with similar status and salary to those held prior to their sexual offence conviction. Whilst Mike had managed to obtain employment as a delivery driver within three months of leaving prison, he left after a short period as he felt the salary was meagre in comparison to his previous career. A year later he obtained further low paid employment with a company to whom his convictions were not a concern. However, Mike stated that suffering depression in 2006 led him to quit this job. Although he claimed that his unemployment was due to ongoing mental health problems, his unwillingness to undertake low

paid, low status employment appeared to underpin his apparently self-imposed unemployment.

Similarly, Derek had enjoyed a high salary prior to his conviction but was unable to continue in his previous profession as a teacher post-prison release. He had been employed in a low paid role for 10 years at the time of interview and struggled to manage financially. He had secured his current job working for a friend who was willing to employ him despite his conviction. Although he was grateful to have a job, he found it somewhat unfulfilling and missed his teaching role, which he felt was more beneficial to society and one in which he could make a difference. However, he did acknowledge the beneficial nature of the structure and routine provided by work, although his job did not appear to influence his identity or provide him with self-esteem. The role of employment for Derek failed to provide him with a sense of mastery, but he appeared to have resigned himself to the fact that he was unlikely to obtain an alternative, more fulfilling job. He was also approaching the age of retirement and thus, believed it would be pointless to seek alternative employment.

Russ had experienced few difficulties in finding employment, and tended to change jobs often due to boredom. Interestingly, he related his success in securing employment to the fact that:

> I think I'm lucky in the respect that you know without resorting to stereotypes, there are some people that look **weird** for want of a better word. I'd like to think I come across quite well...and I'm honest as well. I tell people what happened in as much detail as they want to know, I obviously don't go into all the details. I think people respect and value that.

The extract above from Russ's narrative indicates awareness of the stereotypical image of the sex offender as he discussed not looking *"weird"*.[28] His account also highlights distancing from the sex offender group by presenting himself as looking 'normal'. He therefore rejects the label of which he is aware is ascribed to sex offenders as a whole. It should be noted that none of the participants looked 'weird' but Russ's account reflects the pervasive view of stigmatised sex offenders, perhaps reinforced by the media. He acknowledged the benefits of a job, not only in relation to providing a source of income in order to support his baby daughter, but the fact that he needed to be occupied: *"not working is not good for me because I've got too much time on my hands"*. Unemployment is a risk factor for sexual reoffending perhaps primarily as boredom is likely to lead to internet use, the source of Russ's conviction. His account demonstrated interaction of two types of informal social control. He admitted to having often changed jobs due to boredom and lack of fulfilment, however, the arrival of his baby daughter had instilled a sense of responsibility, which encouraged him to make a greater commitment to his job:

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[28] Participants' attempts at negotiating identity are discussed further in Chapter Six.

*Work is going well, I enjoy it, I've had a few sort of rough spells through that but again the fact I've come through that is definitely a progression.*

This section has highlighted the barriers to securing employment experienced by respondents and the necessity of persistence and determination in order to achieve this. The low paid roles available to CSOs appeared to have prevented Mike from seeking further employment. Those who had managed to obtain employment often did so due to non-requirement of criminal record disclosure, or through friends who were willing to employ them. For those who were employed, the fact that they had achieved this despite the barriers encountered was likely to have enhanced their confidence and self-esteem. Generally, participants did not obtain a great sense of fulfilment from their jobs, but recognised that these were useful in providing structured routine, which is likely to have contributed to their desistance. Furthermore, employment indicates positive life change, which displays to others a "symbolic expression of successful desistance" (King, 2013: 157). Simon attached the greatest meaning to his job but had fortunately been able to continue his previous career which was reasonably well paid. In accordance with the Good Lives Model, the primary human good of mastery was achieved by Simon through his job. His reform was acknowledged by his employer's acceptance of his conviction, which had provided 'certification' of desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977).

## 5.4 Romantic relationships

Research suggests that marriage involving a strong attachment to a spouse, combined with close emotional ties, may operate as an informal social control to assist desistance from crime (Sampson & Laub, 1993). The majority of participants (*n*=10) were married at the time their offending was discovered, and perhaps unsurprisingly, all respondents' marriages dissolved due to their conviction/s. Thus, marriage had failed to prevent their offending. However, only Terry had spoken of his marriage in a positive light. His narrative involved a consistently rosy picture of family life prior to his wife's awareness of his offending, therefore, what was presented as a strong attachment had failed to deter him from offending. Other respondents who were married at the time of their conviction spoke of their relationships negatively, their narratives indicating the absence of a strong bond to their partner.

In the UK, recent decades have witnessed increasing cohabitation and a decline in marriage (Farrall, Bottoms & Shapland, 2010). Marriage in contemporary society is often preceded by relatively long periods of dating and cohabitation (Laub, Nagin & Sampson, 1998). As such, individuals often engage in lengthy stable romantic partnerships prior to marriage, or without marrying, indicating that the informal social control mechanisms linking marriage with desistance from crime should also operate in cohabiting men (Lyngstad & Skardhamar, 2010).

Indeed, Skardhamar, Monsbakken and Torkild's (2014) Norwegian research found that the majority of marriages occurred after a period of cohabitation, which was also the period when the greatest reduction in offending occurred.

CSOs subject to the terms and conditions of the SOR are required to inform the police (or probation whilst on licence) if they enter into a romantic relationship, and are encouraged to inform their new partner of their offending history as soon as possible. It is likely that CSOs experience greater difficulties in forming new romantic relationships than non-sexual offenders, due to the nature of the offence, the necessity of disclosure, and issues surrounding the 'right' time to disclose. Presumably most women would be deterred from entering into a relationship with an individual who had a history of child sexual offending, particularly if they had children of their own (as this may amplify distaste and revulsion towards those committing such offences). However, four of the interviewees in the current sample were engaged in intimate relationships, forged since their release from prison, two of whom were cohabiting with their partners. Several participants were deterred from seeking a romantic partner due to concerns over the necessity of disclosure. Simon noted:

> *...there's too many erm...problems associated with finding a partner. I mean, disclosure is one of them, when do you do it and do you do it?, should you do it?, obviously yes you should, but when and all that and you know, I've got enough friends that a partner....maybe one day down the track I don't know, see how things pan out. But at the moment my life I feel is full enough that erm...you know I'm happy, I'm much happier than I've been since coming back to this country.*

The dilemma of disclosure is documented in previous research and appears likely to impede CSOs' formation of romantic relationships. Craissati (2004) described a male sex offender's experience of a negative reaction to a previous disclosure and his resulting difficulties in forming new social contacts, particularly romantic partners, which he had found difficult to resolve. Ian, on licence at the time of interview, was aware of the need to inform his probation officer immediately should he begin a relationship, but acknowledged the difficulties of disclosing to a new partner:

> *Well that's it, chances are the relationship finishes before it starts...but then, do you build up a relationship, then disclose and risk destroying it?...it would be too stressful at the moment.*

Finding the 'right' time to disclose a sexual conviction/s is clearly difficult. Disclose early and the relationship is likely to cease before it begins; disclose later and risk losing the trust of their partner. Derek had not had a relationship since his prison release 15 years prior to our interview and clearly missed female company, however he also felt that attempting to form a new relationship was too problematic:

> *I still realise and appreciate that I'm luckier than a lot of other people and....but I still get down at times when I think that you know, there's nothing ahead. I mean you know,*

*I don't have any relationship. I've not had any relationship. I've met nice ladies that I've thought oh you know she's single it would be nice…but I just step back from it because I think if I got into a relationship, perhaps this person doesn't know at the moment about my past and if I was starting a relationship with this person, then would the day come when somebody would whisper in her ear and that would be her first awareness, and she would then you know, run a mile from me, so….the better mechanism is to avoid it.*

Disclosure clearly presents issues for CSOs which are difficult to overcome. Relationships may begin as friendships, waiting to disclose when the friendship has become a relationship is likely to destroy the partner's trust and potentially terminate the relationship. Due to CSOs' stigmatised status they are likely to be concerned that any individuals to whom they disclose may also disclose to others, raising the potential of victimisation. Appropriate relationships may be considered as protective factors on risk assessment (Cortoni, 2009), although difficult to establish for those with a sexual conviction.

The introduction of the child sex offender disclosure scheme (CSODS, popularly known as 'Sarah's law'), rolled out across England and Wales in Spring 2011 (Home Office, 2010) enables parents, guardians or carers to request information from the police should they have concerns over particular individuals engaged in close contact with their children (Kemshall et al, 2010). The police may disclose information regarding previous convictions as necessary, if the individual is deemed to present a risk. The introduction of the CSODS was described as "…an important step forward for child protection", which "…keeps children safer" (Home Office, 2010) but was arguably unnecessary given the amount of resources involved and the fact that disclosures when necessary took place through MAPPA (Kemshall et al, 2010). The implementation of the CSODS appears unlikely to significantly alter the way police in England and Wales previously operated disclosure (Kemshall et al, 2010), but provides a formal mechanism for public enquiry. Participants were not explicitly questioned regarding the CSODS. None mentioned this and it is therefore presumed that they had not experienced disclosure through this method.

MAPPA agencies have an obligation to inform romantic partners of sexual convictions, particularly if the partner has children, although they would generally suggest that the CSO provides the disclosure. An example of this is apparent in Mike's narrative. He failed to inform his PPO of a relationship he had entered with a woman with three children. When police became aware of this, they terminated the relationship. Mike found this particularly devastating and, according to him, this led to his depression and associated mental health problems. His anguish regarding this meant that he felt the formation of new relationships was too complicated.

Terry had met his partner whilst working in a voluntary position as a gardener. At the time of interview, their relationship had been ongoing for two and a half years, although they were unable to cohabit as his partner had two daughters under the age of 16 (Terry's SOPO prevented contact with under 16s). Terry's partner visited him at his flat several times a week when her children stayed with their father. Although Terry described his partner as *"a wonderful person"*, who had accepted him despite his past, he also claimed to love his ex-wife. Their relationship had disintegrated due to Terry's offending, which involved his daughter and stepdaughter:

> *...I still love my ex-wife and my family...I miss her so much. Yeah, I'm with my girlfriend now...and no matter how hard you try to put your past behind you, you still make comparisons....I don't think I'll ever be in a situation where I'll marry [girlfriend] because I don't love her as much as I love my ex-wife you see.*

However, indicating that attaining sources of social support was influential in his desistance, Terry noted:

> *I'm very focused when I want to be...I'm just focused on my job, my relationship, er...wanting to move on as best I can under the circumstances that I find myself in, I mean, life's pretty good at the moment...*

Whilst Terry claimed less of an attachment to his girlfriend contrasted with his ex-wife, the former was a recurrent theme throughout the interview. Terry appeared surprised by his girlfriend's acceptance of his offending and acknowledged her constant support, which indicated her commitment to him and perhaps served to reinforce his reform. Such belief and trust from significant others is acknowledged to support desistance (Maruna, 2001) and thus, for Terry, informal social controls interacted with his internal (re)sources to support his continued desistance. Terry felt the need for a romantic partner as he disliked living alone and whilst he was unable to live with his girlfriend, they managed to spend several nights a week together alone at his flat. However, although their relationship had lasted for two and a half years at the time of interview and he was clearly fond of his girlfriend, it appeared that Terry believed it unlikely that he would find an alternative romantic partner due to his offending history, and was perhaps therefore prepared to accept what he had.


Pete had been released from prison for almost 15 years, and had been in a relationship with his male partner for seven years. They were cohabiting and planning to marry. Pete's offending occurred whilst married to his wife, whose son became Pete's victim. He described himself as *"a gay man trapped in a relationship with a straight woman, who I didn't love..."*. Thus, for Pete, the fact that he was able to acknowledge his sexuality and form a meaningful relationship with a man appeared to have been a significant factor in his desistance.

> *I came out to my family, I came out to my mum, she was the most shocked about the offence, she wasn't so much shocked about me being gay, but was just happy that I was now happy...*

Acknowledging and declaring his sexual identity seemed to serve as a cathartic experience for Pete and perhaps in itself aided his desistance. The fact that he no longer had to conceal his sexuality may have assisted in the construction of his new non-offending identity as he was able to engage in relationships which proved more meaningful. Further to prison release he engaged in several relationships with men and ultimately met his current partner. When asked at what stage in the relationship he had informed his partner of his conviction, he claimed to have disclosed early in the relationship:

> *I didn't think I had an option because if he was staying with me that weekend and the police knocked at the door, how would it have been for him?... and we sat and had a long conversation about it, erm..and he came to meet my [public protection] officer at the time and er, she asked him a lot of questions like how do you feel? Obviously it's a difficult thing. He knows he's at risk [of potential vigilantism]...he knows he's at risk but he's willing to take that risk because he wants to be with me.*

The fact that his partner had accepted his past offending and was willing to risk any repercussions reinforced to Pete his commitment and served to support his desistance:

> *...you know, I've sat, I've had a long conversation with [him] about my offending and he's accepted it, and he's accepted it was a long time ago. He said had it been like 10 years ago he doesn't know how he'd have reacted, erm, but when the actual offences took place he was only a young lad anyway.*

Pete clearly had a strong attachment to his partner, of whom he spoke often during the two hour interview: *"I am really, really happy you know. And his family, they're so good to me, they really are".* His partner appeared to be the most influential source of informal social control in his desistance, acting as a mechanism of normative compliance with the law, whereby a commitment or attachment leads individuals to comply with legal requirements. Pete was aware that any reoffending would jeopardise his relationship with his partner and was unwilling to risk losing his investment. Thus, desistance for both Pete and Terry involved the informal social control provided by their romantic partners, which interacted with their own agency to support and maintain their desistance. Perhaps more so for Pete, who had significantly invested in a relationship which provided him with meaning and fulfillment, and enabled his sexuality to become part of his reformed identity.

Similarly, the bond between Russ and his partner was significant to his desistance. He claimed: *"I'm not happy when I'm single, I'm much happier when I'm in a relationship".* Russ was convicted of a non-contact offence via an online chat room with a 13-year old girl who he claimed had led him to believe she was 16. At the time of interview, he had been in a relationship with his partner for 18 months with whom he was cohabiting and had a baby daughter. He reflected upon the fact that his offending was in part due to his preference for younger females and his difficulties in meeting age appropriate partners.

*...lack of confidence around relationships was probably the biggest factor in my offending...erm, but obviously that's sort of changed now and I've seen what I can offer, and my girlfriend at the moment's brilliant, she's the same age as me but she's a little bit more understanding which is one of the problems I found with younger women, they're not necessarily as understanding or patient you know [laughs].*

He was also aware of his risk factors and the need to engage in activities to occupy his time: "*I didn't want to get back into the habit of spending a lot of time online*". Russ was aware of the necessity of disclosing his offending behaviour early in his new relationship:

*If this is gonna go anywhere she needs to know and it's not fair to keep sort of seeing her and then end up going ok, I really like you, this is gonna go somewhere but now three months down the line I've got something to tell you. So I decided to tell her.*

Russ met his current partner online due to his difficulties approaching women in pubs and clubs. He discussed the importance of his partner and baby daughter, together with his friends and family:

*Yeah obviously now having a family gives me a massive reason not to go back [to prison]...I've got the impact on friends and family, if I went back I'd probably lose all of those relationships. I think I'd be batting on a very sticky wicket with them in terms of that.*

Such meaningful social bonds acted as an informal social control, operating via the potential threat of withdrawal of affective relations as proposed by Brogden and Harkin (2000). Russ had made a significant investment in his relationship and was unwilling to risk losing this should he reoffend. Russ's narrative included frequent references to his partner and child, indicating their significance. He discussed how the birth of his daughter had changed him:

*...from my perspective to have more than I ever dreamt of quicker than I ever dreamt of really has been a good focus, I mean particularly with things like jobs, I've had so many jobs, lasted 18 months, two years at the most and then I got bored, fed up, got annoyed and instead of working through it, I'd just jack it in and find something else erm, but now, it's probably partly growing up anyway but now I've got reasons to sit down and go, I can't, I've got family to support, can't just chuck it in so you know, I guess I'm just starting to do some of the learning I should have done a few years back so yeah, it's funny...sometimes I sit there and go yeah, it is only nearly two years since I left prison, so to actually be here....*

Highlighting the interaction of varying forms of social and structural supports and the resulting internal change, Russ found that the arrival of his daughter had encouraged him to accept responsibility, such that he made a greater commitment to his work, aware of his role as sole breadwinner and the necessity of providing for his family. His narrative acknowledged that the birth of his daughter had encouraged emotional maturation, often linked to the assumption of conventional adult roles (Healy, 2013). Clearly proud of how he had changed and what he had achieved since leaving prison, Russ acknowledged the significance of meaningful factors:

*...we'd like to get married and perhaps have another kid in a couple of years...it's weird, 'cos I've spent so long not having a direction and just kind of going from this to that, you know relationships were always kind of shortlived, work was shortlived and*

*now I'm so much more settled and the stability that I've got is fantastic, and I think that's definitely the bedrock of moving forward 'cos…you know coming back to relationships I've always struggled when…if I've got one thing going right in life it's not so bad 'cos I think same as a lot of people you can focus on it. If everything else is going to hell but you love your work…or if work's going down the pan but you have a great relationship you kind of focus on that, you know? Whereas I've always found, or often found, that everything's a bit higgledy piggledy but now, relationships with family is pretty good, friends is pretty good.*

The beneficial effects of interactions between events and experiences such as employment, and investment in significant intimate relations and/or parenthood is highlighted in previous research (Rhodes, 2008; Savolainen, 2009). The bonding and social control potential of marriage and a stable job (the 'respectabililty package') when occurring jointly was also found to exert a substantial impact upon desistance by Giodarno et al (2002). Marriage in contemporary society is often preceded by relatively long periods of dating and cohabitation (Laub et al, 1998). As such, individuals often engage in lengthy stable romantic partnerships prior to marriage, or without marrying, indicating that the informal social control mechanisms linking marriage with desistance from crime should also operate in cohabiting men (Lyngstad & Skardhamar, 2010). Russ's commitment to his partner, together with an increased maturity and the sense of responsibility his daughter instilled in him, led to greater investment in his job which had previously provided little meaning. The realisation of this assumed social role and identity as a provider was found to be a powerful motivator for investment in employment by Savolainen (2009). The interaction of various sources of informal social control were influential in Russ's continued desistance.

Describing himself as solitary and happy with his own company, Adam felt it unlikely he would meet a partner. He believed that opportunities for meeting girls were limited as visiting pubs and clubs was not something he enjoyed or engaged in. Adam discussed his desire for a girlfriend and children, but acknowledged the barriers his convictions presented to his achievement of this:

*I'd like to have a girlfriend, have some kids, well…maybe never but to be honest, I wouldn't like to have a kid because I don't think…well with all my paperwork and that, social services would never let me near a kid I don't think, in reality. I could see what would happen a mile off…if I moved in, say I moved in with someone and they got pregnant, I could see a mile off what would happen without even thinking about it, I just know they'd just get told well if you stay with him we'll take your kid off ya. I'm just certain. I don't think they'd ever let me have a kid.*

Adam's narrative highlights the long-term impact of a sexual conviction. As a young man in his twenties, he believed it was unlikely that he would be able to marry, have children and live together as a family. It is not possible to comment on whether Adam's projection is overly pessimistic, as Russ's experience highlighted that the system displayed some flexibility in

allowing him to reside with his partner and baby daughter. Decisions regarding such matters are likely to be based on calculations of risk. Participants were not explicitly questioned regarding their levels of assessed risk, although some volunteered this. Russ claimed that his risk level was assessed as being low. Adam was convicted of collecting child pornography but also for a violent offence, which, together with his personality disorders, meant that he spent some of his prison sentence in a Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorders (DSPD) unit. He discussed being assessed as very high risk upon leaving prison but that as time had passed, the police had begun to trust him more and his risk level reduced. The fact that Adam's SOPO conditions were relaxed following his appeal also suggests a reduction in assessed risk level. Thus, with the passage of time and the acquisition of protective factors, his assessed level of risk may reduce to the point that he is able to be a hands-on father in the future.

Kevin was in the unusual position of having a romantic relationship with a woman whom he referred to as his *"index victim"*.[29] He claimed:

> *…we got back together literally days after her eighteenth birthday. Erm, I deliberately waited until she was 18 before contacting her, erm and things have been everything from fantastic to rocky ever since. It's a relationship, it's not always good…Ultimately I'm in a position now where I'm in a happy relationship…we don't want children, that's her view as well as mine…*

Despite describing a happy relationship with his girlfriend, I was unconvinced that she acted as a source of informal social control in his desistance. Her presence had failed to prevent him from engaging in conversations with females in chat rooms – the source of his original offending:

> *I'm doing exactly the same thing **but** the age line has shifted to 18. [Girlfriend] doesn't like it. This is not really a shock. But ultimately if I'm talking to 18 year olds, that's legal and if it's stopping me from talking to 14 year olds, that's good. Simple as that.*

Kevin's desistance appeared to be underpinned by formal compliance. His behaviour was unchanged but had, he claimed, become legal. Instrumental concerns were evident in his narrative as he demonstrated an awareness of the probability of apprehension should he reoffend, and, keen to avoid a return to prison, his desistance seemed to involve simple adherence to the legal rules, without any substantive compliance or internal change.


This section highlights that a conviction for a sexual offence presents significant barriers to the formation of romantic partnerships. However, four respondents in the present study were engaged in such relationships, demonstrating that these barriers are not insurmountable. The difficulties relating to disclosure were evident in a number of the men's narratives, to the extent that this prevented some from seeking romantic partners. In accordance with the GLM, the

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[29] Kevin was convicted of meeting his victims following online sexual grooming and making indecent images. His convictions involved several victims.

absence of a romantic partnership may prevent achievement of the primary human good of relatedness, often fulfilled by intimate and romantic partnerships. However, some may achieve relatedness via familial relationships or friendships. For Pete and Russ, their romantic relationships and the strong bonds to their partners appeared the most significant factors in their desistance. Both had invested in these relationships, such that they were unwilling to risk losing them through further offending.

### 5.5 Support networks

The majority of participants voluntarily emphasised the importance of a support network in their desistance. This took the form of family, friends, professionals, and for some, a romantic relationship. Laws and Ward (2011) acknowledge the necessity of acceptance into new relationships and community groups in order for the individual to experience a sense of redemption, which aids desistance. In support of this, Farmer et al (2012) found significant differences in desisters who had found social acceptance within a family or wider community, in contrast to the potentially active offenders who experienced feelings of isolation. Social supports are closely linked to wellbeing and acknowledged to be of particular benefit to stigmatised individuals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Ian felt that the importance of a support network could not be underestimated.

> *A very important thing is your support network yeah? You know I haven't got any family 'cos my family have all completely disowned me…you know I did try to rebuild, while I was in prison I tried writing 'em letters and all that and none of 'em even bothered to write back to me…my support network is mainly professional.*

Ian was referring to the support of his probation officer, who appeared to provide the welfare approach to the management of CSOs. In addition to providing invaluable practical support to Ian, he claimed that she also provided emotional support and friendship. Since moving into his flat, Ian had become friends with several neighbours and found their company beneficial in preventing loneliness and isolation:

> *I have got a few friends now…who I can talk to and who come and visit me on a regular basis, or I'll go and see them. One of 'em lives next door so I see him quite often, near enough every day I see him.*

Mike appeared to have little in the way of social support. He had remained in contact with two of his five siblings, and saw a couple of friends "*now and again*". However, his adult children, particularly his daughter, featured significantly in his self-narrative, and indeed he had recently returned from a week's stay with his daughter. He claimed that she was supportive and "*…probably my reason to keep going, you know*".

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Family relationships were significant to Adam who clearly had strong bonds to his parents. When asked if they were supportive:

> *Yeah. Second time [in prison] obviously it was harder for them 'cos they said the first time if you go back we're not gonna support you, but obviously you know, it's hard for them 'cos I was doing an indefinite sentence and not making any progress and if anything the time I was doing seemed to be looking longer and longer…Fortunately my parents have let me stay at home. My mum will miss me you see when I go…*

Adam's parents served as an informal social control, as he acknowledged the threat of removal of affective relations (Brogden & Harkin, 2000) should he engage in further offending. His sister had died, thus he was his parents' only remaining child. He discussed how his relationship with his parents had improved:

> *I…used to treat 'em like hell, used to treat 'em awfully. I treated 'em awfully for years. It was only when I went into prison the first time that I started treating them you know, decently, you know when they were supporting me and coming to see me. It was only after that I treated 'em good. And now obviously my mum, me being the only child now my sister's gone and all that, she wouldn't want me back inside.*

As the youngest participant, in his twenties, Adam demonstrated a change in outlook which seemed to result from maturity and his close relationship with his parents. Recognising the anxiety he had created for his parents in the past, Adam was grateful for their enduring support, which he acknowledged as important in preventing reoffending:

> *…but ultimately when I got out, at first I just wanted to be back inside but then I just wanted to stay out for my parents and just try and do what I didn't do last time, which was build up some things that feel good, you know. I've proved I'm not gonna reoffend 'cos like last time I came out I reoffended really quickly…this time…it wasn't the getting out that particularly excited me, the only thing that actually appealed to me directly…was 'erm, not being on life licence…but fortunately I wasn't doing anything stupid so I didn't just end up straight back inside, mainly for my parents' sake as well you know, I didn't wanna do that…*

The majority of participants referred to support in some shape or form as being beneficial since prison release.[30] Respondents were asked to conclude the interview by summarising what they felt were the significant factors assisting in rebuilding a new life. Overwhelmingly, social support was paramount:

> *Support and people who are in a position to really support you and not just hinder everything you want to do* (Simon).

> *I think it's vital [support network] because, you know, everyone needs someone to talk to…I think it has to be acknowledged that people do need support to…pick yourself back up* (John).

> *Professional support is extremely important, not just social* (Ian).

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[30] Those fortunate enough to retain the support of family, friends, or both (*n=12*), further to their conviction acknowledged the value of their support.

*Having a social network. I wouldn't want to be old and on my own* (Pete).

*If you have no support then you'll go back to your offending behaviour, why change? You need a supportive group of people around you* (Howard).

'Support' took different forms and served various purposes. Respondents referred to the necessity of having someone to talk to, emotional support, friendship, assistance in obtaining accommodation, or providing them with a job. The meaningful social supports which respondents had attained served as sources of informal social control. These forms of support may also serve as a source of normative compliance – participants valued the fact that others were willing to invest in them despite their previous offending. Any reoffending would likely result in the loss of their support and thus they were unwilling to risk jeopardising this. Attention is turned in the following section to the topic of constructive activity and its relationship to participants' desistance.

### 5.6 Constructive activity

Constructive activity, defined as that which has a useful or beneficial purpose (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016), has the potential to provide similar benefits to employment in relation to desistance. It provides a focus through which to occupy one's time, which can redirect thoughts of reoffending and may also lead to the acquisition of additional social supports. For example, new hobbies may lead to new friendships with others with similar interests, thus potentially promoting prosocial relationships. "The desire to 'do something' and especially 'something constructive'" (Farrall & Calverley, 2006: 180) is an inherently human instinct and for CSOs, may assist in the construction of a non-offending identity.

A passion for playing chess had developed whilst in prison for Adam and he had devoted much of his time to this since release. When not engaged in chess tournaments, and keen to improve his skills, he spent time watching professional chess players. Given that he was unemployed, such constructive activity served to occupy his time and provided a meaningful and fulfilling hobby, which also prevented excessive internet use, the source of his sexual conviction.

> *You know, I never realised how good [playing chess] would be. You know, it's like effectively at the end of the day, before I got my kicks from looking at kids and all that and now I get my kicks from playing chess, it's great when I can look at a problem or analyse it, just brilliant.*

In accordance with the GLM, the sense of mastery achieved by Adam through chess play is apparent in his self-narrative. His achievement of this primary human good through his proficiency in chess play is likely to have assisted his desistance and allowed for negotiation of identity as something other than a 'sex offender'. In addition to his love of chess and visiting

the gym, Adam was also undertaking an Open University Law course. He recognised the importance of engaging in activities he enjoyed:

> *I mean this is what they told you on all them courses, you know, have things in your life, you know, and this is what I've got now.*

Adam's free time was utilised constructively to pursue his hobby. He acknowledged the role of this in the prevention of reoffending:

> *Now I've got my chess it makes me really happy, but if I didn't have my chess and if I didn't have my gym and I was just at home all the time with nothing, then what would I have? Other than my family, you know, what would I have? I'd have nothing, I'd just be thinking well, I might as well just be in prison.*

Nigel had reached retirement age and was thus not employed, however, he demonstrated an awareness of the need to occupy his time constructively and had purchased a narrowboat, which he was renovating with a view to ultimately living on it. This provided him with a sense of purpose:

> *It is a new adventure and I will have to be disciplined and I will have to have routine, I'll also…have a purpose…I love going to the gym, I love keeping fit, I've got a bike, but I need…disciplined erm, demand on my time.*

John discussed his offending behaviour (collecting internet images) as a type of addiction. Although he was employed full time, he recognised the need to occupy his spare time with constructive activity. Acknowledging his desire to collect things, he became a member of a wine club:

> *So now I'm in the wine society and I'll collect wine, erm…and that sort of fulfills that desire to collect things…it's nice to have friends round and drink a bottle of wine…*

His membership of the wine society had furnished him with additional social resources through the formation of new friendships obtained through regular wine tasting meetings.

Some respondents were, or had previously been, involved in voluntary work in a variety of roles. In addition to his part time work, Howard volunteered with The Quakers, a Christian group, who Howard explained were involved in Circles of Support and Accountability for CSOs. In addition to this, he was involved in an amateur dramatics group. The general motivation for the constructive activities in which respondents engaged was to occupy their time. Indeed, highlighting the influence of diachronic self control (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011), Kevin described this as the most important factor in preventing his reoffending:

> *Keeping busy even if it's not work…I avoid offending by going out for a drive or similar…which might not sound like a lot…*

This section highlights the beneficial nature of constructive activity in desistance; primarily to occupy time and divert thoughts of reoffending. Adam was able to fulfill the primary human

good of mastery through his excellence in chess play, which provided him with self-worth and allowed him to negotiate his identity. For some, particularly Adam, to whom this was particularly meaningful, constructive activity served as a source of informal social control influential in their desistance.

### 5.7 Summary

Desistance research consistently acknowledges the beneficial effects of social and structural supports in conjunction with the individual's own internal (re)sources, which interact to achieve and maintain desistance (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farmer et al, 2015). Respondents' accounts highlight the barriers a sexual conviction presents to attaining sources of social and structural support. Delays in securing stable accommodation were experienced, and often required assistance from probation services or friends. Whilst none of the men particularly related their accommodation to their desistance, this served to provide the roots of a stable lifestyle, which assisted in the development of further social capital. The interaction of stable accommodation with other sources of informal social control is apparent, for example, in providing a permanent address, which served as a base from which to apply for employment.

Numerous barriers to employment are evident in the mens' narratives. Criminal records checks for roles in which they were unnecessary was common practice, serving to impede the already limited types of job roles they were able to undertake. Those who were successful in obtaining employment often did so either because their employer failed to request disclosure, or friends were able to provide a job, again reflecting the interaction of informal social controls. The necessity of determination and persistence in seeking employment is apparent in the mens' accounts. On the whole, respondents who were employed found little meaning or fulfilment in their roles, which tended to be low paid and of low status. However, the benefits of employment in relation to structure and routine were acknowledged, and proved useful for redirecting any thoughts of reoffending.

The fact that low paid, low status jobs tend to be the only types available to those with a sexual conviction meant that those with previously well paid occupations were required to adapt to lifestyles very different to those which they had enjoyed prior to conviction. Whilst he did not explicitly acknowledge this, this seemed to prevent Mike from seeking further employment, due to his unwillingness to undertake low paid work. This is likely to have impeded his desistance, as he had little to aid in the construction of a new non-offending identity. Indeed, Mike implied that his lack of routine and structured activity served to exacerbate his depression. He had little in the way of social support and identified his daughter as his *'reason to keep going'*. However

he also discussed having scant opportunity to spend time with her due to their geographical locations.

The only respondent engaged in well paid work was Simon, who had managed to continue his previous career. Describing himself as *'a workaholic',* his meaningful role underpinned his desistance, reflecting Sampson and Laub's (1993) claim that strong ties to work are influential to desistance. Through work, he had also formed new friendships, highlighting the interaction of several informal social controls in his desistance. Simon's disclosure of his sexual conviction to his employer resulted in continuation of employment, and indeed promotion, as his employer recognised his proficiency in his role. This provided symbolic 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977). The powerful effect of his employer's belief in him was reflected back to Simon, thus reinforcing his self-belief and serving as a form of 'de-labelling' which empowered him and allowed for the negotiation of identity. In accordance with the GLM, Simon was also able to obtain the primary human good of mastery through his excellence in work.

Respondents' narratives highlight that issues surrounding disclosure of relationships often impede the formation of romantic relationships. Those who were engaged in romantic partnerships found a source of social support, providing the primary human good of relatedness (in accordance with the GLM). For those who had formed a strong social bond with their partners, this appeared to be underpin their desistance. These relationships also served as a 'certification of desistance', given that Pete and Russ were aware that their partners had accepted them despite their convictions, which often required their partners' acceptance of potential risks to them. Their partner's belief in them was again reflected back to reinforce their efforts at reform and self-belief in their ability to change. The interaction of informal social controls is apparent as Russ's investment in his partner and daughter encouraged greater investment in his job due to his new role of provider.

The significance of constructive activity is evidenced in participants' desistance, particularly for those who were unemployed. Adam recognised that his hobbies distracted him from reoffending, but furthermore, provided him with a sense of mastery, achieved through his excellence in chess play. This, together with the support of his parents, was influential in his desistance. Constructive activity was also beneficial to respondents who were employed, providing similar benefits to paid employment in providing structure and routine to occupy their spare time and replace any thoughts of reoffending with legal pursuits.

The informal social controls discussed in this chapter (which serve to bring about conformity to norms or laws) operate via the mechanism of normative compliance, whereby attachments to

some*thing* or some *person* leads to compliance with the legal rules. Arguably two of the subtypes of normative compliance identified by Bottoms (2001) overlap; attachment to a significant other (or significant *thing*, such as a meaningful job) leads to internalisation of a set of norms/rules to enhance moral commitment, which results in compliance. Participants demonstrated an awareness that reoffending was likely to result in the termination of these significant attachments.

A key theme in the mens' narratives throughout this chapter relates to the importance of having a 'focus' and 'direction', which were often found in sources of informal social control. However, participants were acutely aware of their stigmatised status, which some were keen to conceal. For some individuals with a sexual conviction, this may prevent their seeking social supports due to concerns of potential revelations of their offending. This is unfortunate, as social supports were acknowledged to be the most influential factor in desistance.

The theme of 'loss' was significant throughout respondents' narratives. Losses related to meaningful jobs to which their sexual conviction prohited a return (Nigel, Mike); the loss of romantic partners (Terry); the loss of contact with children (Pete, Terry, Nigel); and the loss of friends and family (Ian). Some of the men were able to embrace their future more positively than others. In some ways, previous losses meant that the formation of new social and structural supports were particularly valued, almost as if they had been given a 'second chance'. Akin to individuals who have recovered from serious illness, a re-evaluation of their lives seemed to allow some of the men to make greater investments in people and pursuits which may have been previously taken for granted. Access to social and structural supports is crucial in allowing for the construction of a non-offending identity, important for encouraging and maintaining desistance (e.g., Maruna, 2001).

'Support' took different forms and served various purposes. Respondents referred to the necessity of having someone to talk to, friendship, assistance in obtaining accommodation, or providing them with a job. Reflecting the interaction of different sources of informal social control, accommodation underpinned a stable lifestyle; and for those who were engaged in meaningful employment, this was also cited as an important factor in reform. In addition to the recognition of support networks in desistance, most of the men also noted that an internal motivation/desire to change was necessary, reflecting the importance of internal factors in the desistance process, operating in continued interaction with the external sources of control already discussed. The role of respondents' internal (re)sources in desistance from sexual offending are explored and discussed in the following chapter. Respondents' ability to exercise agency often required hope for the future, together with feelings of being trusted by others, to

'certify' their desistance. Generative pursuits were undertaken by several respondents, both in the early and latter stages of desistance. The significant theme of stigmatisation was evident in participants' narratives, requiring negotiation in order to achieve self-acceptance and a positive sense of self. This often required the use of stigma management techniques in order to allow for the construction of a non-offending prosocial identity.

# Six: Internal (Re)Sources of Control

## *6.1 Introduction*

Building upon the external sources of control discussed in Chapters Four and Five, this chapter explores the theme of internal controls and their role in respondents' desistance. Internal controls refer to "those strategies that focus more on developing the offenders' own ability to avoid and manage risk situations" (Weaver, 2014: 18). Canton (2012: 586) acknowledges that whilst external controls are necessary in the prevention of reoffending, "…the most reliable constraints of offending are internal rather than externally imposed". The present study also finds that internal controls are crucial to desistance from sexual offending, interacting with external sources of control which together encourage and support desistance.

Beginning by defining agency, this chapter proceeds to explore how respondents exercised agency in order to secure the external sources which assisted their desistance. Attention is then turned to the roles of hope and trust, evidenced in participants' narratives as significant to their desistance. Respondents who were able to find hope for the future were better able to exercise agency. Achieving trust from others, and indeed trusting oneself, is significant to CSOs, whose offending often involved an abuse of trust. Achieving trust from others was valued by respondents and seemed to 'certify' their desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977). The chapter proceeds to consider generativity, a prosocial behaviour which involves helping others and was evident in several participants' narratives, allowing them to 'give something back' to society (Maruna, 2001). Whilst generative behaviour has been identified to occur as an outcome of the desistance process (Healy, 2014), there was evidence in the present sample that this also occurred in the early stages of desistance.

The chapter continues by exploring respondents' attempts at identity negotiation, hindered due to the stigmatic labelling assigned to CSOs. Stigmatisation was a common theme within respondents' narratives, although only one participant referred to feelings of shame. Respondents were acutely aware of societal vilification of those committing sexual offences involving children, thus the projection of stigma from external sources appeared to result in feelings of self-stigma. In order to reject the internalisation of self-stigma, which negatively affects the achievement of goals (Corrigan, Larson & Rüsch, 2009), some participants were able to negotiate self-stigma through a variety of techniques which served to separate their offending behaviour from their 'core self' (Maruna, 2001). This was necessary to achieve a positive sense

of self, which enabled them to exercise agency and construct a non-offending, prosocial identity. The extent to which identity change was achieved existed along a continuum culminating in identity transformation for two sample members, who had been released from prison for lengthy periods of time. Identity transformation seemed to be dependent upon the attainment of social and structural supports, which serve to provide the various 'essences' (Collins, 2015) of identity meaningful to the individual, highlighting that the interaction of internal and external sources are crucial to desistance from sexual offending. Furthermore, the men who had achieved identity transformation were able to fully accept responsibility for their past offending, negating the necessity of stigma management techniques.


## 6.2 Exercising agency

Internal controls include individual agency, a concept which lacks universal definition. According to Matza (1964: 28-29), agency can be defined as "a sense of command over one's destiny". The Good Lives Model includes agency as one of the primary human goods and defines agency simply as "autonomy and self-directedness" (Ward, 2002: 515). Farmer and colleagues (2012) suggest that agency involves a strong internal locus of control, apparent in the desisters in their sample and contrasted with the external locus of control displayed by the potentially persisting CSOs in their sample. Those with a strong internal locus of control believed in their ability to control events in their lives, whilst those with an external locus of control were more likely to attribute events to external sources, displaying a lack of belief in their own capacity to determine their path (Farmer et al, 2012). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) present a number of terms with which agency has been associated: selfhood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom and creativity. Perhaps therefore agency can be summarised as taking ownership of one's life, including the ability to think carefully about life choices and "…the capacity to exercise will during interactions with the social world" (Healy, 2013: 558).

Respondents demonstrated awareness that their own internal resources were necessary to the prevention of reoffending. For example, after Terry cited his home, his partner and his job as being significant factors in his desistance, he added:

> *…and my own steely determination not to be governed by my past…just gotta keep going after getting knocked back…erm…you need confidence as well as self-esteem, your confidence is gone, it's shot…you need to be self sufficient, mentally strong, that's it, you gotta be mentally strong, so tough, you've gotta be and if you aren't that's how you fall by the wayside and quite easily breach your conditions and end up back in prison.*

Others acknowledged the necessity of the desire to change, and that the key to desistance lay in their hands:

> *There's only one thing that can stop sexual offending and that's the offender* (Kevin).

> *They've got to want to do it. Take the steps yourself* (Pete).

> *The only person that's going to stop you from reoffending is yourself* (John).

> *I've never met anybody of the same mind as myself, the same mindset, to say well, that's the end of my offending behaviour, it aint gonna happen again* (Alan).

Respondents' enactments of agency were evident, for example, in their search for employment (see Chapter Five), given that securing paid employment was often a process replete with rejection and thus required resilience, determination, and self-efficacy. Emphasising the interplay between external and internal sources of control, the men who successfully secured employment were rewarded for their efforts and were thus likely to have experienced reinforcement of their internal resources. This was perhaps most profoundly experienced by Simon, whose employer was willing to maintain his employment (and indeed promoted him), despite becoming aware of his conviction. Such 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977) reflected back to Simon the belief in him displayed by his employer and served to enhance his self-belief. Recognition by others of the individual's change also serves as a 'de-labelling' process (Maruna et al, 2004a). The fact that Simon's employer believed he was proficient in his role and worthy of redemption served to enhance his self-esteem and allowed for negotiation of identity, beneficial in supporting his desistance.

Further evidence of the interplay between external and internal sources of control is highlighted in both Adam's and Russ's accounts. Both exercised agency in challenging the conditions of their SOPOs (see Chapter Four). Clearly aware that the sources of informal social control in their lives were significant in the prevention of reoffending, both men demonstrated an internal locus of control in seeking changes to their SOPOs. Their success in achieving these meant that Adam was able to participate in chess tournaments and Russ was able to reside with his baby daughter - sources of meaning and purpose in their lives. Again, success in their achievements was reflected back to Russ and Adam by sources of authority, who, in relaxing their SOPO conditions, acknowledged Russ and Adam's steps towards reform, thus reinforcing their self-belief and providing them with a sense of pride in their achievements.

Adam's narrative implied that coming to terms with his personality disorders, and developing the ability to manage these, had strengthened his internal resources. His narrative consistently displayed self-belief and optimism for the future:

*I mean the thing about outside [of prison] is, what my fear was about outside is not achieving my things, 'cos it's like…with my narcissistic personality disorder I have better expectations than what I should do, to reality. Obviously I temper it now, but before it caused me to behave in certain ways, not crime particularly, other social aspects that would cause me problems. But obviously I temper it now…this is why particularly in my chess it's great 'cos I'm achieving what I want to do…build up some things that feel good, you know. And now that's what I've done.*

Pride in his achievements was a significant theme within Adam's account, which served to reinforce and encourage further exercise of agency and maintenance of desistance. Russ also spoke with pride of his achievements to date:

*I'm not necessarily gonna have the career I wanted or anything else but I've got a child that I never thought I'd be able to have and when I came out of prison I thought well, if by the time I'm 30 I've got my own place, still in a job, and got a relationship, that would've been a success you know…it's actually about what's going to make me happy and keep me on a level and certainly, I'm a long way there now, so…yeah to have actually got to here…has been a massive achievement.*

Healy (2013: 563) suggests that the traits possessed by agentic individuals, "…when accompanied by tangible resources like social capital […] endow actors with the capacity to interact agentically with their environment". Respondents in the current sample were required to draw upon their agentic capacities to seek out opportunities for personal development, in order to assist desistance. Without such internal resources it is unlikely that the men would have secured employment in the face of repeated setbacks, nor would they have sought the additional social and structural supports they had acquired, as to do so required confidence and self-belief. The current project's findings therefore, provide support for Maruna and Farrall's (2004) claim that agency is crucial to initiating desistance.

The following section explores the roles of hope and trust in the desistance process. Hope was important in enabling respondents to envisage future achievements and a meaningful life. Proving their reform over lengthy periods was required to achieve the trust of others and also, the ability to trust themselves. Respondents who were able to achieve this experienced confirmation of change from others which served to reinforce desistance.

### 6.3 Hope and trust

Feelings of hope and trust are intrinsically linked. The Oxford dictionary (2016) defines hope as "a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen", and identifies earlier definitions of hope as related to "a feeling of trust". To desire something and have the means to achieve it is hope; the "will and the ways" (Burnett & Maruna, 2004: 395). Hope relates to optimism and the achievement of goals, which also link to agency, as the individual must believe they can instigate change to achieve their goals. The beneficial role of hope in the

desistance process is widely acknowledged (Burnett & Maruna, 2004; Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Ministry of Justice, 2010b; Farmer et al, 2015; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). Burnett and Maruna (2004) demonstrated that the level of optimism (to refrain from further offending) displayed by individuals leaving prison showed some correlation with self-reported offending when participants were visited further to release. That is, those with high levels of optimism were less likely to be reconvicted, suggesting that hope may assist desistance. However, the common perception that CSOs are incapable of change, and the criminal justice system's approach to management of treatment of CSOs, which reinforces this perspective, is unlikely to offer them little hope of reform. Thus, the ability to develop and maintain hope should be seen as a product of the individual's own efforts - his internal resources. Hope, therefore, is significant to one who has committed a sexual offence, and is likely to require a great amount of effort to achieve, due to the stigma and exclusion often experienced by CSOs. Feelings of both trust and hope may be achieved via the 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977) experienced by some respondents in the current sample. This de-labelling process serves to instill into CSOs the feeling of being trusted by others. This feeling of trust is then reflected back to the individual and provides them with hope and feelings of self-efficacy; they are rewarded for their efforts and more likely to be successful in their further efforts with the support of others behind them.

For Pete, the earlier stages of desistance were fraught with concerns of avoiding situations where he might place himself at risk. He was well aware that he would be viewed with distrust by those aware of his previous conviction. Over time, this had become easier and indeed his brother had come to trust him with his grandchildren:

> *When I first came out [of prison] I found it very difficult to put my trust in anywhere where there were any children about, and not because I was afraid that I was gonna offend against them, but I was paranoid, what if somebody said something?, I'm immediately gonna be guilty whether I've done anything or not. So I found that very very difficult and now, 15 years on, erm, I now go and see my brother occasionally, he's got control of his five grandkids all under the age of 12, erm, he's [age]this year so it's quite a task for him [laughs], but I go round there sometimes because he trusts, he won't leave me alone and I don't babysit or anything like that, because that would be a stupid thing to even get myself involved in so I don't do anything like that. But he trusts me to go around and sit there and sit have a coffee and I chat with [brother's grandchildren]. But I'm getting my trust back and putting my faith in the fact that I can be in the same room as children and it's fine, it's not a problem for me...I've just really done everything I can to prove that I'm trustworthy.*

Not only does Pete note that he gained the trust of others, but he also learned to trust himself. Gaining the trust of others was of particular significance to Pete who offended against his stepson which he described as: *"a breach of trust issue…"*. He was therefore rewarded by his brother's actions, who demonstrated belief in Pete that he was a changed person, which in turn

served to reinforce Pete's desistance, thus providing further evidence of the 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977). This demonstrates that CSOs not only need to find self-acceptance, they also need the acceptance of significant others, which Pete also achieved through his partner's display of trust: "*He knows he's at risk [potential of vigilantism] but he's willing to take that risk because he wants to be with me*".

The fact that Simon's employer accepted his previous conviction and ultimately promoted him demonstrated trust and belief in Simon. Feelings of trust were also experienced by Terry, whose girlfriend accepted him despite knowledge of his previous conviction. Similarly, Russ had received acceptance by his girlfriend and her family and was trusted to live with his baby daughter, which also provided Russ with belief in his change from the criminal justice system. Similarly, feelings of being trusted were experienced by Adam as formal social controls became less stringent. He noted that, as he demonstrated positive change the police began to visit him less: "*Over time I did reduce my risk and the police began to trust me, you know, I didn't see them as often*".

These feelings of trust were also linked to his SOPO changes, which allowed him to participate in chess competitions. This provided Adam with hope to achieve his goals:

> *…in my chess it's great 'cos I'm achieving what I want to. Not quite getting as good as I wanna be but I'm a decent player and hopefully I'm gonna play for the top team for my club from September. I've just played for the B team last season, so from September hopefully I'll get a spot in the A team, so…it's a good target.*

John's narrative also reflected the benefits of the 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977), which implies trust and provides hope and self-belief. John acknowledged that was influential in desistance:

> *The best thing you can do is pick yourself up and people do then have quiet respect for you and when you start seeing that it boosts you even more because you think there is a light at the end of the tunnel.*

Similarly, Russ spoke of his hopes for the future, during which he wished to get married, have another child and find a new job. These realistic hopes he felt sure he could achieve:

> *A lot of people go in with the mentality of oh, I'm not gonna get this job and no-one's gonna give me a chance…If you're thinking negatively it's gonna come across…I've got every right to have a successful positive life as anyone else, I've made a mistake and I've moved past it, and the only way you can justify being entitled to those positive things is by not going back [to offending].*

Ian, having recently been *"signed off the sick"* at the time of interview, demonstrated a positive mindset, displaying confidence in his ability to secure employment:

> *I keep calling personally in some places and asking if they got vacancies and I [asked] a woman in the job centre the other day, eventually one's gonna say 'oh yeah we've got a vacancy'…I'm confident I will get there eventually, it's just a matter of time.*

Ian went on to demonstrate a realistic awareness of the types of jobs for which he could apply and appeared positive and motivated in his search.

Whilst some of the mens' narratives did not contain explicit references to hope and trust they were, on the whole, replete with positives, relating to achievement, self-belief, motivation, and demonstrated an internal locus of control. These stood in stark contrast to three respondents' narratives which contained negative emotions and demonstrated an external locus of control, more akin to the persisters in Farmer et al's (2012) sample and the condemnation scripts identified by Maruna (2001). These men exhibited little belief in self-change, or indeed any desire to do so. Both Vic and Alan experienced chronic ill-health. I had no reason to doubt that they were in fact desisting, but this appeared to be related to the constraints ill-health imposed upon them, which resulted in a lack of opportunity to engage in the contact offending they had previously been convicted of. Mike presented with a somewhat negative affect and his narrative reflected a loss of hope; in relation to his previous quest to return to his original job; in relation to obtaining a new relationship; and in relation to there being no hope in reinstating his earlier relationship - there was no hope left. He confessed to having made a suicide attempt several years prior to our interview: "*I can only speak for myself but the reason for my suicide attempt is this feeling of hopelessness I suppose*".

Mike's pessimistic narrative and feelings of hopelessness potentially limited his future prospects (Beck, 2005). It seemed that the only positive things he had achieved in life were achieved prior to his conviction. It was difficult to see what factors aided Mike's desistance. This seemed solely related to his daughter, who appeared to act as a source of normative compliance with the legal rules, and to whom he referred to as being his "*reason to keep going*". However, there were few signs of internal change, despite Mike being released 11 years prior to our interview. He lacked engagement with criminal justice agencies, demonstrating defiance towards his PPOs. His desistance appeared to be underpinned by formal compliance, involving simple adherence to the legal rules which seemed to have become habitual.

The positive feelings of hope and trust are intrinsically linked and clearly assist with the internal changes beneficial to desistance. Hope provides an increased sense of confidence and is reinforced by feelings of being trusted. Respondents' narratives demonstrated that external factors, in the form of social supports, encourage and support hope and motivation, beneficial for maintaining desistance.

### 6.4 Generativity

Generativity, a psychological construct, is a form of prosocial behaviour which promotes psychological well-being (McAdams et al, 1997). Generative behaviour involves a concern for others by contributing to positive changes that benefit others and thus contribute to society (McAdams et al, 1997). Self-narratives are useful for exploring generativity which "is expressed in the stories people construct to make sense of their lives" (McAdams & Logan, 2004: 15). Generativity can also affirm redemption, as generative roles are useful for achieving fulfillment, exoneration, legitimacy and as a source of therapy (Maruna, 2001).

Arguably, given that no financial incentive was offered for participation in the current study, generativity was displayed by those volunteering to take part. Their reasons for participation were not asked as part of the interview, however, five respondents stated that their participation was underpinned by a desire to help others in a similar situation. Both Terry and Nigel expressed the desire to mentor others in similar situations. Terry had enquired about the possibility of this with his probation officer but claimed he was told there was no funding available for this. Nigel also expressed a desire to mentor other CSOs but claimed that his probation officer said that opportunities to do so were not available. It is perhaps understandable that the criminal justice system do not encourage this type of contact between CSOs, as this may potentially encourage reoffending. Both paid employment and voluntary work must be undertaken in roles which do not compromise public protection, highlighting the barriers encountered by CSOs who wish to undertake generative roles.

Whilst in prison and further to completing the SOTP, Ian mentored other CSOs undertaking treatment for 16 months, which he found particularly rewarding. Demonstrating generativity, he claimed: "*I felt that I had got so much out [of] the course that I was giving a little bit back*". In addition to helping others, and also demonstrating his own determination to desist, Ian also realised that mentoring others during treatment assisted his retention of treatment messages: "*Also as well it helped keep what I'd learnt fresh in me mind rather than drifting off into obscurity*". Ian found that helping others assisted in the maintenance of his own efforts at reform, which perhaps served as a form of 'therapy' (Maruna, 2001), reinforcing treatment aims.

A common theme in the narratives of those undertaking generative pursuits was, as Ian acknowledged, the desire to 'give something back'. John had been working in a soup kitchen for six months at the time of interview. He was introduced to this by his neighbours when he himself had run out of food:

> *Because they [neighbours] were always so nice to me and when I was working from home they'd make a cup of tea for me and everything, and they've now come off sick benefits and they're now looking for a job because they said that I've put them to shame [laughs] and I thought well, that's a positive effect I've had on somebody and…that's why I wanted to do it because I thought well, they helped me so I'm gonna help them and that's how I ended up at the soup kitchen.*

The comments of his neighbours reinforced to John a feeling of pride in his achievements. Making reference to both his paid and voluntary employment John stated:

> *…working **really** helps, having something to do and physical, like in my case I don't want to reoffend um because I've found an alternative, I've also seen what I've built up, you know I can't complain, I've got an OK lifestyle now, in fact lots of people now believe in me and I don't want to throw that away so I've built up something that I don't want to lose.*

Several of the needs with which generative pursuits assist (Maruna, 2001) are evident in the extract from John's account. He achieved fulfillment from his voluntary role which provided him with a sense of meaning and also provided a prosocial way of spending spare time - an alternative to offending, reflecting the concept of diachronic self control (Shapland & Bottoms, 2011). Perhaps helping others exonerated feelings of guilt or shame and assisted with feelings of redemption, beneficial to identity negotiation. Furthermore, voluntary work helping others can support the CSO's own reform efforts (Maruna, 2001). Working with vulnerable and disadvantaged people also served to reinforce to John that he was perhaps in a better position than they, highlighting the significance of hope:

> *That's what I see at the soup kitchen as well, people take drugs and you think why do they carry on doing that?, they've got no teeth...your ability to have children is all gone, it's just like there's nothing else for them, they just feel that there's no hope.*

Pete had been engaged in voluntary work for charities since release from prison, which he had begun whilst seeking paid work:

> *It was my salvation in a way, because it got me out of the flat, I was just sitting looking at the four walls when I came out and it was like being in prison still.*

Similarly, Simon had voluntarily worked for the church further to prison release, which he found useful for occupying his time during his search for paid employment. Thus, generative concerns may not be the driver for commencing voluntary work, but the recognition that keeping occupied was useful for preventing reoffending. However, Pete found the charity work so rewarding that, at the time of interview he was almost 15 years post-prison release and still working for the charity for one day a week, in addition to full time paid employment. I commented that his life was very busy working all the hours he did. Pete stated that he did not want to let his charity employer down. It seemed that what began as a way to occupy his time had become a generative concern to help others. However, he also noted that the charity role was beneficial to him as he had learned new skills. The generative roles undertaken by

respondents were not only related to helping others but also benefitted them through their development of new skills.

Generative pursuits endow CSOs with numerous positive emotions. 'Giving something back' to society provides fulfillment and hope, together with a feeling of being believed in and trusted by others, which supports desistance (Maruna, 2001). Healy (2014) asserts that generativity appears to be an outcome rather than a precursor of desistance, however, generative pursuits were undertaken by present sample members in the early stages of the desistance process. Whilst undertaking such roles may not initially have been motivated by the desire to help others, respondents acknowledged their beneficial nature in both providing constructive activity, useful for the prevention of reoffending, and also the ability to acquire new skills. Voluntary work seemed a constructive way to bridge the gap whilst seeking paid employment. The role undertaken by Pete had continued for many years and, if not initially driven by generative concerns, had certainly developed into such, given that he combined this with full time paid employment and did not wish to let his voluntary employer down. Furthermore, generative work is likely to have assisted identity construction, in providing an additional 'essence' (Collins, 2015) to the individual's development of a prosocial identity.

### 6.5 Identity negotiation

Previous research highlights that the development of a prosocial non-offending identity is crucial for desistance (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Healy, 2014). Gadd (2006: 181-2) suggests that "'Identity' refers […] both to the way in which people present themselves and the way in which they are perceived by others". Illustrating the interaction of both external and internal sources in the construction of individual identity, Stryker (2007: 1083) argues that identity is inextricably socially linked, derived from "roles embedded in organized networks of social interaction" with "social structures as facilitators in bringing people into networks or constraints in keeping them out". Identity is multi-faceted, not static but changeable contextually and over time, as the various 'essences' (for example; father, worker, son, friend) that construct our identities are of changeable influence and weight at particular stages of life (Collins, 2015).

Individuals with a sexual conviction may experience barriers to the construction of a non-offending identity due to the stereotypical labelling assigned to such individuals, which can interfere with their ability to achieve social and structural supports, important to identity construction. Labelling theory is of significance in relation to CSOs, who, despite being a heterogeneous population, are seen as a highly deviant, high risk group and unlikely to change -

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the term 'sex offender' being consistently equated with 'the demonised other' (Mills, 2015). Labelling theory (Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963) proposes that behaviour labelled as deviant results in stereotypical views towards labelled individuals' behaviour, encouraging continuation of the deviant behaviour. The stigmatising labelling assigned to CSOs and the perpetual criminal justice risk focus may encourage 'secondary deviance' (Lemert, 1972), whereby internalisation of the 'primary deviance' involved in the original offending act(s) becomes the core aspect of the individual's identity, thus potentially increasing the risk of further offending. This reflects Becker's (1963) concept of the 'master status' – the primary identifying characteristic of an individual and the key trait that overrides all others. Once the individual has been labelled, that label can become the most salient part of their character and identity. Internalisation of the sex offender label may become the individual's 'master status', likely to present difficulties in negotiating any other identity and increasing the risk of reoffending.

A person's identity is comprised of various aspects (for example, father, son, worker, friend) that inform our sense of who were are, although these 'essences' are not always of equal weight or influence at particular times in our lives (Collins, 2015). Thus, identity construction is partially dependent upon the social roles which individuals occupy and value. The following section explores the stigma experienced by sample members, which presented barriers to identity negotiation. Their 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1963) necessitated the rejection of stigma in order for identity reconstruction to ensue. Participants' experiences of stigma are discussed, followed by the variety of techniques employed to manage stigma and provide for a positive sense of self.

### 6.5.1 Stigma

A sexual conviction presents numerous barriers to reintegration via physical restrictions (McAlinden, 2011). In addition, the stigma experienced by respondents presented barriers to identity negotiation. Goffman (1963: 15), whose seminal work on stigma uses the term "to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and "…an undesired differentness", recognizing that those stigmatised are discriminated against, often reducing their life chances. Differentiating between the concepts of 'personal identity' and 'social identity', Goffman alludes to the latter as involving social presentations of self, and how the individual is perceived by others, whilst 'personal identity' relates to the 'me' of the individual, the internalised sense of self. However, stigmatised individuals' social identity can be spoiled should their 'actual social identity' become known; concealment of their stigma can assist in the retention of a 'virtual social identity'. Goffman's term's 'actual social identity' and 'virtual social identity'

will be adopted throughout the remainder of the thesis, given their significance to CSOs whose conviction may or may not be concealed from their local communities.

Braithwaite (1989) proposes that successful community re-entry is assisted by reintegrative shaming, which involves the overt disapproval of the offending act by socially significant community members but is directed towards the evil of the act rather than the evil of the person, resulting in inclusion of the individual as a member of civil society (McAlinden, 2007; 2011). Restorative justice approaches, such as CoSA for sexual offenders (see Chapter Two), are influenced by the concept of reintegrative shaming.   In contrast, disintegrative, or stigmatising shaming (Braithwaite, 1989), involves the extended disapproval of the offending act to the individual as a whole, potentially resulting in social exclusion and community vengeance (McAlinden, 2007; 2011).  CSOs are likely to experience the latter form of shaming, a product of retributive justice and popular contemporary responses to sex offenders in the community. Indeed, the News of the World's name and shame campaign and the resulting violence within a community provides an example of the disintegrative shaming of sexual offenders.

Evidence of reintegrative shaming in the present sample is illustrated in Nigel's account. Upon release from prison into the area in which he had previously resided, he was somewhat surprised that the local community were supportive, despite awareness of his conviction:

> *'Cos you are labelled and we were child sex offenders, that's how we'll always be labelled and I don't pretend to make any excuses for that.*

Nigel's quote refers to himself and two family members who were all convicted of childhood sexual abuse.  Perhaps the fact that his offending had occurred during his childhood, further to which he had built a successful life and career, provided for greater acceptance as the community were better able to separate his offending from himself as a wholly good person.  A mistake happening in childhood is perhaps more likely to be forgiven.

Alan claimed that neighbours welcomed him back into the community further to prison release, although most of his claims were somewhat unconvincing, a product of his narcissistic personality and grandiose sense of self.

Whilst the majority of participants noted the stigma surrounding a sexual conviction and the impact of this upon reintegration, feelings of shame were notably absent in respondents' self-narratives, with the exception of Terry, who, in addition to noting stigma, also claimed to feel shame for his past offending.  His shame related to his abuse of his grieving stepdaughter:

> *I've got to live with that shame…I feel ashamed…I took advantage of her…when she was at her lowest, and that is always going to be on my mind and I'm deeply guilt ridden and shamed because of that.*

However, Terry's 'shame' appeared more akin to regret – of being apprehended and having lost what he often referred to as a wonderful home and family. It is perhaps useful to contrast shame with stigma, differentiated by Gray (2010: 687-8) below:

> …shame tends to be described as a deeply personal and individual experience […] In contrast, stigma is characterized as being discredited by a social group, considered to deviate from the norm (Gray, 2010: 687-8).

In accordance with this definition, shame is an internal feeling, whilst stigma is externally imposed. It was the latter to which participants' referred - stigmatisation usually related to the 'punishment' of labelling, which impacted upon obtaining employment, housing and the formation of social supports. Terry noted the enduring nature of the stigma of a sexual conviction:

> *I know I did wrong and I shouldn't have done what I did, er…but to be stigmatised for the rest of your life, erm…it's not fair.*

Previous sex offender research also finds that any shame conveyed tends to relate to secondary effects of the individual's offending behaviour, such as the "negative status assigned to the popular image of the sex offender" (Hudson, 2005: 59). The following section continues by exploring participants' experiences of stigma.


### 6.5.1.1 Experiencing stigma

The stigma of their sexual conviction was acutely experienced by respondents, who demonstrated awareness of society's denunciation of CSOs. The criminal justice system's approach to the treatment and management of CSOs encourages internalisation of the sex offender label through consistent reminders of the perpetual risk such individuals represent. CSOs undertaking treatment are informed that this seeks to encourage (self-) control, rather than cure, via the discourse of "once a sex offender always a sex offender" (Lacombe, 2008: 59); a theme which also extends to CSO management via formal social control. Such concerns were reflected in Kevin's account, who had engaged briefly with treatment whilst in the community:

> *…everything I found at SOGP was encouraging you to think in terms of your offending behaviour and if I'm not offending, then what's my offending behaviour? My history is not my destiny.*

Discussing the approach of PPOs, Mike reflected upon the difficulties in achieving rehabilitation when the system expresses little belief in CSOs' ability to change:

> *I've even had them saying a sex offender is never rehabilitated, 'once a sex offender always a sex offender' because you always have that interest so therefore you'll always be a risk.*

Similar concerns were emphasised by Simon:

*There's no such thing as an ex offender, there's no such thing as being able to move forward, you've gotta tread water for the rest of your life, as far as the officials are concerned. There certainly has to be more done in this country to help people to ditch the offender, erm, title, because not all of us* **are**. *Not all of us are ever gonna go down that path again. Yeah, once you've done that, I mean that was actually mentioned in the programme that I did, that you…* **I** *can never ever say that I'll not do it again, because that's a cognitive distortion or something or other. Erm… and the fact is that, what we can say is that, er we don't want to do it again. Where the difference lies I don't know.*

Participants noted that the title of the sex offender register was problematic in relation to labelling, its present tense implying that individuals are currently offending (see Chapter Four). Indeed, registration requirements ensure that CSOs are identified as such and this label becomes a major component of their identity (Evans & Cubellis, 2015). This presents difficulties for the individual to establish an identity as anything other than a sex offender, when in fact CSOs have "…multiple identities and characteristics besides the label of sex offender" (Hudson, 2005: 56). Kevin articulated concerns reflecting the labelling assigned to CSOs:

*…the problem is, society encourages them [sex offenders] to reoffend. Because whenever, for example, anyone is referred to in the press or whatever, it doesn't matter whether I was convicted for an indecent assault in 1980 that's long since spent…it's now 2013 so we're talking 33 years ago, yet I'm still a sex offender. No, no, no, I'm not. Since the day I stopped offending, which stopped before I was arrested I might add, from the day I stopped offending I became an ex-offender, simple as that. And the only person who can decide whether I am an ex offender, or a sex offender, is me. By my conduct. Now. This very minute. Not by what I did 20 years ago, not by what I did even seven years, not by what I did even five years ago. If I am an offender, I am an offender because of what I am doing now. And if I am not offending right now I cannot possibly be an offender, let alone a sex offender.*

The persistent reinforcement of a lack of faith surrounding rehabilitation of CSOs reinforces stigma and may lead to internalisation of the 'sex offender' label, reflecting Becker's (1963) concept of the 'master status', which is unlikely to encourage significant change or redemption (Lacombe, 2008).

The influence of stigmatic labelling remained present in the narratives of respondents who had spent the longest periods in the community following prison release. Derek acknowledged that the stigma of a sexual conviction was unlikely to fade, in contrast to other offender types:

*You can be a murderer, you can be a habitual burglar, whatever, and it's almost accepted, but when you've been in prison for sex offending, people think, you've been playing with little children, you've raped somebody, etc, etc, to a large extent perpetuated by the media.*

Kevin also lamented the media's role influencing public perception and negative stereotyping of CSOs. Reflecting Cohen's (1972) concept of moral panics, Kevin referred to the UK's fixation

with *'paedosteria': "It's like you see in the newspapers, and the newspapers really don't help people in my scenario, paedophile that, paedophile this, sex beast this, sex beast that…"*

He proceeded to discuss the inaccurate use of the term 'paedophile' by the media and the fact that an individual cannot be convicted of paedophilia, highlighting Goffman's (1963: 15) assertion that specific stigma terms are often applied to those stigmatised in daily discourse "…typically without giving thought to the original meaning". This is indeed true of individuals with a sexual conviction involving a child, whereby the term paedophile is often generalised to all 'child molesters'. In fact the term is intended to define a recognised clinical disorder (Berlin, 2014). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, cited in Centre for Science & Law, 2015: no page) requires that the current criteria for a diagnosis of paedophilia are as follows: "over a period of at least six months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviours involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger)". To be diagnosed with paedophilia, the individual must have acted upon these sexual urges, be aged at least 16 years and at least five years older than the child. The problems associated with the current definition are recognised by psychiatrists as being a "…demonizing pejorative…in the collective consciousness of contemporary society" (Berlin, 2014: 404) and as such, the revised version of the DSM-V seeks to remove current ambiguity by defining the condition more precisely, to ensure that those who have not physically acted upon their urges are not diagnosed with the disorder. In accordance with the DSM-IV definition, few of the men in the current sample could be defined as paedophiles, however, they were aware of the widespread perception of child sexual offenders as paedophiles.

The enduring stigma of a sexual conviction was highlighted in several participants' narratives:

> *It's most days, you know…it never leaves you. It never leaves you. If I'd shoplifted 15 years ago I'd have forgotten about it by now...but because of the nature of my offence, it has impacted so much on my life, and it still impacts to a degree, because it excludes me from things that I think I could still do and would like to do, so it never leaves you* (Derek).

> *Life's a fucking nightmare [laughs], it can be. Don't get me wrong, I'm not after sympathy or anything like that, but you know, sometimes the punishment outweighs the crime…I know I did wrong and I shouldn't have done what I did, er…but to be stigmatised for the rest of your life, erm…it's not fair….to most people I'm classed as a child murdering rapist, but I'm not. But because you're on the sex offenders' register, you are* (Terry).

> *If you took somebody that for any other walk of life, say they'd done something daft when they were a kid and then they were still being penalised for it you know 30 years down the line…but…*(Russ).

> *The thing is it's long-term proving anyway, this whole moving on thing. It's not just the year, two years, it's 20 years down the line* (Adam).

The theme of 'normalcy' was evident in several of the mens' narratives. Their stigma led to feelings of 'differentness' and a desire to be 'normal', reflecting Goffman's (1963: 15) assertion that "…the person with a stigma is not quite human":

> *…my aim in life was to be a normal person again, erm…whether I'll ever be allowed to let that happen or not is another matter, er but that's my aim in life…to be a normal person, have a normal lifestyle, just, you know….*(Simon).

> *I just wanna be normal…*(Adam).

The psychological literature differentiates between self-stigma and public stigma, the latter being described in terms of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. To experience self-stigma, the person is aware of the stereotypes that describe a stigmatised group, agree with them and apply the stereotype to their self. Self-stigma is demoralising, leading to reduced self-esteem which negatively affects goal attainment (Corrigan et al, 2009). Participants' adopted various techniques to manage self-stigma, necessary in the early stages of desistance to allow for the construction of a non-offending identity.

### 6.5.1.2 Managing stigma

Aware of the widespread vilification of CSOs and the resulting stigma projected towards them from external sources, respondents experienced feelings of self-stigma. The early stages of desistance required negotiation of such feelings, as these threatened to hinder their attempts at identity negotiation. Respondents managed to prevent the internalisation of self-stigma through rejection of the sex offender stereotype which was deemed as unrelated to themselves. Various techniques were employed to do so, in order to provide for self-acceptance and a positive sense of self, which seemed to be crucial in the early stages of desistance.

John articulated the necessity of self-forgiveness: "*…one of the things you have to do is forgive yourself, which is very difficult, and once you've gotten over that it's a bit easier…"*. Although he did not explicitly explain how he managed to achieve this, he rejected the sex offender stereotype to avoid the internalisation of self-stigma:

> *I think the number one thing is to be able to accept it [past offending] and move on with your life and get on with it…you've got to understand it and you've also got to understand that you mustn't listen to necessarily everything that the media says, you are a predator or paedophile…*(John).

The sex offender stereotype even extends to physical appearance, and is rejected by Russ as he presents himself as looking 'normal' when discussing his search for employment (see Chapter

Five): "*I think I'm lucky in the respect that you know without resorting to stereotypes, there are some people that look **weird**, for want of a better word*".

The media influence public perception of sex offenders, supported by Kitzinger's (2004: 130) research on public views of sex offenders in which participants tended to revert to stereotypical images and "in spite of their own better judgement […] have a very clear mental image of a child abuser". Russ implied that the physical appearance of such individuals is likely to be 'abnormal', whilst he believed himself to appear 'normal'. This represents an attempt to reject the stigmatic stereotypical label as an identity negotiation technique by distancing himself from 'sex offenders' as a group to which he did not belong. Of course, as Hudson (2005: 56) notes:

> …despite popular belief, the stigma of a criminal record for a sexual offence […] is not inherent in any individual's physical attributes. Consequently, you would not know, just by looking at somebody, whether they had committed a sexual offence.

The type of stigma inhabited by CSOs is termed 'discreditable' by Goffman (1963), being one which cannot be visibly seen by others, but arises from deviations in normal and acceptable behaviour. This contrasts with 'discredited' stigmas, those which are visibly noticeable, such as a physical deformity. Fortunately for those with sexual convictions in England and Wales, their CSO status is not accessible to the general public, in contrast with some American states which publish information on RSOs on the internet.

Whilst those with discreditable stigmas may successfully conceal their actual social identity and may thus be assumed to experience less stigmatisation, anxiety is experienced in relation to the dilemma surrounding to whom they should disclose and in what way. As Goffman (1963: 57) notes: "to display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where"; a dilemma pertinent not only to CSOs but to others with discreditable stigmas, such as heroin abusers (Furst & Evans, 2014). Individuals with deeply discreditable stigmas such as CSOs experience damaging effects to their sense of self, which may benefit from the adoption of some form of stigma management technique to allow for the negotiation of a non-offending identity. Furthermore, stigma management techniques are necessary as stigma threatens an individual's dignity and self-respect which can jeopardise numerous social and structural supports (Furst & Evans, 2014).

Evans and Cubellis (2015) identified several stigma management techniques employed by RSOs[31] suggested to enable them to manage their public identities. These include 'honesty', 'concealment' (and 'passing'), 'isolation', 'grouping' and 'denial'. The stigma management technique of 'honesty' includes 'preventative telling', whereby RSOs selected an individual,

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[31] American research tends to refer to those with a sexual conviction as Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs).

perhaps one whom they felt could be trusted, to inform about their offending in order to prevent them uncovering the information themselves. This latter point is of greater significance to RSOs residing in the USA, where publicly accessible information on the SOR is available online. A second stigma management technique relates to 'concealment', whereby the RSO's status is kept secret from the local community to avoid social rejection. This is likely to create anxiety, particularly for American RSOs, given the availability of publicly accessible information on the SOR. Within the technique of concealment is 'passing', a reactive method in response to perceived or anticipated stigmatisation. [32] By employing the technique of 'passing' social engagement is facilitated through deceit, although the omnipresent threat of exposure of their RSO identity remains as this identifies them, in addition to their stigma, as being deceitful.

A third stigma management technique relates to 'isolation' and social withdrawal. RSOs may limit social engagement and interaction, the extreme of which can result in social isolation, which potentially results in adverse effects upon psychological wellbeing. The fourth technique, 'grouping', relates to RSOs seeking similarly stigmatised others as a source of social support and understanding. This was evident in two of the participants in the current sample, Terry and Nigel, who had become friends whilst imprisoned and remained in telephone contact. They clearly found each other to be valuable sources of support and both expressed the desire to mentor others in similar positions. The fifth stigma management technique identified by Evans and Cubellis (2015) involves the use of denial, allowing stigmatised individuals to disavow the label ascribed to them by society in order to subjectively reform their identities as separate from their conviction.

Furst and Evans (2014) identifed the additional stigma management technique of intra-group discrimination. RSOs compare themselves to other members of their own stigmatised group in an attempt to present themselves as less dangerous or violent than others, suggested by Furst and Evans to aid self-presentation. Perhaps more importantly, this serves to provide the individual with a more positive sense of self, necessary in order for identity reconstruction to ensue. This technique is developed further by Hudson (2005: 66), who identified a number of distancing techniques employed by CSOs "to preserve a more acceptable identity in the eyes of others and to enhance their own sense of self worth". Several of these were employed by members of the present sample. 'Distancing by category' (Hudson, 2005) occurs when CSOs distance themselves from others whose offences were considered 'worse' than theirs,

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[32] It is unclear how the technique of 'passing' differs to concealment, but is noted to remain true to the authors' work.

highlighted in Mike's self-narrative, who contrasted his offence with other types of serious offending:

> *I'm not erm the killer of Milly Dowler and all this lot, you know that sort of crime appalls me as much as it does anyone else and erm, any crime with violence erm, is abhorrent as anyone else would find it.*

Mike attempted to present himself as a moral individual by using the example of child murderers to infer that his offending was of lesser severity. Terry adopted the same technique, using the example of offences committed by others on the prison treatment programme: "*If I can be blunt and say more serious offences such as rape, whereas mine such as sexual assault was classed as not as serious but they didn't say it in those words*".

Terry adopted a number of techniques to negotiate feelings of self-stigma, including 'distancing by age of victim' (Hudson, 2005): "*I know I shouldn't make comparisons but…well they were both teenagers. Technically they were children but, well…. not small children*". The fact that his victims were teenagers allowed Terry to take the 'moral high ground' by placing his offences as of lesser severity than offenders abusing younger children.

Russ's narrative presented earlier in this section represents an additional distancing technique to those identified by Hudson (2005). Believing himself to look 'normal' in contrast to the stereotypical appearance of the 'sex offender', indicates 'distancing by appearance', and allows him to reject the sex offender stereotype as a method of negotiating self-stigma. Although Hudson (2005) suggests that the distancing techniques she identifies allow CSOs to present a more acceptable identity to others, and to enhance their self-worth, findings from the present study indicate that these techniques also serve the purpose of aiding identity reconstruction. Individuals with 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1963) need to reconstruct an 'acceptable identity' for themselves, which cannot proceed without techniques which serve to enable a positive sense of self.

Hudson (2005) also found that CSOs aligned themselves with other people who had not committed a sex offence, or implied that they had more in common with 'normal' members of society, a technique employed by Mike in claiming that his sexual preference was not unusual:

> *…research has shown that erm…there's a lot of me, there's a lot of me's about and there's more than the public think, you know in actual fact. I've so far gained a statistic that people with this interest…they call em hebephiles erm, is actually one in six.*

Mike felt more comfortable defining himself as a hebephile, in order to reject the paedophile label, perhaps because the former term is lesser known and therefore less stigmatising. The term hebephile refers to those who are primarily attracted to pubescents, typically aged 11-14

(Blanchard et al, 2009). Mike's attraction to older children also presents him as being a less 'serious' offender than those who abuse younger children.

Several of the stigma management techniques identified by Furst and Evans (2014) and Evans and Cubellis (2015) were employed by members of the present sample, with some respondents adopting a number of techniques. For example, Terry employed the technique of 'honesty' given that he engaged in preventative telling (of his offending to his girlfriend) which, in addition to stigma management, was perhaps also due to the fact that disclosure is required by the criminal justice system when CSOs enter into a relationship. Although England and Wales do not provide public access to the SOR, this preventative telling carried the risk of disclosure should Terry's relationship terminate. Terry had also concealed his conviction from his local community, thus presenting a virtual social identity which allowed him to present as non-stigmatised (Winnick & Bodkin, 2009), and facilitated social engagement through deceit. However, whilst the anonymity afforded through his concealed CSO status was somewhat comforting, Terry lived in fear of revelations should his actual social identity become public knowledge. This necessitated 'living a double life':

> *If my neighbours found out, my work colleagues found out. Oh there was a bit in the paper two weeks back where an ex offender was murdered 'cos two young men thought they were above the law and so they killed him…your life's at stake…you can't truly relax, the only person I can really relax with is [girlfriend].*

It was clear from Terry's account that his concealed CSO status created enduring anxiety, reflecting Sullivan's (1956, cited in Goffman, 1963: 24) discussion of the stigmatised's social interactions with 'normals': "The awareness of inferiority means that one is unable to keep out of consciousness the formulation of some chronic feeling of the worst sort of insecurity, and this means that one suffers anxiety…". Such deep-seated anxiety was also apparent in Ian's narrative, whose CSO status was also concealed from his local community. Simon also discussed the uncomfortable emotions associated with living a double life, having concealed his convictions from his employer for some time. Following disclosure and his employer's subsequent acceptance, Simon described feelings of relief.

Perhaps indicative of the high levels of denial which prevented his participation in the SOTP, Kevin consistently distanced himself from 'sex offenders', referring to them as a group to which he did not belong. His narrative involved numerous references to *"most sex offenders…"*, or *"the majority of sex offenders…"* and "*There's only one thing that can stop sexual offending and that's the offender"*. This technique allowed him to reject the sex offender stereotype, thus preventing the internalisation of self-stigma, which negatively affects the achievement of goals (Corrigan et al, 2009) and is thus likely to hinder desistance. Furthermore, within the field of

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psychology, social identity theory finds that people who belong to negatively evaluated social groups experience damaged self-esteem, which hinders identity development (Tajifel & Turner, 1979). Distancing from stigmatised groups may assist in alleviating such problems, as social identity theory also proposes that the in-group (us) will discriminate against the the out-group (them) to enhance their self-image (Tajifel & Turner, 1979).

Potentially a similar technique related to distancing, Adam made continued references to his *"paperwork"*, as if this contained information regarding the sexual offending which was somehow separate to him:

> *...my paperwork's awful. My paperwork's awful...even the prison officer said I can't believe how much paperwork you've got. He said it's not the most I've seen but for the amount of time you've been in [prison] it's tons. And a lot of it's like...it's negative...he has violent fantasies, high risk this, suspected of doing that, suspected of doing the other. Oh it's awful. I wouldn't dare show my parents some of my paperwork. I've got a lot of it...I'd never show 'em, I couldn't [laughs].*

Separating himself from his 'paperwork' provided Adam with a method of rejecting the sex offender label from his 'core self' as a wholly good person (Maruna, 2001). The rejection of self-stigma allowed respondents to achieve self-acceptance and a positive sense of self, crucial to commencement of the desistance process.

Respondents' narratives reflected those of Maruna's (2001) participants who felt obliged to take some responsibility but also wished to align themselves with conventional moral values. The majority of respondents (*n*=10) adopted some form of technique to manage stigma, with several displaying numerous techniques, resulting in a "…chaotic jumble of excuses and justifications…" (Maruna, 2001: 134). Psychological techniques commonly displayed by CSOs in attempts to reduce culpability for their offending behaviour include cognitive distortions, denial, minimisations, justifications and neutralisations. The concept of cognitive distortions lacks definitional clarity and tends to be used as an umbrella term "…to refer to offence-supportive attitudes… as well as post-hoc neutralisations or excuses for offending" (Maruna & Mann, 2006: 155). Such 'faulty thinking' is not exclusive to sexual offenders, but commonly used by humans to defend themselves (Brown, 2005), or to reduce culpability for a behaviour of which we are ashamed. Indeed, As Maruna and Mann (2006: 155) note, "...outside of the criminal context, post-hoc excuse-making is widely viewed as normal, healthy, and socially rewarded behaviour". Making excuses for behaviour of which we are ashamed (or indeed that which encourages stigmatisation) assists with self-esteem and the negotiation of identity.

According to Harris (2011: 64):

> …excuses for past behaviour provide a way for people to distance themselves from their past selves in attempts to preserve or re-create a possible self that is still worthy to

be redeemed in the future. This discourse becomes one mechanism that motivates individuals to change their lives...

Maruna (2001: 134) found excuses to be common among the desisters in his sample: "'Obviously', none of the desisting narrators want to make excuses, 'but…' they do". Nor did respondents in the current study wish to excuse their conduct, but…they did:

> **No way** Joanne am I making it as an excuse for my offences, but… (Terry).

> …while this does not in any way excuse my conduct… (Kevin).

Within the criminological literature, Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation theory, originally developed to account for the onset of offending behavior, involves five techniques which "…can be applied to any situation where there are inconsistences between one's actions and one's beliefs" (Maruna & Copes, 2005: 223). The five techniques of neutralisation identified by Sykes and Matza (1957) include: denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim, condemnation of the condemners, and the appeal to higher loyalties. Farmer and colleagues (2015: 328) refer to desisting child molesters' engagement "in a process of 'neutralisation'" in order to maintain a positive sense of self. However, although referencing Sykes and Matza (1957) they fail to identify which of the five neutralisation techniques were employed by respondents. As noted by Cohen (2001: 61) the denial of responsibility is the 'master account'. Employing this technique allows the individual to separate the offending act(s) from their 'core self' (Maruna, 2001), through the displacement of blame, which mitigates feelings of self-stigma.

Denial is common in CSOs and exists along a continuum ranging from categorical denial (that the individual committed the offence) to a range of partial denials or minimisations, which may include minimisation of the offence ("it wasn't that bad") to denial of responsibility ("it's not my fault") and excuses/justifications ("it was the alcohol") (Blagden et al, 2014: 1700). Anna Salter (1988), a clinical psychologist with extensive experience of working with sexual offenders employs the term 'denial of responsibility' to refer to the excuses often employed by sexual offenders attempting to shift blame for their offending behaviour. Individuals engaged in this cognitive technique admit they committed the offence but claim that it was not their fault by attributing blame to an external or internal source outside of their control. Cognitive distortions were previously construed by Marshall, Anderson, & Fernandez, (1999) as excuses that must be overcome in treatment. However, in light of 12 years additional research, their position has been revised to encourage researchers and clinicians to question the wisdom of the necessity of overcoming these (Marshall, Marshall & Kingston, 2011). Historically, CSOs exhibiting high levels of denial or minimisations have been excluded from treatment programmes, believed to hinder the progress of other group members (Hudson, 2005). However, more recently, Blagden

et al (2014) suggest that, in many jurisdictions, only categorical deniers are excluded from treatment programmes. Those displaying partial denial are accepted, although significant treatment time is devoted to encouraging acceptance of responsibility (Blagden et al, 2014), despite the fact that research has not established that failure to take responsibility for past sexual offending constitutes a risk factor for future offending (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Ware & Mann, 2012).

Techniques which mitigate responsibility for sexual offending may be beneficial in the sentencing process, potentially enabling a reduction in sentence length. However, these techniques were evident among present sample members for lengthy periods of time (Alan was 13 years post-prison release and engaged in 'denial of responsibility'). Such techniques were therefore not employed for the sole purpose of sentence bargaining. In the two respondents who had been released the longest (around 15 years), their narratives indicated that these techniques had been part of their pasts. The technique of 'denial of responsibility' was the most common type of neutralisation in respondents' narratives. Given that this is one of Sykes and Matza's neutralisation techniques, and is also the professional term for excuses (Salter, 1988) the term 'neutralisation' or 'excuse' will be used in this thesis to refer to the technique of denial of responsibility. The stigma management techniques identified by Furst and Evans (2015) and Evans and Cubellis (2015) discussed earlier in this section highlight similarities with the distancing techniques identified by Hudson (2005), and the neutralisation techniques of Sykes and Matza (1957). It is argued that these techniques all function to achieve the same purpose for CSOs in the present study – to prevent internalisation of self-stigma, thus allowing the individual to achieve a positive sense of self, necessary for the construction of a prosocial identity, and crucial to facilitating desistance.[33]

Adopting the neutralisation technique of denial of responsibility, several participants (*n*=4) blamed an external factor beyond their control as having compelled them to offend. These participants acknowledged that they had committed the offence/s but attempted to shift responsibility for their offending to psychological or mental health problems from which they claimed to suffer. Terry claimed that contracting meningitis as an adult had resulted in enduring changes to his personality:

> *It does change your thought processes, the illness. **No way** Joanne am I making it as an excuse for my offences, but it's one of those factors that you've gotta take into consideration.*

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[33] Given that all the techniques employed by respondents are argued to serve the purpose of managing stigma they will be presented under the umbrella heading of stigma management techniques in Appendix D.

He sought confirmation of this as the cause of his offending from the Meningitis Trust. He found them to be supportive, but perhaps unsurprisingly:

> *...they wouldn't actually nail it on the head to say, 'right your illness made you do what you did'. I mean I wasn't expecting them to say that.*

Adamant that meningitis influenced his criminal acts, Terry discovered that he had lost half his hearing, which provided him with further 'reasons' as to why this was responsible for his offending:

> *...but it explains so much, why sometimes, you know, well I would ignore people 'cos I didn't hear 'em and...so much up in the air with my relationships with my wife and kids. And the side effects of viral meningitis are quite lengthy, if you happen to look it up on the internet.*

How the above relates to sexual offending is unclear and unconvincing. Terry was 40 months post-prison release at the time of interview and despite his claim to the contrary, was clearly attempting to separate his offending behaviour from his 'core self' as a 'wholly good' person (Maruna, 2001).

Simon believed that reduced inhibitions as a side effect of anti-depressant medication were responsible for his offending behaviour, and, adopting a technique similar to Terry's, sought confirmation from professionals:

> *I'm yet to get this in black and white 'cos nobody will ever give it to me on paper...what it did for me [the medication] was totally blur that line so I don't know where right and wrong was...nobody in prison will give you answers like that. Medical staff won't give you the answers, the doctor just says you're being silly...I feel quite strongly that the medication influenced the fact that I allowed myself to offend...I think that's part of the reason now why I don't need to go down that path, there's no...I know the difference between right and wrong, it's clear, it's plain as day...I think that's an important factor in why I have no interest in reoffending or any of that sort of stuff...*

Simon's account was also somewhat unconvincing given that he had a previous conviction for a similar offence and had only begun taking the medication when arrested for his last offence. Marshall et al (1999) note that sexual offenders often come to believe their self-serving distortions, evident in the self-narratives of current sample members attempting to deny responsibility for their offending. All of their attempts were unconvincing, however, it seemed that the men themselves had come to 'believe' their excuses, having repeatedly employed these and obtained the benefit of achieving a positive sense of self through their use.

Alan employed a similar type of neutralisation, claiming to have suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following the death of his wife, which he suggested had led to his last offence. He described the consequences of his illness:

> *I went really off me head…and you're never the same after. And it affects the way you think and the way you behave and…your relationships with other people. It affects everything. And it sometimes affects you to the extent that you become a different person.*

Again, Alan's account was unconvincing given that he had served a total of three prison sentences for similar offences,[34] although he only admitted to his most recent period of incarceration, prior to which he alleged the PTSD surfaced. Furthermore, he claimed that PTSD was 'diagnosed' by a (non-medically qualified) friend. Whilst all of these excuses were unconvincing, they allowed respondents to distance themselves from negative identities. Harris (2011: 76) suggests that such behaviour is a necessary mechanism in the desistance process and reinforces individuals own worthiness in obtaining assistance and constructing future 'clean' selves.

Kevin also used his mental health problems to deny responsibility for offending:

> *This offending occurred during a period of severe depression, and mental difficulties including significant periods of clinical amnesia resulting from the drug therapy prescribed to treat me; while this does not in any way excuse my conduct, it reassures me that it will not recur.*

This type of neutralisation allows individuals to portray themselves as temporarily 'sick' and as such, their offending behaviour was beyond their control. The individual is then able to present themselves as having reformed now that they are no longer 'sick' and therefore no longer at risk of offending.

These findings are reminiscent of those found in rapists in Scully and Marolla's (1984) research. Rapists who admitted their offences tended to use excuses to demonstrate that either intent was absent or responsibility diminished, thus attempting to preserve their identity as a moral person. Their excuses "…also permitted them to view their behaviour as idiosyncratic rather than typical" (Scully & Marolla, 1984: 538). The neutralisations employed by respondents provided them with a way of understanding (albeit flawed) why they had engaged in offending and therefore why they are no longer offending. In this respect, desisting CSOs appear to differ little from the non-sexual offenders in Maruna's (2001: 7) study. He found that "ex-offenders…need to account for and understand their criminal pasts (why they did what they did), and they also need to understand why they are now 'not like that any more'".

Nigel was convicted as an adult of childhood sexual offences (historical offending), and claimed that during his childhood he was subjected to sexual abuse himself. The fact that he had remained in regular contact with his stepsisters (his victims) throughout adulthood led him to

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[34] Alan's previous convictions were confirmed by the supervising police officer who referred him as a participant.

question whether his actions as a child had genuinely harmed them. Nigel may have experienced less difficulty in negotiating his identity than some of the other participants due to the fact that his offences had been committed whilst he was a child. However, he had experienced stigmatisation whilst serving his lengthy prison sentence, during which he claimed to have been considered the bottom of the hierarchy of sexual offenders:

> *What they couldn't see is that I had offended as a young child…of course the prison officers were the same…they only saw it as me the male, me the erm mature bloke, kiddy fiddling as they called it. They forgot the years in between, the 50 years in between. It's no excuse for me, but that's how they saw it.*

Thus, although Nigel had developed a professional career and a 'normal' life prior to his conviction, it was nonetheless necessary for him to negotiate the new 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963) assigned to him. Nigel was able to separate his offending from his 'core self' (Maruna, 2001) by presenting himself as a different person as an adult contrasted with his childhood offending behaviour, which allowed for the rejection of self-stigma in order to achieve a positive sense of self.

Mike attempted to remove responsibility for his offending behaviour by claiming it to be genetically inherited. Stating that his father, brother and nephew had all been arrested for offences involving the same sexual preference, Mike implied that his offending behaviour was not his fault, having been genetically inherited.

John's narrative reflected two of Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation techniques. He employed both denial of responsibility in attempting to transfer responsibility for his offending behaviour to parents, and also 'condemned the condemner' by blaming parents for the fact that children are exploited online.

> *…it's very painful to accept it but maybe parents need to do more to educate their children of the dangers of the internet and perhaps stop these sort of things happening. Now we've got mobile phones it's even more difficult and you need to think, well are they mature enough to look after the internet?, to use the internet…you know it's a form of child neglect really. Erm I know that's very controversial. Mobile phones need to be used responsibly, children may take what they think is just a naughty image, that gets sent to another person, that person uploads it onto the internet, I then download it and then you know, you've spread that around.*

Interestingly, participants who had been living in the community for the shortest post-release periods were more likely to employ techniques of stigma management (including neutralisations),[35] in support of Farmer et al's, (2015) findings. Farmer et al (2015) found that the early stages of desistance from sexual offending required a positive sense of self as an

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[35] With the exception of both Alan (13 years post-release) and Mike (11 years post-release), who neutralised their offending behaviour.

essentially good person (Maruna, 2001) which required engagement in a process of neutralisation, suggested to signal "…weak attachment to crime and an acceptance of social values" (Farmer et al, 2015: 328). Such techniques thus allow the individual to 'knife off' their past offending identity, and should therefore be viewed as a positive factor which facilitates desistance. All the techniques employed by present sample members demonstrate an internal view that their past behaviour was wrong (Brown, 2005).

Ian's narrative differed significantly from the other respondents with short post-release periods. Unlike other respondents, Ian comfortably identified as a sex offender. He had extensive engagement with the SOTP, having mentored others undertaking the programme during his incarceration. Whilst treatment programmes encourage identification as a sex offender, the majority of respondents did not identify as sex offenders. Ian had found a positive sense of self, appeared highly motivated to desist, and demonstrated substantive engagement with criminal justice agencies. However, in contrast to other respondents, Ian claimed to have been troubled by his offending behaviour for some time prior to apprehension. He stated that he had wished to seek help regarding this, but feared conviction. Potentially, the time prior to apprehension, together with the four years spent in prison, during which he felt he had addressed troubling issues from his childhood, meant that he had already spent a number of years accepting that he was a 'sex offender'. Ian was one of only two respondents referred to their past offending in terms of addiction:

> *…being a sex offender is you know, it's the same as anybody who's got any sort of problem or addiction yeah? The first thing that has to happen is that you have to admit to yourself that you've got a problem and that you need help with it, yeah? Once you've done that, you can then start being completely honest with yourself and completely honest with the people that are working with you.* (Ian).

John had also referred to his past offending as addictive behaviour, stating that he enjoyed collecting things (child pornographic images) which he had since replaced with collecting wine. The literature on recovery from addiction is not dissimilar to the literature on desistance from offending, in proposing that turning points are important on the road to recovery. Furthermore, McIntosh and McKeganey (2000) found that the stigmatisation ascribed to dependent drug users required the management of a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 1963), reflecting similarities with CSOs attempting to desist. As such, and reflected by the present findings, the individual comes to an understanding that his/her "…damaged sense of self has to be restored together with a reawakening of the individual's old identity and/or the establishment of a new one" (Biernacki, 1986, cited in McIntosh & McKeganey, 2000: 1503).

Whilst Ian did not employ the stigma management techniques similar to those adopted by other participants, he made reference to other participants on the SOTP as simply attending because they had to, not because they wanted to be, or desired change.

> *When I was in prison doing the course you know you get the box tickers yeah? Who are only there because they have to be. Not because they want to be. They go for the course and they don't get bugger all out of it, they don't learn nothing 'cos they don't want to, yeah?*

It was almost as though, in the reconstruction of his own identity, reference to those who were unlikely to do as well as he reinforced his new crime free identity. Similar findings were obtained by Harris (2011), who found that (ex)offenders in American re-entry programmes made reference to others who were 'faking it' in contrast to themselves who actually wanted to change. This, Harris (2011: 77) suggests, implied "…that they were now more worthy and authentic in their transformations than others in similar situations". Citing Snow and Anderson (1987) Harris (2011) suggested the techniques employed by her sample to be a form of 'associative distancing'. Ian appeared to engage in this technique through negotiating his future identity by defining himself according to what he was not – the stereotypical sex offender who is unamenable to change. This technique of Ian's is therefore perhaps a more implicit stigma management technique compared to those adopted by other participants. Whilst he referred to himself as a 'sex offender', he rejected internalisation of the stereotype by presenting himself as 'different to other sex offenders', being more worthy of redemption and thus preventing the internalisation of self-stigma.

Ten respondents displayed stigma management techniques, including neutralisations. These men had been living in the community for periods ranging between 12 and 156 months at the time of interview. However, none of the respondents had post-release periods between 55 and 107 months. The men who had been released for nine years plus were less likely to display such techniques, with the exception of Alan and Mike, who had been at liberty for 13 and 11 years respectively. The majority of those displaying stigma management techniques (*n*=8) had been released for periods between 12 and 54 months. The narratives of two respondents, those who had been released the longest (Pete and Derek) indicated that stigma management techniques had been part of their pasts. Three sample members, released for nine to 10 years, did not display any stigma management techniques, nor demonstrated having done so in the past, indicating that such techniques are common in desistance from sexual offending. Figure 6.1 illustrates the presence or absence of stigma management techniques and respondents' post-release periods.

*Figure 6.1: Post-release periods and stigma management techniques*
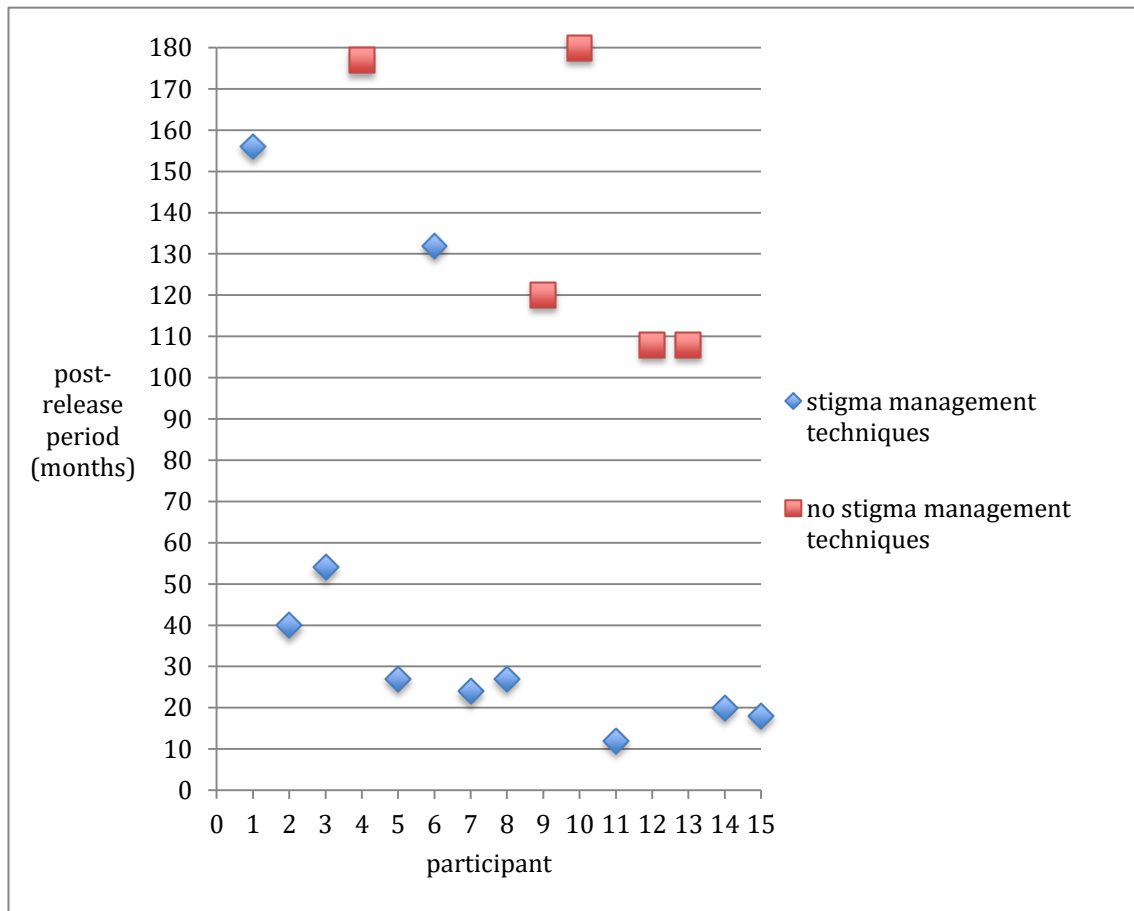


*Key to participants can be found in the comprehensive sample characteristics table (Appendix D)*

Eight respondents had post-release periods of between 12 and 54 months and seven for between 108 and 180 months. The figure illustrates that stigma management techniques were more common in the earlier stages of desistance and generally ceased around the four and a half year post-release period, although the fact that none of the participants had post-release periods of between four and a half to nine years excluded assessment of this timescale. However, these findings indicate that such techniques are necessary and beneficial in the early stages of desistance from sexual offending. This will be explored further in the following chapter in which the key findings will be drawn together.

Stigma management techniques were not associated with any particular offence type, nor were there any associations between these and engagement in treatment programmes. Those who had not undertaken treatment employed such techniques and appeared to accept less responsibility for their offending behaviour than the treated participants. However, the latter also displayed neutralisations and stigma management techniques, and ceasing to do so appeared to be related

to the passage of time (see Appendix D for basic descriptive information for each participant including age bracket, broad offence type, custodial sentence length, post-release period, the presence or absence of stigma management techniques and whether or not treatment was undertaken). These findings indicate that desistance from sexual offending is a particularly protracted process, which is perhaps unsurprising given the negative stigmatising labelling assigned to such individuals, which presents barriers to the attainment of social and structural bonds, and thus, in turn, for identity reconstruction.

The use of neutralisations and stigma management techniques are argued to serve as a coping mechanism for CSOs to manage feelings of self-stigma and achieve self-acceptance. Such techniques allow the individual to separate their offending behaviour from their 'core self' (Maruna, 2001) which provides for a positive sense of self, necessary for identity reconstruction. In effect, these techniques provided a way for the men to signify that their offence was not representative of their current identity, by either claiming to have changed or 'knifing off' (Maruna & Roy, 2007) their offence from their 'true self', as an individual that was not intrinsically immoral. The cognitive techniques adopted by CSOs to reduce responsibility for past offending serve as a self-protective mechanism, and appear crucial to the construction of a prosocial identity required for desistance. Findings from the current research indicate that identity transformation is a lengthy process, existing along a continuum, and addressed in the following section.

## 6.6 A continuum of identity transformation

The significance of identity change in desistance is well recognised (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Healy, 2014). The majority of participants (*n*=10) demonstrated evidence of identity change to varying extents. Five respondents demonstrated no evidence of cognitive transformations or identity change. The fact that respondents' post-release timescales ranged between one and 15 years allowed for the identification of a continuum of identity transformation and demonstrated that the passage of time assists in the construction of a non-offending identity. The concept of identity transformation, for the purpose of this thesis, can be best understood as the 'culmination' of the desistance process, achieved by two of the CSOs in the present sample with lengthy post-release periods. These men acknowledged their old offending identities, which were completely incompatible with their new prosocial identities, which had become crystallised. Respondents who had transformed their identities saw themselves as a completely different person to the one who had offended, having achieved redemption and built a new meaningful life.

The term 'identity transformation' should, however, be interpreted with caution. Whilst I suggest this to be the culmination of the desistance process, it is not my intention to propose that identity is static, as identity involves both continuity and change and comprises separate and distinct parts (Palmer, 2007). The construction of a coherent, non-offender identity had become concrete in the two respondents who demonstrated identity transformation; however, given the fluid nature of identity, this is likely subject to further changes and developments in accordance with social roles performed. For example, a change in job, or a new relationship will contribute to one's identity if this is viewed as meaningful. Three phases within the continuum of identity transformation were identified, illustrated in Figure 6.2. Given that internal changes and external sources (of social and structural support) are interdependent, these phases may not always proceed in a linear fashion.

*Figure 6.2: A continuum of identity transformation*
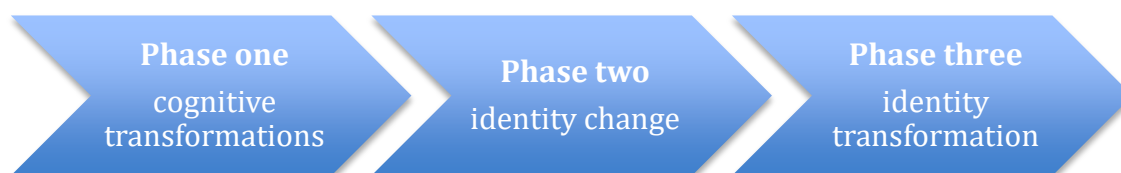


The continuum of identity transformation was identified to begin with cognitive transformations, commonly resulting from participation in treatment programmes. The concept of cognitive transformations is commonly used within the desistance literature (e.g., Giodarno et al, 2002; Healy, 2010; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015), although rarely defined. Giodarno et al (2002) refer to both cognitive transformation and identity transformation, noting that hooks for change hold identity transformation potential, and indicating that these two concepts are distinct. Farmer et al (2015: 328) note that "the process of cognitive transformation [relates to] changes in thinking", which summarises the concept for the purpose of this thesis. Cognitive transformations are argued, for the purposes of this thesis, to differ from identity transformation, which is more complex, highlighted in Palmer's (2007: 3) conception of identity:

> By *identity* I mean an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others, and to myself, the experience of love and suffering–and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make me who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human.

The majority of respondents' self-narratives (*n*=10) highlighted changes to their thinking which were commonly assisted by treatment programmes. In support of Harris (2014), treatment served to enhance CSOs' understanding of their offending from their victim's perspective,

although the non-contact offenders were less likely to acknowledge this. Two men had not completed treatment and their narratives demonstrated this. Kevin demonstrated a complete lack of victim empathy. John, although attempting to shift blame to parents, and failing to acknowledge that his collection of online images had created victims, claimed to understand the harm caused by contact child sexual abuse. He became tearful when recounting his prison cellmate's childhood sexual abuse. It thus appeared that John's thought processes were beginning to change, developing understanding of the harm caused by his own offending. John also demonstrated understanding of his offending behaviour as related to his addictive personality, which he claimed to have learned to manage, redirecting his addictive desire to focus on the collection of wine. Treatment had also enabled other respondents to gain a deeper understanding of their past offending behaviour, and had assisted Pete to become *"a better person"*. Significantly, treatment programmes also seemed to encourage individuals' evaluation of their past, present and future, perhaps in part due to the amount of time available to reflect whilst incarcerated. Self-evaluation was encouraged in treatment, highlighted by Ian: *"It really makes you have a good look at your whole self, not just your offending behaviour but your whole package"*.

The second phase of the continuum related to 'identity change'. Respondents identified as being in this phase (*n*=7) had made progress towards the construction of a coherent prosocial identity, but this was ongoing 'work in progress'. Identity work was being undertaken, but the availability of meaningful social and structural supports crucial to identity transformation were often difficult to attain. This phase accords with the 'liminal desisters' identified by Healy (2014: 877), "who developed an interim identity that enabled them to exercise agency and coping even though they had not fully realized their desired selves". Although identity negotiation began for sample respondents in the early stages of the desistance process, enabled through the achievement of a positive sense of self, identity work took place over extended periods of time. Thus, identity transformation was a protracted process resulting from difficulties in achieving the multiple 'essences' of identity (Collins, 2015) required to constitute the whole. Whilst identifying themselves as a changed person with whom their previous offending was now incompatible, the men in phase two of the continuum could envisage a future transformed identity, but that identity was currently unattainable (Healy, 2014).

Whilst the non-contact offenders were less likely to display cognitive transformations in relation to victim harm, this did not restrict identity change, as both Russ and Adam were identified as being in phase two of the continuum of identity transformation. Adam was engaged in identity work and displayed cognitive transformation relating to understanding his offending behaviour as a result of his personality disorders, which he had now learned to manage as a result of

treatment. Distancing himself from his 'paperwork' provided Adam with a method of rejecting the sex offender label and the accompanying self-stigma, from his 'core self' as a wholly good person (Maruna, 2001). However, social roles within his identity were few. His time was occupied by engaging in hobbies, within which chess play was a significant source of meaning and fulfillment. Unable to secure accommodation of his own, Adam had returned to live with his parents since leaving prison, which he saw as a backward step. It was important to him to find his own accommodation, but this was dependent on securing employment, which was proving particularly difficult. The analogy of a jigsaw is perhaps useful here for conveying my point, Adam had not attained sufficient pieces of the 'jigsaw' to complete the 'puzzle' and achieve identity transformation. He was unable to define himself by his employment or relationship status, and expressed his desire for a romantic partnership. Identity work was thus ongoing, highlighting that the inability to achieve credible sources of structural and social supports hampers desistance by prohibiting identity transformation. There was the sense that Adam's journey was incomplete, reflecting Healy's argument (2014: 885) that 'liminal desisters' had not found a permanent way to express their desired selves. "In the meantime, the liminal desister develops a meaningful substitute self that permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity" (Healy, 2014: 878). Adam had found a meaningful substitute self, with which his past offending behaviour was incompatible:

> *I mean now when I think about it, my robbery that I did, now when I think about it, it seems absolutely bonkers now, I wouldn't even consider such a stupid thing [laughs], or even pictures, images of kids and all that, it's like what's the point? You know, it's part of who I am yes, but just 'cos it's part of who you are doesn't mean you have to look at images, commit crimes or anything like that, it's all about like…now I'm making a life for myself.*

Adam's narrative reflected Maruna's (2001: 87) claim that desistance is more likely to involve 'self-construction' rather than 'amputation' (Maruna, 2001). Whilst Adam had successfully 'knifed off' (Laub & Sampson, 2003) feelings of self-stigma through the use of stigma management techniques, he had not completely 'knifed off' the past from the present but incorporated this within his self-narrative to provide a coherent and convincing narrative for evidencing his change. Adam's self-narrative included the rewriting of a shameful past into one worthy of redemption, including the construction of reasons for why he is no longer the person he was, reflecting the redemption scripts of Maruna's (2001) desisters. However, there were additional pieces of the identity 'jigsaw' which Adam had not yet attained. The achievement of identity transformation seemed dependent upon the ability to secure the various sources of social and structural supports, meaningful to the individual to construct their new identity, and highlighting Giodarno et al's (2002: 1002) assertion that "the presence of the environmental stimulus is integral to the development of the replacement self".

Generally, the men with the longest post-release periods demonstrated greater identity change, although Ian was an exception. At the time of interview, he had been living in the community for 18 months and was subject to licence supervision. Whilst he had successfully found stable accommodation, he was yet to find employment and his support network was mainly professional, apart from a friendship with his neighbour. However, Ian's positive narrative displayed optimism and hope for the future and changes in identity. Ian's steps towards identity reconstruction in the relatively short space of time he had been living in the community was potentially due to recognition of his problematic behaviour a long time prior to his conviction. He reported having been troubled by his behaviour for many years but lamented the lack of support and treatment available to those without a conviction. Thus, although he had been released for a short period, he had potentially come to terms with his past offending a number of years previously, which had allowed him to find self-acceptance and begin identity reconstruction. The continuum of cognitive transformation identified in Harris's (2012) sample was reflected in Ian's narrative. He had acknowledged the harm caused by his offending behaviour for years prior to conviction. Keen to begin treatment, this had aided understanding of his past behaviour and provided him with the tools to live an offence free life. Subsequently, Ian had begun to construct a new identity where redemption seemed within reach. Generative behaviour was displayed in Ian's role as a mentor to other sex offenders engaged in prison treatment, which he acknowledged was also beneficial to him in reinforcing treatment messages. Although Ian did not display similar stigma management techniques to those adopted by other participants, he implied that others undertaking treatment were unlikely to do as well as he, which perhaps served to reinforce redemption and assist in his construction of a non-offending identity. Table 6.1 presents the phases of identity transformation which each participant was identified to occupy.

*Table 6.1: Respondents' phase of identity transformation*

| None (no change) | Phase one: Cognitive transformations | Phase two: Identity change | Phase three: Identity transformation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kevin | John | Adam | Pete |
| Mike | | Russ | Howard |
| Vic | | Derek | |
| Alan | | Simon | |
| Patrick | | Ian | |
| | | Terry | |
| | | Nigel | |

The table illustrates that five respondents failed to display evidence of any cognitive transformations or identity change. Whilst I had no reason to question their desistance from

sexual offending, I was unconvinced that any identity change had taken place. Alan, however, claimed to have changed: *"I'm a different person now from the one who's offended"*. (Alan). Kevin also implied that he had changed:

> *My history is not my destiny. Just because I broke my leg when I was 17 as an example, I didn't, but just because I broke my leg at 17 doesn't mean I'm certainly a cripple. It doesn't mean I'm going to have a broken leg for the rest of my life.*

Despite both Kevin and Alan's claims to have changed, their narratives were unconvincing and often contradictory, demonstrating no evidence of internalised change. The five respondents displaying no evidence of cognitive or identity change appeared to desist for other reasons than the development of a new sense of self. Their non-reoffending seemed akin to primary desistance, with cessation of offending unsupported by identity change. However, rather than the lull or crime free gap in their criminal careers which primary desistance relates to (Maruna & Farrall, 2004), this seemed to exist in the longer term given that these five men had been living in the community for periods between two and 13 years. Two types of desistance were identified in the present sample which will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Only two respondents displayed identity transformation – Pete and Howard. Both had been living in the community for lengthy periods of time – almost 15 years and 11 years respectively, in support of Harris's (2014: 1566) findings, whereby those released the longest were forming a new identity where "redemption had been found or seemed within reach". Harris's sample of mixed sex offenders had been released for periods between six months and 15 years, similar to the current study.

Pete had been living in the community for around 15 years and appeared to have undergone identity transformation. Pete's narrative evidenced that the neutralisation technique of 'denial of injury' (Sykes & Matza, 1957) had been part of his past, relating to his distorted perception of the sexual abuse of his stepson which he had previously seen as a loving consensual relationship. However, he was at the time of interview able to acknowledge the harm that this had caused but that he was now a different person to the one who had offended. He had a stable home, paid employment, a voluntary role, and a supportive partner whom he was planning to marry. These meaningful social and structural supports seemed to have enabled Pete to collect sufficient pieces of the 'jigsaw' necessary to transform his identity. His non-offending prosocial identity had become crystallised, including full acceptance of responsibility for his past offending which meant that he no longer needed to neutralise his offending behaviour, thus affirming Janoff-Bulman and Timko's (1987) assertion that denial is a form of transition, allowing for protection of the self-concept and discarded when no longer required.

Pete's change had been acknowledged by significant others, namely his brother, who demonstrated trust in him and also his partner, to whom Pete had a strong bond:

> *...as [partner] says, it's all that time ago now, you're not the person you were back then, erm and I'm not, definitely, I know that. Deep down inside me I know that I'm not. I don't want to remember the past, you know it's gone now.*

Pete's self-narrative was positive and related to a purposeful and meaningful life. Although he had experienced barriers to integration in the earlier stages of desistance, he was able to overcome these which served to strengthen his agency. Together with the certification of desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977) from his brother and his partner, Pete was able to achieve identity transformation over a lengthy period of time post-prison release.

Despite Derek being almost 15 years post-prison release at the time of interview, I was unconvinced that he had undergone the identity transformation displayed by Pete within a similar timescale. Derek had undergone cognitive transformations relating to victim harm and understanding of his offending behaviour. His self-narrative demonstrated evidence of past neutralisations as he had come to terms with the fact that his past offending was not the consensual relationship he had perceived it to be, but rather, an offence resulting from his grooming behaviour. Thus, whilst Derek's post-prison release period was similar to that of Pete's, Derek had not undergone identity transformation, but was identified to be in phase two on the continuum of identity transformation. Identity was ongoing work in progress, although Derek's self-narrative indicated that he was now able to accept full responsibility for his past offending. Perhaps denial (or stigma management techniques), as a form of transition, discarded when no longer needed (Janoff-Bulman & Timko (1987) is alleviated with the passage of time, rather than requiring identity transformation.

Although Derek had a job, a home, friends and a social life, his offending had had a catastrophic impact on his life. He was unable to return to his previous employment which had provided him with social standing and a comfortable financial position, due to his offending, which had also robbed him of contact with his children. He felt that his lack of romantic partner meant he was unfulfilled, however, the prospect of disclosure deterred him from seeking a relationship. Derek still felt the enduring consequences of a sexual conviction:

> *...because of the nature of my offence, it has impacted so much on my life, and it still impacts to a degree because it excludes me from things that I think I could still do and would like to do, so it never leaves you.*

Eleven years post-prison release, Howard's narrative demonstrated identity transformation, with no evidence of stigma management techniques or their use in the past. Howard's offence type

may have negated the necessity of such techniques. His consensual homosexual relationship with an underage man resulted in his conviction. His ex-partner had reported him to the police following a disagreement. His partner was 18 at the time when the legal age of consent for homosexual sex was 21, although a breach of trust was also involved as Howard's professional role involved him meeting his partner as a client. Although Howard's offence was obviously lawfully unacceptable, it was perhaps less morally unacceptable than other respondents' offences, whose victims were under the age of 16. This may potentially have resulted in an identity less 'spoiled' (Goffman, 1963) and as such, fewer feelings of self-stigma, which negated the use of stigma management techniques. While his conviction had prohibited Howard's return to his previous profession, he had found this role detrimental to his mental health and had since found several part time sources of employment which he found less stressful and beneficial to his wellbeing. He had no desire for a romantic relationship due to the volatile and controlling relationship which had led to his conviction. He had a stable home, a good relationship with his brother and numerous friends, and in addition to his paid employment roles, voluntary work for the Quakers. Howard seemed to have attained the necessary pieces to complete the 'jigsaw' required for identity transformation, which perhaps required less transformation than other participants due to his offence type.

The current findings provide some support for Giodarno et al's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation. The first cognitive transformation proposed by Giodarno et al (2002), 'openess to change' is evident amongst the present sample, who acknowledged that their own desire to change was important in the early stages of desistance. Also significant to the early stages of desistance from sexual offending, was the necessity of a positive sense of self, often achieved through the rejection of self-stigma. The second phase in the theory of cognitive transformation, the 'hooks for change' were intentionally sought and recognised as beneficial by respondents, who, through exercising their own agency, sought prosocial external sources of support. The hooks for change influence changes in identity, relating to Giodarno et al's (2001: 1001) third type of cognitive transformation in which individuals "are able to envision and begin to fashion envisioning an appealing and conventional 'replacement self' that can supplant the marginal one that must be left behind". The 'liminal desisters' identified by Healy (2014: 878) had perhaps reached this phase but were unable to attain a new identity in their current circumstances and thus fashioned "a meaningful substitute self that permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity". The fourth stage of the cognitive transformation process is reached when the individual views their past criminal behaviour as negative and incompatible with their new self, and no longer personally relevant. I argue that this is the point at which the continuum of identity transformation identified in the current sample of respondents differs. Respondents within phase two of the continuum demonstrated

some identity change - their past offending behaviour being no longer compatible with who they had become. However, identity reconstruction was 'ongoing work in progress'. A substitute meaningful and prosocial identity had been constructed (Healy, 2014), but identity transformation was currently unachievable as there were 'essences' of their identity (Collins, 2015) they had been unable to fulfill due to the difficulties in achieving the external sources required to do so. In addition, six of the seven men in phase two of the transformation process displayed stigma management techniques, indicating that their new identity was not yet developed enough to accept full responsibility for their past offending. The remaining respondent identified as being in phase two of the transformation process evidenced having employed such techniques in the past. Identity transformation seemed to evolve over lengthy periods of time, and involve the crystallisation of a non-offending identity which linked with full acceptance of responsibility for past offending behaviour, negating the necessity of stigma management techniques.

The continuum of identity transformation identified in the present study may be of relevance not only to desistance from sexual offending, but perhaps other serious offences which carry significant stigma, rather than offences of lesser severity. This perhaps explains the differences in temporal ordering found in the present study compared to those identified by Giodarno et al (2002).

### 6.7 Summary

This chapter has explored the internal (re)sources drawn upon by respondents in order to achieve desistance from sexual offending. Respondents acknowledged the significance of their internal resources in the prevention of reoffending, noting the necessity of self-esteem, confidence and the desire to change. The early stages of desistance for the majority of participants seemed to have involved an openness or readiness to change, in support of Giodarno et al's (2002) theory of cognitive transformation. An internal locus of control was demonstrated by agentic respondents, who displayed resilience, determination and self-efficacy in seeking paid employment, a process often replete with rejection. Securing social and structural supports required the exercise of agency which was reinforced through the attainment of such supports, encouraging further exercise of agency. Respondents who were able to exercise agency displayed positive self-narratives, including hope for future achievements to be envisaged and sought. Hope relates to optimism and the achievement of goals, which also link to agency as the individual must believe in their ability to instigate change and achieve goals. Their hope for the future and their optimism for achieving various social and structural supports enabled the exercise of agency, demonstrated by Russ and Adam's appeals to relax the

conditions of their SOPOs. Their success in achieving these demonstrated the 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977) through the system's acknowledgement of their change, which enabled Russ and Adam to capitalise on the sources of social support beneficial to their desistance. This demonstrated to Russ and Adam that the system was beginning to trust in them. Trust is difficult to achieve for CSOs, whose offences often involve an abuse of trust and who are typically viewed as untrustworthy. Pete's narrative highlighted that, together with the trust he had gained from his brother, that CSOs also need to begin to trust themselves, which over time Pete had come to do, feeling comfortable spending time with his brother's grandchildren.

The stereotypical perception of sex offenders as being unamenable to change is unlikely to provide them with hope. Mike's negative, pessimistic, self-narrative demonstrated that hope was lost, he lamented PPOs lack of belief in rehabilitation, via the discourse 'once a sex offender, always a sex offender. He seemed to have given up, his daughter being his *"reason to keep going"*.

Generativity, a prosocial concept involving a concern for others tends to be an outcome, rather than a precursor of desistance (Healy, 2014). However, several respondents engaged in generative pursuits in the early stages of desistance whilst seeking paid employment. These were perhaps primarily undertaken as a prosocial way of keeping occupied, useful for preventing thoughts of reoffending. These voluntary roles were acknowledged to be beneficial for developing social networks and learning new skills, and appeared to provide respondents with feelings of redemption. Several respondents expressed generative concerns, being engaged in voluntary work in addition to paid employment, which reflected their desire to 'give something back'. Furthermore, generative work may have assisted identity reconstruction, in providing an additional 'essence' (Collins, 2015) to the individual's development of a prosocial identity.

The labelling associated with stigmatised groups such as CSOs presents barriers not only to reintegration, but also to identity construction. Respondents felt that such labelling was perpetuated by both treatment and management approaches, which encourage the individual to internalise the 'sex offender' label and focus retrospectively on offending behaviour.

Participants were acutely aware of society's denunciation of sexual offenders and experienced stigma projected towards them from society. This resulted in their experiencing what appeared to be feelings of self-stigma. Keen to reject the sex offender stereotype, a number of respondents (*n*=10) adopted stigma management techniques which allowed them to separate

their offending behaviour from their true self. Such techniques involved various methods of 'distancing', which served to prevent the internalisation of self-stigma, which can be demoralising, lead to reduced self-esteem and negatively affect goal attainment (Corrigan et al, 2009). The neutralisation technique of 'denial of responsbility' (Sykes & Matza, 1957) was adopted by several participants, who blamed their offending on external sources beyond their control. All of these techniques served the same purpose; to achieve self-acceptance and a positive sense of self, necessary in the early stages of desistance to assist identity negotiation. In the present sample, such techniques seemed to exist for lengthy periods of time, however, given that none of the participants had post-release periods of between four and half and nine years, assessment of this timescale was prohibited. These findings indicate that the construction of a non-offending identity is a protracted process in desistance from sexual offending.

A continuum of identity transformation, with three phases, was identified, which began with cognitive transformation, led to identity change, and culminated, for two respondents, in a transformed identity. Identity transformation took place over lengthy periods of time and was dependent upon the attainment of various social and structural supports meaningful to the individual to provide the necessary 'essences' of identity required to complete the whole. The men demonstrating identity transformation were not employing stigma management techniques at the time of interview, although one (Pete) appeared to have done so in the past. Janoff-Bulman and Timko, (1987) suggest that processes of denial serve to protect the self-concept and allow for change to occur gradually, furthermore, these techniques are employed to prevent further damage to the self and cease when no longer necessary. Processes of denial can be aligned with stigma management techniques, including neutralisations, which exist in the present sample for protracted periods of time. Findings from the present study indicate that stigma management techniques cease when full responsibility for past offending is accepted, which involves protracted periods of time. For Pete, this linked with identity transformation. However, Derek was identified as being in phase two on the continuum of identity transformation and had also discarded past neutralisations, suggesting that the passage of time alleviates the necessity of stigma management techniques, rather than identity transformation.

Individuals identified as being in phase two of the identity transformation process, reflecting Healy's (2014) 'liminal desisters', were able to envisage a future identity which was currently unattainable, due to the difficulties attaining the social and structural supports meaningful to them and necessary to construct their new identity, reflecting Giodarno et al's (2002) assertion that the hooks for change present identity transformation protential. The men in phase two had, in the meantime, formed a substitute meaningful and prosocial identity, although the transformation of their identity was ongoing 'work in progress'. Six of the seven men identified

as being in phase two were employing stigma management techniques, with the seventh (Derek) demonstrating evidence of having done so in the past. Five men demonstrated no evidence of cognitive transformations or identity change, nor did they demonstrate any convincing desire to change. These findings will be discussed further in the following chapter which presents the two types of desistance identified in the current sample.

I argue in light of these findings that stigma management techniques are a necessary and beneficial part of the desistance process in this offender type, which persist for many years and should not indicate treatment failure. In contrast, they assist desistance from sexual offending, supporting Maruna's (2004: 189-90) claim that "The constructive use of cognitive distortions such as externalizing blame, might actually promote desistance". Indeed Blagden et al (2014: 1708) acknowledge that CSOs' techniques of denial are "doing important identity work and allowing offenders to keep a coherent and positive sense of self" and suggest that "breaking down this identity could be potentially damaging for the offender". Such techniques should be seen as encouraging, rather than disabling, for desistance from sexual offending. CSOs failing to accept full responsibility for their offending should not be excluded from treatment programmes, as the men in the current sample appeared to have benefitted from these, with those having undertaken treatment displaying strikingly different narratives from those who had not.

These findings provide some support for those of Farmer et al (2015) who also found that desisting CSOs employed neutralisations in the early stages of desistance. The current findings indicate that these may exist for lengthy periods, perhaps until identity transformation is achieved. Whilst Farmer et al (2015) suggest that the respondents' neutralisations "…seemed to be related to shame about their offending…", the current findings suggest that such techniques are required to negotiate feelings of self-stigma rather than shame. Reflecting similarities with Harris's (2014) findings, who found that the men released the longest were forming a new identity, the culmination of the desistance process, identity transformation, in the present sample took place over protracted timescales.

This chapter has highlighted the significance of internal factors in the process of desistance from sexual offending. In response to the central research question, the internal factors involved in desistance from sexual offending in the current sample involved the exercise of agency, an openness and desire to change, with an internal locus of control, hope, a positive sense of self, and identity reconstruction. Internal factors appeared to initiate the process of desistance from sexual offending, but these were reliant upon the attainment of external sources, in the form of social and structural supports. A continued interaction of internal and external

factors is required for desistance from sexual offending. The following chapter draws together the themes identified within respondents' narratives. Within this chapter, the two types of desistance identified in the present sample of 15 self-reported desisters from sexual offending are presented and discussed.

# Seven: Unravelling the Process

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises and interprets the findings of the present study and assesses them against the backdrop of existing research and theory on desistance. Drawing together the three significant themes of formal social control, informal social control, and internal (re)sources of control, each identified within respondents' narratives, this chapter attempts to unravel the complex process of desistance from sexual offending.

The chapter begins by reminding the reader of previous desistance literature within which Maruna and Farrall (2004) identified two phases of desistance, since developed upon by other authors (Healy, 2014; Nugent & Schinkel 2016). Little theorising of desistance from sexual offending is apparent in the literature, with the exception of the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO; Göbbels et al, 2012), which is briefly recapped in order to assess the validity of this theory in relation to the current sample.

Section 7.2.1 proceeds to outline the two empirically based types of desistance from sexual offending evidenced in the current data. Two distinct types of desistance emerged from respondents' self-narratives, which I have termed 'formal desistance' and 'substantive desistance'. Five respondents were identified as formal desisters, discussed in section 7.2.1.1. Ten respondents were identified as substantive desisters, discussed in section 7.2.1.2. Further to this, associations between the two types of desistance are explored in relation to offender type, sentence length, and post-release period. Section 7.3 summarises these findings and interprets them in relation to previous theories of desistance.

## 7.2 Theorising desistance (from sexual offending)

Given that the current findings evidence two distinct types of desistance from sexual offending, it is pertinent to recap on previous theorising prior to exploring the types of desistance emerging from the current study. Previous research has identified two distinguishable phases in the desistance process – primary and secondary (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). The former refers to a lull or crime free gap in a criminal career, whilst the latter is marked by "the assumption of the role or identity of a 'changed person'" (Maruna, Immarigeon & LeBel, 2004b: 274). Healy asserts that the "transition to secondary desistance occurs not with the *imagining* of a new self but with the *realization* of this new self through the enactment of conventional roles" (2014:

876, emphasis in original). McNeill (2016) identifies a third phase of desistance, termed 'tertiary desistance' which, in addition to the behavioural and identity change involved in primary and secondary desistance, also includes an individual's sense of belonging to a (moral) community, together with recognition by others that the individual has changed.

Building upon the phases of desistance previously identified, Healy (2014) identified three categories of desisters in a sample of probationers. 'Imagined desisters' have reduced the frequency of offending although may succumb to temptation if a criminal opportunity arises - "Imagined desistance occurs when a putative desister imagines a desired future self but believes that this identity is unattainable" (Healy, 2014: 878). This phase is suggested by Healy to link conceptually to primary desistance, due to the absence of identity change. Conversely, 'authentic desistance' involves the transformation of an imagined identity into a meaningful crime-free self, thus linking conceptually to secondary desistance. Identifying an additional phase, 'liminal desistance', Healy (2014: 878) relates this to "individuals poised on the threshold […] between two social worlds", whose desistance journeys are incomplete. This concept aligns with respondents in the current study identified to be in phase two on the continuum of identity transformation (see Chapter Six). 'Liminal desisters' have a vision of a desired future self which is currently unattainable in their current circumstances, and therefore they develop "a meaningful substitute self that permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity" (Healy, 2014: 878). Respondents in phase two on the continuum of identity transformation were undertaking identity work, constructing and reconstructing their new identity in accordance with the sources of social and structural supports they had attained. Whilst viewing their old offending identity as incompatible with their current self, these men had yet to attain a sufficient amount of external sources to complete their identity transformation, within which their non-offending pro-social identity becomes crystallised.

Building upon, and conceptually linked, to the concepts of primary, secondary (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) and tertiary desistance (McNeill, 2016), Nugent and Schinkel (2016) introduce 'act-desistance' which relates to non-offending, 'identity desistance', which involves the internalisation of a non-offending identity, and 'relational desistance' as recognition of change by others. Nugent and Schinkel (2016: 3) claim that the terminology they employ "describes and differentiates between the different aspects of desistance better than 'primary', secondary' and 'tertiary' desistance, as it does not suggest sequencing in time or importance". Highlighting the necessary interaction between internal and external sources of control, all three are required for long term change. 'Act desistance' in itself is insufficient for maintaining desistance, highlighted by one respondent in Nugent and Schinkel's (2016) sample who was returned to prison.

Theorising of desistance from sexual offending is somewhat neglected within the literature, with the exception of the ITDSO, a comprehensive theory developed by Göbbels et al (2012) which incorporates the work of Laws and Ward (2011). The theory is said to build upon previous explanations of desistance including those proposed by Maruna (2001), Giodarno et al (2002), Laub and Sampson (2003), Farrall and Calverley (2006), Vaughan (2007) and Paternoster and Bushway (2009). Also acknowledged within the theory is the Trans-theoretical Model of Behaviour Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982), which provides an explanation of the behavioural changes involved in recovery from addiction. A quick recap of the ITDSO reminds us that this encompasses 4 phases; 1) decisive momentum (initial desistance); 2) rehabilitation (promoting desistance); 3) re-entry (maintaining desistance); 4) normalcy (successful maintenance of desistance over a long period of time). These four phases are proposed to be necessary for desistance. Findings from the current research identify two types of desistance from sexual offending, the identification of which is suggested to contribute to existing theorising of desistance from sexual offending. These are presented and discussed in the forthcoming sections.

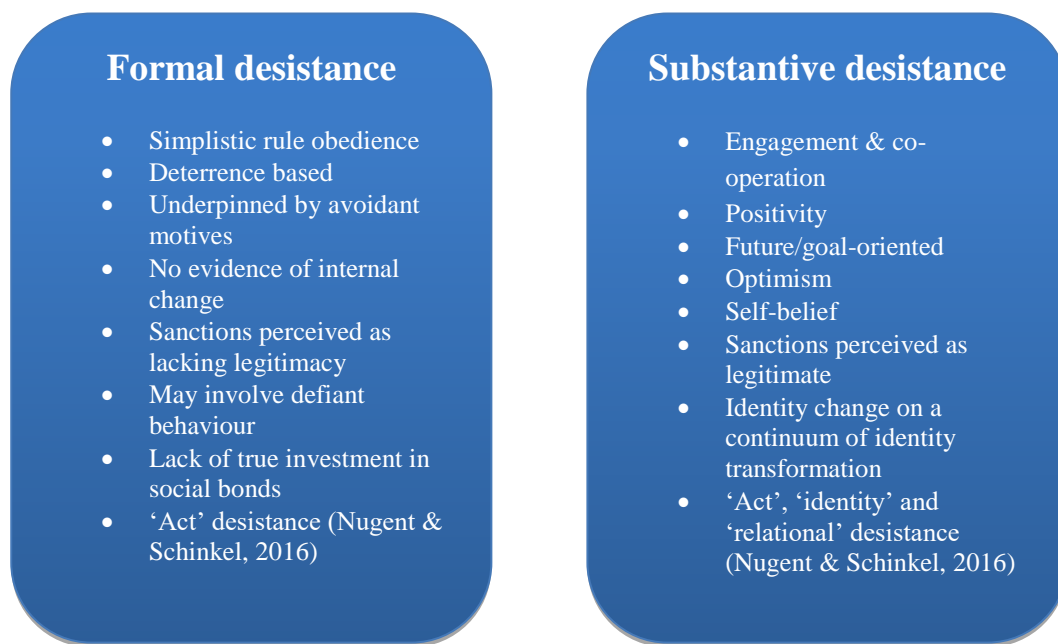### 7.2.1 Types of desistance from sexual offending

Analysis of respondents' self-narratives highlighted two distinct types of desistance, which I have termed 'formal' and 'substantive'. These terms are influenced by Robinson and McNeill's (2008) dimensions of formal and substantive compliance with community penalties, which are proposed to exist in the short-term, due to the fact that community orders run for specific periods (see Chapter Two). The long-term (sometimes indefinite) nature of the legal requirements imposed by the SOR contrasts with the limited timescales of a community order and therefore, the types of formal and substantive desistance are deemed to apply in the long-term.

Robinson and McNeill's (2008) work relates formal compliance to behaviour which simply meets the minimum specified requirements with the order and reflects compliance with the legal rules, whilst substantive compliance is underpinned by different mechanisms, implying co-operation and active engagement of the individual with the requirements of their community order, and may also involve the individual's genuine desire to change (Robinson & McNeill, 2008). The types of desistance identified in the current project include the behaviours and mechanisms involved in formal and substantive compliance but apply on a long-term basis.

Whilst Laub and Sampson (2001: 55) found desisters to be 'active participants' in the desistance process, this was not applicable to all the respondents in the current sample. Formal desisters'
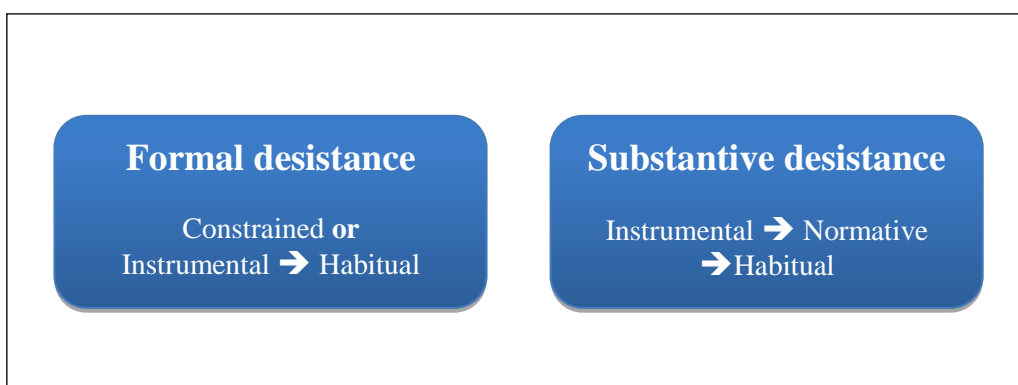
($n=5$) narratives displayed little evidence of identity change and were underpinned by instrumental concerns – their desistance appeared to lack engagement or co-operation and, for some respondents, involved a defiant approach. Their instrumental compliance with the law had become habitual, lacking any indication of 'active participation' in the sense of engagement or a reformed identity. In contrast, the men identified as substantive desisters ($n=10$) were 'active participants' in the desistance process. Their self-narratives were future-oriented, positive, involved meaningful pursuits and significant others, and displayed identity change (on a continuum). Figure 7.1 displays the two types of desistance and their associated processes.

*Figure 7.1: Types of desistance and associated processes*

**Formal desistance**

- Simplistic rule obedience
- Deterrence based
- Underpinned by avoidant motives
- No evidence of internal change
- Sanctions perceived as lacking legitimacy
- May involve defiant behaviour
- Lack of true investment in social bonds
- 'Act' desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016)

**Substantive desistance**

- Engagement & co-operation
- Positivity
- Future/goal-oriented
- Optimism
- Self-belief
- Sanctions perceived as legitimate
- Identity change on a continuum of identity transformation
- 'Act', 'identity' and 'relational' desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016)

Chapters Five and Six identified the mechanisms underpinning compliance (Bottoms, 2001) with the law within the present sample, prior to the development of long-term formal and substantive desistance. The two types of desistance identified from the current findings involve differing mechanisms of compliance (displayed in Figure 7.3), which develop into long-term formal and substantive desistance.

*Figure 7.2: Type of desistance and associated compliance mechanisms*

**Formal desistance**

Constrained **or** Instrumental ➜ Habitual

**Substantive desistance**

Instrumental ➜ Normative ➜ Habitual

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It is perhaps also worth considering that intra-familial offenders' substantive desistance was underpinned in the early stages by constraint-based compliance due to the severed ties with victims resulting from their conviction. This offender type consistently demonstrates the lowest levels of recidivism (Quinsey et al, 1995; Alexander, 1999; Seto et al, 2015), perhaps unsurprising given that they often reside with their chosen victim – conviction results in separation, ties are severed and further contact is prohibited. All the men in the current sample who were convicted of contact offences with intra-familial victims had contact severed, thus, constraint-based compliance with the law may have underpinned their desistance. It is not possible to definitively determine this as, perhaps unsurprisingly (as this is not conducive to impression management), none of the respondents explicitly stated that their lack of re-offending related to inaccessibility of their chosen victim/s. However, Cann, Friendship and Gozna's (2007) research illustrates that 14% of their sample of 1345 adult male sexual offenders had engaged in offending with both intra-familial and extra-familial victims, indicating that intra-familial offenders may also abuse extra-familial victims. The following section develops the concept of formal desistance, illustrated through the presentation of excerpts from respondents' narratives.

### 7.2.1.1 Formal desistance

Formal desistance demonstrates similarities with primary desistance, both involving simple cessation of offending. However, primary desistance refers to a lull or a gap in a crime free career (Maruna & Farrall, 2004), implying a short-term behaviour, whilst formal desistance is identified among members of the present sample in the long term.

The attitudes and behaviours of the men identified as formal desisters ($n=5$) contrasted with those evident in the self-narratives of the substantive desisters. Formal desistance is defined here as "simplistic obedience to rules" (Parker, 2002:27, cited in Robinson & McNeill, 2008: 434) and as such, involved no particular identifiable process. Keen to avoid a return to prison and aware of the surveillance via the SOR, non-offending was deterrence based. What had begun as formal compliance with the law in the short-term, underpinned by instrumental concerns, had become habitual and developed into what is defined here as long-term formal desistance. Thus, formal desistance was underpinned by a negative avoidant motive, rather than the approach, goal oriented motive involved in substantive desistance.

Five respondents were identified as formal desisters, who perceived their imposed sanctions as lacking legitimacy which often resulted in a defiant attitude towards criminal justice agents, contrasted with the substantive desisters who tended to perceive their sanctions as legitimate.

This finding corresponds with Robinson and McNeill's (2008) dynamic model of compliance with community supervision in which perceived legitimacy deficits aligned with formal compliance whilst substantive compliance was more likely to involve perceived legitimacy (of the community order).

Formal desisters' lacked cognitive transformations and identity change, and whilst they made reference to sources of social support, they seemed to have made little investment in these. The formal desisters had achieved 'act desistance', having simply stopped offending (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016), which appeared to be underpinned by three mechanisms, illustrated in Figure 7.2.

*Figure 7.3: Mechanisms underpinning formal desistance*
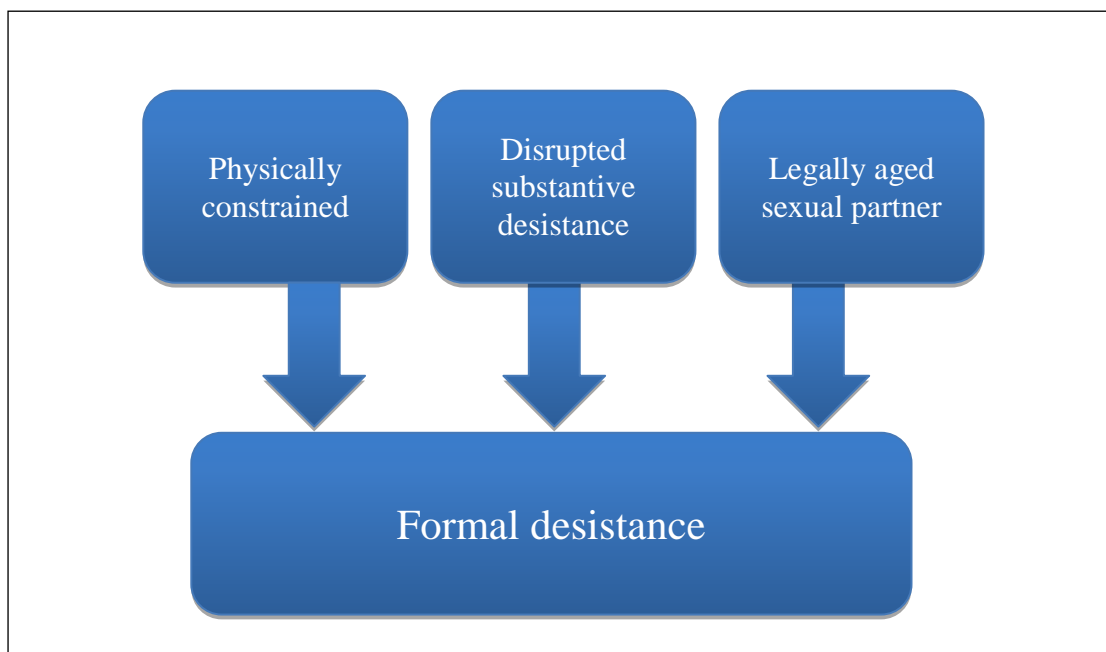


### Legally-aged sexual partner

Within the current sample, two of the men identified as formal desisters claimed to have simply focused their sexual attention on individuals above the age of sexual consent. This enabled them to continue engaging in what may be viewed as morally unacceptable behaviour (due to the significant age differences between respondents and the focus of their sexual attraction), although not legally unacceptable. For example, Kevin, convicted of grooming girls under the age of sexual consent whom he contacted via online chat rooms, stated:

> *...in regard to that form of behaviour I'm doing exactly the same thing but the age line has shifted to 18...ultimately if I'm talking to 18 year olds, that's legal and if it's*

> *stopping me from talking to 14 year olds, that's good…ultimately it may be morally and socially unacceptable but it's not criminal behaviour.*

Similarly, Patrick, convicted of contact offences with underage males, implied that he employed a similar method of avoiding illegal behaviour:

> *As I've got older the age to which I'm attracted has got older but not significantly, but I don't find it erm.....difficult to ...although I find people under 16 or 18 attractive I don't find it necessary to engage myself with them, because I'm quite fulfilled with relationships with people who are slightly older than that.*

### Physically constrained formal desistance

A further two of the formal desisters, convicted of contact offences, suffered from chronic ill-health which meant they were unable to leave the house without the assistance of others, resulting in a lack of opportunity to offend. Alan and Vic, 13 and 10 years post-release respectively, had developed chronic health problems over the two years prior to interview. As such, the early stages of desistance were not underpinned by constraint-based compliance. Both mens' narratives evidenced a desire to avoid a return to prison and as such, it seemed that the earlier stages of their desistance were deterrence based, illustrating instrumental compliance which became habitual over time and led to constraint based compliance imposed by ill-health. This finding may be common in desisting CSOs, whose criminal careers evidence a reduction in reoffending from an older age than non-sexual offenders. Various studies demonstrate a reduction in recidivism from the age of 45 (Langan et al, 2003), over the age of 50 (Hanson, 2002; Harris & Hanson, 2004; Barbaree et al, 2003), over 55 (Fazel et al, 2006) and over 60 (Thornton, 2006) (discussed in Chapter One). The mechanism underpinning the effect of ageing on reduced CSO recidivism is generally unclear and may relate to the effects of ill-health which prevents opportunities to engage in contact offending, as evidenced in two of the formal desisters in the present sample.

### Disrupted substantive desistance

As previously noted, it was difficult to determine the factors underpinning Mike's desistance. Interestingly, his self-narrative displayed similar themes to those Harris (2014) identified in those she termed 'natural desisters' who displayed a negative identity with no hope for the future. Mike's narrative differed significantly from the other respondents, being largely focused on losses rather than achievements.

> *I probably think I might have been dealt a bad hand, but then I don't know. Maybe it's what I deserve but then I think well, perhaps it's not because….it's not only the prison sentence it's the loss of the job. It was actually not just a job but a career.*

He seemed to be experiencing 'the pain of hopelessness' identified in several of Nugent and Schinkel's (2016) 'act desisters'. These men had stopped offending but felt unable to "fully

take part in life or to move towards their goals [which] meant that many of the men were slowly giving up hope for anything other than a life of merely existing […] leading to helplessness and apathy for many" (2016: 7). Mike's self-narrative described the somewhat rigid enforcement practices of the PPOs involved in his management, which led to anger over what he perceived as sanctions lacking in legitimacy. In support of previous research, this type of practice can impact negatively upon offenders' commitments to compliance and desistance (Digard, 2010; Ugwidike, 2011; Weaver, 2014). His narrative was negative and evidenced a defiant attitude towards agents of formal social control, with recurring themes of pessimism and resignation, a narrative more akin to the condemnation scripts of persisting offenders identified by Maruna (2001). Mike was however, visited regularly by PPOs who monitored his internet browsing and I had no reason to believe that he was engaged in continued offending.

Mike did not appear to have successfully negotiated a positive sense of self, despite the adoption of several stigma management techniques. In accordance with Harris's (2014) natural desisters, he demonstrated resignation, and enduring stigmatisation: *"I can't live my life knowing that I'm this evil monster, erm well I've made two suicide attempts since 2002"*. He related his suicide attempts to a feeling of hopelessness. It seemed that these had occurred around the time of his prison release, although it was not possible to ascertain from his narrative when his last suicide attempt took place. However, his narrative indicated that he was able to overcome feelings of hopelessness through reconciliation with his two adult children. His self-narrative indicated that this had resulted in a more positive outlook, coinciding with his obtaining employment. He had since undertaken several low paid jobs which he found unfulfilling and lamented his inability to return to his previous role as a well-paid train driver.

Mike's narrative implied that he had, prior to 2006, succeeded in alleviating feelings of self-stigmatisation and, perhaps, due to the social bonds he had attained, taken steps towards identity reconstruction: *"...quite frankly I hated being branded this monster by the authorities because I actually felt that at one stage I was, but then over the years…"*. At this point in the interview he had become upset and therefore the topic was changed. Mike felt that life improved further when he began a relationship with a woman with children. He claimed that his partner was aware of his previous convictions and was happy to continue their relationship. However, he failed to inform his PPO of his partner, who later found out and terminated their relationship. This resulted in the imposition of a lifetime SOPO which extended the period for which he was subject to registration requirements. This appeared to be a particularly negative turning point for Mike, leading to his depression and resignation:

> *Since 2006 I had this SOPO put on, it did destroy me because it wrenched this woman and her kids away from me, the fact that I could never even have the chance to say goodbye to them, erm... that was enough for me to send me right down to the bottom, I*

> *just gave the job in, I couldn't get up in the mornings…depression and wanted to sort of end it all. I couldn't because I was thinking of me kids.*

It is interesting that by 2006, despite the catastrophic effect of the termination of his relationship and the imposition of the SOPO, Mike claimed that his children prevented further attempts at suicide. He did indeed acknowledge later in the interview that his daughter was a significant factor in his life: *"My daughter's probably my reason to keep going, you know"*. However, he was unable to see her regularly due to their geographical distance and the financial difficulties created by Mike's unemployment.

Nugent and Schinkel (2016) found that the 'pains of desistance' involved an inability to connect to prosocial networks or new activities, which often led to loneliness. Serious mental health problems and an increased risk of suicide may result from loneliness, which can decrease both self-confidence and self-esteem. Although clearly having suffered mental health problems in the earlier stages of desistance, Mike seemed to have since made steps towards substantive desistance, attaining various sources of informal social control in which he had invested. The termination of his relationship by the police, followed by the imposition of a SOPO, seemed to have resulted in a decline in Mike's mental health, disrupting his progress. Indeed, Mike related his difficulties in moving on to the approach of PPOs, who he felt had little faith in his rehabilitation. Their consistently retrospective approach and lack of belief in the potential of CSO's reform encouraged internalisation of the sex offender label which likely resulted in Mike's feelings of self-stigmatisation evidenced at the time of interview:

> *I've even had them saying a sex offender is never rehabilitated, once a sex offender always a sex offender because you always have that interest so therefore you'll always be a risk and they say that's why we give people lifetime SOPOs…*

Mike, in his fifties, claimed to have little sexual interest, however, he also claimed that: *"I've never been very sexually driven anyway…I'm in my 50's now but I don't really have that urge"*. The offending trajectories of Harris's (2014) natural desisters seemed more akin to those of general offenders, beginning in adolescence, and involving persistent and varied offending. These three men did not identify as sex offenders. They were tired of living the criminal lifestyle and ironically, among the youngest in Harris's sample, aged 44-48, with the average sample age of 52, thus similar to the current sample with an average age of 50.6 years. As Chapter One noted, studies demonstrate decreasing sexual recidivism in CSOs from around the age of 45 (Langan et al, 2003) upwards. However, given my previous criticisms of natural desistance (see Chapter Two) and the fact that natural desistance is said to be that occurring in the absence of formal or informal social controls (Laws & Ward, 2011; Göbbels et al, 2012), Mike cannot be termed a natural desister. His formal desistance was influenced by informal

social controls, in the form of his children, and formal social controls in the form of PPO's visits.

Mike is thus tentatively defined as a 'disrupted substantive desister'. Whilst this is evidenced in only one member of the current sample, the wider literature acknowledges, often in relation to the supervision of high risk offenders by probation services, that a risk focused criminal justice approach can be disabling for desistance. This clearly extends to the management approaches of PPOs supervising CSOs, although no previous identifiable research specifically focuses on this. Weaver (2014: 17) argues that a predominantly risk focused approach to the community management of high-risk offenders, subjects the (ex)offender "to an ever-growing awareness of what they cannot do but has limited opportunity to develop a more positive alternative, leaving little incentive to change". The retrospective approach of Mike's PPOs persistently reinforces "an erroneous perception of the offender as someone permanently at risk of re-offending, who is unable to change and who must be managed" (Kemshall, 2008, cited in Weaver, 2014: 17). It seems that the new penology's (Feeley & Simon, 1992) emphasis on public protection takes precedence, for some criminal justice practitioners, over the promotion of desistance and reintegration (Barry, 2007). Furthermore, rigid enforcement practices are recognised to encourage perceptions of sanctions lacking legitimacy, which impacts negatively on desistance (Digard, 2010; Ugwudike, 2011). Highlighting the governmentality gap identified by McNeill et al (2009), the ability of the system to take a more flexible approach - striking a balance between managing risk and promoting desistance, is evident in the accounts of both Russ and Adam.

Formal desistance in the present sample was underpinned by deterrence. Instrumental compliance had become habitual and resulted in long-term formal desistance. Formal desistance involved simple adherence to the legal rules, without the substantive engagement and identity change demonstrated by the substantive desisters. Whilst the formal desisters generally attempted to present themselves as one who had changed, their narratives were more indicative of self-presentation techniques, rather than any internalised change. They lacked genuine acknowledgement of victim harm or remorse for their past offending, demonstrating a lack of cognitive transformation despite (with the exception of Kevin) having undertaken treatment.

The perceived illegitimacy of sanctions was a recurrent theme in the narratives of formal desisters. The legitimacy deficits perceived by Alan and his belief that the police were keen for him to reoffend resulted in his defiant attitude, whereby his lack of reoffending was presented as a desire to prove the police wrong. Mike also demonstrated a defiant and antagonistic approach to interactions with PPOs.

Highlighting Maruna's (2001: 32) assertion that "families, jobs, age or time cannot change a person who does not make a personal effort to change on the inside", the formal desisters' narratives, with the exception of Mike, indicated little investment in the sources of social and structural support available to them, seemingly evidencing little openness to internal change. Reflecting Giodarno et al (2002: 1001) who argue that "successful hooks [for change] will need to influence the actor to make a particular sort of cognitive connection", the formal desisters' narratives involved simple adherence to the legal rules with no evidence of a convincing redemption narrative. Formal desistance had become long-term and habitual, rather than involving "a fundamental and intentional shift in the person's sense of self" (Maruna, 2001: 17).

Nugent and Schinkel (2016) found in their sample that one 'act desister' was returned to prison, highlighting that without 'identity' or 'relational' desistance, long-term desistance is unlikely to be maintained. The absence of internal change in formal desistance suggests that this is unlikely to be maintained, however, the lengthy post-release periods of the formal desisters in the present sample, ranging from 27 months to 13 years, indicates that this *can* be maintained in the long-term. The achievement of substantive desistance is however preferable, incorporating 'act', 'identity' and 'relational' desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). The next section of this chapter proceeds to model the substantive desistance process.
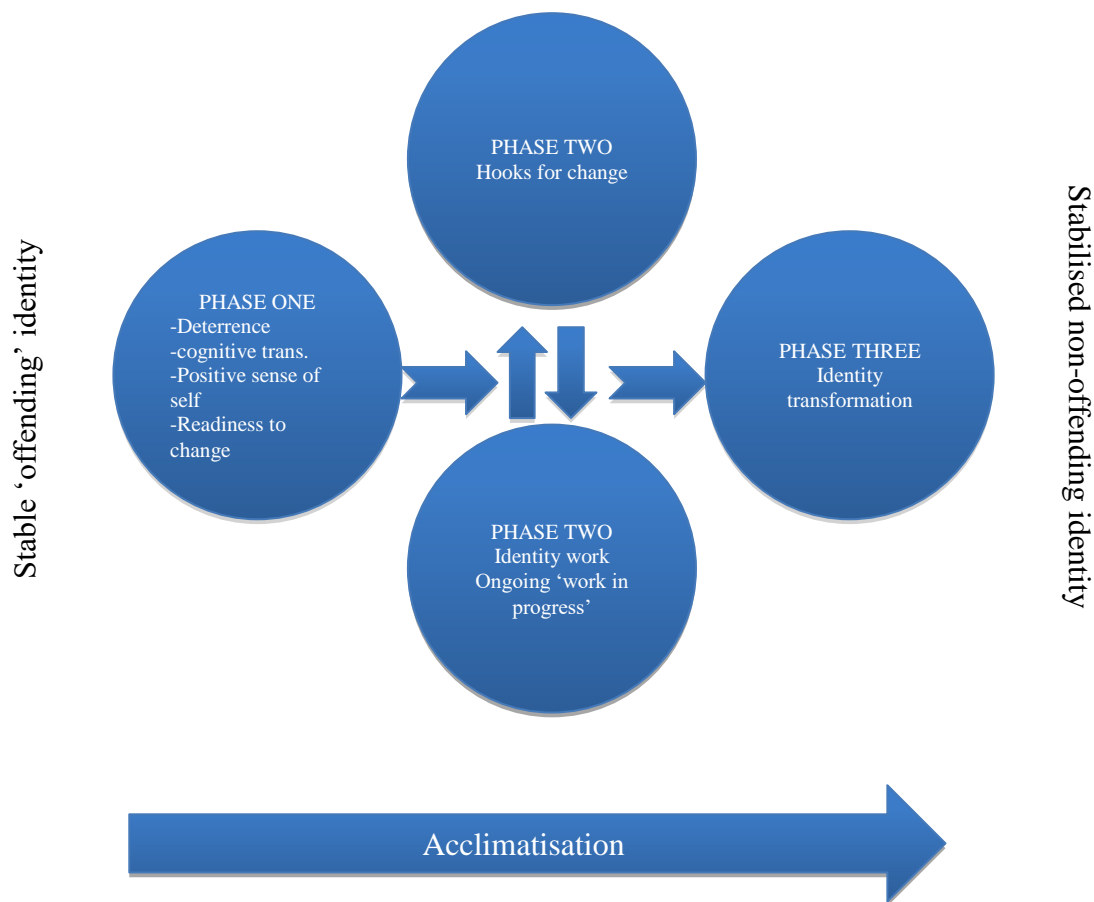
### 7.2.1.2 Modelling the substantive desistance process

Previous research (e.g., Shover, 1983; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Lebel et al, 2008) has identified difficulties in disentangling the external and internal factors to determine which of these initiate desistance. Lebel et al (2008:133) caution: "…do not assume that the two [social and subjective variables] are necessarily separable or wholly independent of one another". Indeed, findings from the present study indicate that the social and subjective factors are interdependent. In accordance with the formal desisters, the substantive desisters' accounts highlighted that deterrence was significant in the early stages of desistance. Their self-narratives included the desire to avoid a return to prison which was perceived to be the likely outcome of any further offending due to the formal social controls imposed via the SOR, hence respondents made a rational choice to stop offending. Similarities were noted by Farmer et al (2015: 328): "Detection and conviction appear to have carried with them a significant deterrent effect, sufficient to start the process of cognitive transformation necessary for desistance" (Farmer et al, 2015: 328).

Ten respondents were identified as substantive desisters. Seven of these employed stigma management techniques at the time of interview, argued to assist in the negotiation of feelings

of self-stigmatisation, necessary to achieve self-acceptance and obtain a positive sense of self. Two respondents' narratives (Pete and Derek, both almost 15 years post-prison release) indicated that such techniques had been part of their past, indicating that these techniques are enabling for susbstantive desistance. Each phase of the substantive desistance process aligns with the phases within the continuum of identity transformation discussed in Chapter Six. The dynamic[36] and complex process through which respondents proceded to engage in long-term substantive desistance is illustrated in Figure 7.4.

*Figure 7.4: A model of the substantive desistance process*



Despite the cross-sectional design of the present project, the range of post-release periods within the present sample enabled the identification of three phases within the substantive desistance process, which involved temporal ordering. As Chapter Six discussed, stigmatising labels are assigned to those in receipt of a sexual conviction, which may result in the internalisation of feelings of self-stigmation. Respondents in the current sample were acutely aware of society's

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[36] "The term *dynamic* refers to (a) the distinct elements of the change process and (b) the processes through which desistance is enabled. It recognizes thus the influence and interaction between the elements that contribute to desistance as well as the activity and change that occurs within and between those elements over time" (Weaver & McNeill 2015: 106).

revulsion towards those who have committed a sexual offence, creating feelings of self-stigmatisation which threatened their personal identity. Phase one of the substantive desistance process required the rejection of the 'sex offender' label in order to achieve self acceptance and a positive sense self, through the use of various techniques to separate their past offending from their 'core self' (Maruna, 2001). These techniques included neutralisations in the form of denial of responsibility and various distancing techniques. Some respondents employed several techniques which enabled them to both remove their offending behaviour from their 'core self' as a wholly good person (Maruna, 2001), and also separate themselves from the stereotypical 'sex offender', thus presenting themselves as worthy of redemption. These techniques highlight the significance of social identity theory, which hypothesises that individuals socially categorise others into social groups, the 'us' and 'them'. Members of the in-group to which they belong discriminate against the out-group, focusing on the out-group's negative aspects in order to enhance their own self-image. People who belong to negatively evaluated social groups experience damaged self-esteem which hinders identity development (Tajifel and Turner, 1979), thus distancing from stigmatised groups may assist in alleviating such problems.

All of these techniques are argued to serve the same purpose - to reject the internalisation of self-stigma and increase self-worth, and are thus included under the umbrella heading of stigma management techniques. Given that sex offenders are popularly viewed as incapable of change, techniques such as these assist in the construction of a self-narrative which provides a coherent and believable story to convince both themselves and others that this is real change (Maruna, 2001).

Together with the achievement of a positive sense of self, the self-narratives of the substantive desisters also indicated that a readiness, a desire to change, together with the belief that change was possible, was also significant in the early stages of substantive desistance. The men recognised that they were agents of self-change, in control of their futures. Taking ownership of their future was evidenced in their narratives, which often involved acknowledgement that the key to preventing reoffending lay in their hands.

Nine of the ten substantive desisters had undertaken treatment. They demonstrated a receptivity to treatment, having actively engaged and internalised treatment messages, which enabled a series of cognitive transformations evident in their narratives. Cognitive transformations in relation to the harms caused by their offending were most significant in the contact offenders. The non-contact offenders struggled to acknowledge that their offending had created victims. John is identified as a substantive desister and although not having undertaken treatment, and attempting to shift responsibility to parents, appeared to be gradually acknowledging the harm

caused by his past offending. Although four of the five formal desisters had undertaken treatment, they were less likely to have internalised treatment messages or to provide positive accounts of its benefits. The formal desisters who presented positive accounts of treatment were somewhat unconvincing, contrasted with the substantive desisters' accounts of treatment.

Further to the establishment of a positive sense of self, together with a readiness to change, the substantive desisters were able to utilise their internal resources to seek social and structural supports. They recognised, often through undertaking treatment, that these external sources were important elements for successful change. Giodarno et al (2002: 1001) term these social and structural supports, 'hooks for change', noting the necessity of "…both exposure to a hook and one's attitude toward it…", acknowledged further by LeBel et al (2008: 139):

> …the impact of the social factor depends on the level of the subjective characteristics. With the right subjective mindset, the person may be capable of taking advantage of the good events in life that come along and/or will not be thrown off course by social disappointments. In other words, the subjective mindset is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for success after release from prison. Social events need to occur that support and encourage desistance.

Whilst the current findings indicate that internal resources are the initial drivers of desistance from sexual offending, the role of formal social control was also influential in providing a deterrent to further offending. Despite their experiences of prison being better than expected, the majority of respondents expressed the desire to avoid a return. The identity changes necessary to substantive desistance were dependent upon the attainment of meaningful external sources, in the form of social and structural supports, discussed in the continuum of identity transformation presented in Chapter Six.

Obtaining exposure to the hooks for change was often difficult for respondents. The stigma of a sexual conviction presented barriers to reintegration, however, respondents' success in this area demonstrates that these barriers are not insurmountable. It was clear that determination and resilience were required to negotiate the numerous setbacks encountered when seeking accommodation, employment and social supports. Attaining these structural and social supports was often a protracted process, although when successful, respondents were rewarded with enhanced self-belief, further enhanced when their achievements were reflected back to them, acknowledging their change, by significant others. For example; Simon, a self-confessed workaholic, was promoted by his boss following disclosure of his past offending. His boss acknowledged his proficiency in his role, irrespective of his past convictions. This provided the 'certification of desistance' (Meisenhelder, 1977), serving to acknowledge Simon's change, assisting redemption and reinforcing his self-efficacy. Respondents' achievements enabled the negotiation of a new identity through self-reconstruction rather than amputation, reflecting the redemption scripts of Maruna's (2001) desisters. Whilst the majority of respondents succeeded

in 'knifing off' feelings of self-stigmatisation, they did not attempt to reject or 'knife off' (Maruna & Roy, 2007) the past from the present, but rather, incorporated this within their self-narratives to provide a coherent and convincing self-narrative for evidencing their change (Maruna, 2001).

The attainment of social and structural supports is crucial to the construction of a non-offending, prosocial identity, highlighting the interdependence of external and internal factors. Identity change was apparent along a continuum (discussed in Chapter Six), culminating in identity transformation, the final phase of the substantive desistance process. The substantive desisters were at various stages of identity change, which involved construction and reconstruction of their identity, in accordance with the meaningful structural and social roles and supports they had attained which provided sources of prosocial identity. The attainment of social roles and social bonds assisted in the mens' creation of a new identity, one which was incompatible with offending. As some of respondents' quotations presented in Chapter Six illustrate, their changed identity was evidenced in their self-narratives. Commonly, reference was made to being a different person now to the one that had offended. Their self-narratives highlighted that the past had become incompatible with their new identity, reflecting the fourth cognitive transformation within Giodarno et al's (2002) theory.

Two of the substantive desisters (Howard and Pete) were identified as having engaged in identity transformation, their stabilised non-offending identities being viewed as negative, irrelevant and incompatible with their new self. Pete, 15 years post-prison release, was identified as having engaged in identity transformation aided by the numerous sources of social and structural support in which he had invested, allowing him to continually reconstruct his identity. These sources, together with his change reflected back to him by his partner, rendered his 'old' identity as one far removed from his new transformed identity. The process of acclimatisation involved in substantive desistance had become complete with crystallisation of his new identity. Some participants' narrative identities, for example Adam, included reference to his past criminal behaviour as being incompatible with his current self, however, identity transformation was hindered by his inability to achieve his normative ambitions, such as a job, his own home, and a romantic partner, potentially due to his extensive and serious offending history. He was making steps towards identity change, but this was 'ongoing work in progress'.

It should be pointed out that not all of the substantive desisters' narratives were wholly positive. Indeed, Becker (1998) proposes that qualitative research should endeavor to identify evidence of the opposite of an anticipated theme – a negative case. Harris (2014) identified that members of her sample desisting through cognitive transformation also evidenced negative themes of

resignation, pessimism and resentment. Although I have identified Derek as a substantive desister, his self-narrative included resignation to the fact that he would never secure employment as fulfilling as that he had experienced prior to his conviction. He felt it unlikely that he would reach a stage in his life where he considered himself to be happy, due to the loss of his previous professional role, which had furnished him with significant social status, and financial reward - a role that he was now unable to return due to his conviction. His self-narrative included negative themes of pessimism and resignation, in contrast to Pete's positive self-narrative which included themes of optimism, meaning, hope and positive outlook for the future. Both Derek and Pete had been released for almost 15 years at the time of interview. Thus, although Derek had engaged in identity reconstruction, it was difficult for identity transformation to take place as he resented the way his life had turned out as a result of his conviction. Derek has been identified as a substantive desister as his self-narrative did not display evidence of simple adherence to the legal rules but involved cognitive transformations including acknowledgement of the harm caused to his victim. However, the guilt he experienced haunted him on a daily basis, despite being at liberty for 15 years since his prison release. Not only had he sexually abused an underage girl but he had also abused his position of trust. He was unable to engage in identity transformation due to the catastrophic effect of his conviction upon his professional career which had clearly been a huge source of meaning and fulfillment. His identity prior to conviction appeared to have been primarily defined by his professional role and the resulting social status. This had impacted upon his identity in the sense that he was unable to put the past behind him to the extent that the other substantive desisters had.

### 7.2.2 Points of convergence with the existing literature

The process of substantive desistance is primarily driven by internal changes, although external sources of formal social control are influential in enforcing a deterrent effect. Some of the present findings support previous research by Harris (2014) and Farmer et al (2015). In addition, similarities with aspects of previous theoretical explanations of desistance are apparent, namely Giodarno et al' s (2002) theory of cognitive transformation; Vaughan's (2007) 'internal narrative of desistance'; Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory of desistance (the 'feared self') and the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012).

The internal changes begin with the necessity of a positive sense of self, often achieved through the use of stigma management techniques, reflecting Farmer et al's (2015) findings within which neutralisation techniques were employed in the early stages of desistance. An avoidant motive seemed to underpin the desire to change in the present sample, rather than being driven

by a recognition of the harm caused by their past offending. Whilst substantive desisters displayed cognitive transformations in relation to their past harms, this did not appear to be the driver of desistance. Respondents made a rational choice to stop offending, underpinned by the deterrent effect of prison, reflecting the findings of Farmer et al (2015) whose desisters also demonstrated rational choice making due to the deterrent effect of detection and conviction. Despite their experiences of prison being better than expected, the majority of respondents in the present study expressed the desire to avoid a return. The 'internal narrative of desistance' identified by Vaughan (2007) also requires the first phase of 'discernment', whereby the individual reviews possible lifestyle changes. However, Vaughan's second phase of 'deliberation', a review of the pros and cons of offending, relates to the first phase of the process of substantive desistance. Paternoster & Bushway's (2009) identity theory also begins with a rational choice whereby the individual contemplates two possible futures – that of the positive possible self and that of the feared possible self. The substantive desisters in the present sample also appeared to have experienced 'the crystallisation of discontent' proposed by both Paternoster and Bushway (2009) and the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012). However, rather than wishing to avoid a future 'feared self', it seemed that respondents in the present sample, prior to beginning the desistance process, were already their 'feared self', cemented through conviction and incarceration together with the associated stigmatisation, rather than a desire to avoid a feared self in the future. Thus, rather than, as proposed by Paternoster and Bushway (2009), individuals cast off their old 'working identity' as an offender, to replace it with a new identity which promotes changes in preferences and social networks to motivate the process, current respondents' new identities emerged later in the process. Farmer et al (2015: 328) also found that the formation of a new identity was not the driver of desistance, but rather, "interviewees said they reverted to a previous, non-offending and conventional lifestyle". This finding was not replicated in the present sample. Substantive desisters often had lengthy offending careers prior to apprehension and as such, their previous non-offending personal identity was long forgotten.

Linking with phase one on the continuum of identity transformation, phase one of the substantive desistance process involved cognitive transformations. Highlighting similarities with the first cognitive transformation in Giodarno et al's (2002) theory, current respondents evidenced that the desire to change, together with a readiness to change and the belief that this was achievable, were involved in the early stages of substantive desistance. In addition, the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012) begins with decisive momentum, which includes self-evaluation and a readiness to change. The early stages of the 'feared self' theory also necessitate the desire to change (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). However, elements of the second phase of the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012) are evident within the first phase of the substantive desistance

process. This relates to 'rehabilitation', which the authors propose includes an adaptive self-conception, which individuals in the present study had achieved at the beginning of the desistance process, through the negotiation of feelings of self-stigmatisation.

The second phase of the substantive desistance process involves the individual acknowledging the value of meaningful sources of social and structural support and actively seeking these. These 'hooks for change' (Giodarno et al, 2002) were necessary to the construction of a new pro-social identity. In this phase, the substantive desisters no longer associated themselves with their previous offending identity but saw their past as being incompatible with their current self, therefore also incorporating the fourth of Giodarno et al's (2002) cognitive transformations – a reassessment of attitudes to deviant behaviour.

Elements of phase two of the ITDSO, 'rehabilitation' links with the current findings in relation to its emphasis on the necessity of a changed practical identity in desistance. The primary goods (of the GLM) are closely aligned with practical identities and those most important to the individual are realised through prosocial actions. However, the ITDSO also proposes that the optimal outcome of phase two is "a successful reconstruction of the self" (Göbbels et al, 2012: 457) which differs from the current findings, as this identity construction is 'ongoing work in progress' in phase two. In the present study "a successful reconstruction of the self" links conceptually with identity transformation. Giodarno et al's (2002) third cognitive transformation relates to the availability of an appealing and conventional self, which relates to phase two of substantive desistance. Substantive desisters in phase two of the process align with the 'liminal desisters' identified by Healy (2014), whose journey was incomplete. The men in the present sample were able to envisage a desired future self, which they believed to be achievable, however, this was not currently attainable in their current circumstances – they had not attained sufficient external sources of social and structural support required to achieve identity transformation, thus a meaningful substitute self is developed which allows for the exercise of agency and "permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity" (Healy, 2014: 878). Phase two of the process of substantive desistance is argued, in light of the present findings, to be a lengthy and protracted process involving the interdependence of external and internal (re)sources. A lengthy process of acclimatisation is involved whereby the attainment of meaningful external sources serve to develop the individual's new identity, which is constructed and reconstructed in a continued interaction with the external sources until phase three of the substantive desistance process, identity transformation, is achieved.

In phase three of the substantive desistance process, the individual's identity has become fully developed through the attainment of sufficient meaningful external sources of social and structural support, reflecting the culmination of the desistance process - identity transformation. The individual's new, prosocial, non-offending identity which was envisaged in the past has now become crystallised. The identities of the two respondents who had achieved identity transformation had developed stabilised non-offending identities which were completely incompatible with their old offending identities. The final stage of the substantive desistance process includes all three aspects of desistance ('act', 'identity' and 'relational') proposed by Nugent and Schinkel (2016) to be necessary to successful desistance.

Phase one is conceptually related to both primary desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) and 'act desistance' (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). Phase two includes 'identity desistance', albeit 'work in progress', involving a substitute identity until identity transformation is realised. 'Relational desistance' (and therefore McNeill's (2016) concept of tertiary desistance) also features within phase two of substantive desistance, evidenced in the accounts of the men who experienced close bonds with family, friends, or romantic partners. Whilst secondary desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) is conceptually linked to both phase two and three of the current model of substantive desistance, subtle differences are apparent. If secondary desistance is marked by "the assumption of the role or identity of a 'changed person'" (Maruna et al, 2004b: 274), and "the transition to secondary desistance occurs not with the imagining of a new self but with the realization of this new self through the enactment of conventional roles" (Healy, 2012: 876), respondents in phase two of substantive desistance were 'liminal desisters', imagining a new self which could not be achieved in their current circumstances. Therefore a substitute identity is developed. This suggests, then, that secondary desistance is related conceptually to identity transformation, phase three, the culmination of the substantive desistance process.

Whilst the majority of the elements involved in the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012) link conceptually with those identified within the process of substantive desistance, the temporal ordering differs somewhat. It is argued, in light of the current findings, that the ITDSO affords little concern to stigmatisation, which is somewhat surprising given the overwhelming significance of the feelings of self-stigmatisation evident in current respondents' self-narratives. Whilst Göbbels et al (2012) caution that internalised stigmatisation may lead to further offending, and also that stigmatisation and disintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989) obstruct the attainment of the primary goods package, the theory fails to account for any internal negotiation of stigma as evidenced by current respondents.

*7.3 Summary*

This chapter draws together the significant themes emerging through respondents' narratives and discussed in previous chapters. The complex and protracted process of desistance from sexual offending is disentangled to identify two types of desistance; namely formal and substantive desistance. The latter is the preferred type of desistance, being underpinned in the early stages by normative compliance and involving the construction of a new non-offending identity, which becomes stabilised through the process of acclimatisation culminating in identity transformation. The identity changes within substantive desistance link it conceptually to secondary desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). Furthermore, this type of desistance includes the three aspects of desistance ('act', 'identity' and 'relational') identified as being necessary to sustain desistance by Nugent and Schinkel (2016). The concept of 'relational desistance' is conceptually linked to McNeill's (2016) identification of tertiary desistance which involves the development of a sense of belonging, together with the recognition of others that the individual has changed.

The complex process of substantive desistance is identified to involve three phases and is primarily driven by internal factors, although the influence of formal sources of control are influential in providing a deterrent effect. Phase one involves the rejection of self-stigma, often achieved through the use of stigma management techniques, which allow the individual to develop a positive sense of self. In addition, the individual displays the desire to change, and the belief that this is achievable, rendering them open to change. Phase two involves the attainment of meaningful external sources of social and structural support, which the individual actively seeks, acknowledging them as beneficial. The attainment of such sources serve to enable the construction of a prosocial identity, highlighting that internal and external sources are interdependent. Phase two appeared to be the lengthiest phase of the substantive desistance process. Respondents within this phase can be termed 'liminal desisters' (Healy, 2014), those who can envisage a desired future identity but whose current circumstances do not currently permit the attainment of such, due to insufficient sources of social and structural support. In the meantime, a substitute identity is developed which allows for the exercise of agency and provides the individual with an internal locus of control. For respondents in phase two, the development of identity was 'ongoing work in progress'. These men identified as non-offenders but were continually constructing and reconstructing their identity in accordance with the meaningful external sources they had attained. The process of substantive desistance involves acclimatisation, as the individual gradually develops the external sources to develop their identity, resulting in phase three, identity transformation. The two respondents in the current sample identified as having achieved identity transformation had developed a non-offending

identity which had become crystallised and was completely incompatible with their old offending identity.

In contrast, formal desistance involved no identifiable process. Respondents identified as such (*n*=5) were 'act desisters' (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016), or primary desisters (Maruna & Farrall, 2004) having stopped offending, but with no evidence of cognitive transformations or identity change. There was evidence in the present sample that formal desistance was underpinned by three distinct mechanisms. Two respondents admitted to simply changing the age of their sexual preference to align with the law. Two men (both contact offenders) were physically constrained from further offending due to chronic ill health. Interestingly, Mike's self-narrative was indicative of substantive desistance in the past, which appeared to have been disrupted by formal social controls. His negative and pessimistic narrative displayed feelings of hopelessness. Whilst the present study excluded exploration of whether formal desistance may develop into substantive desistance, the converse was apparent in Mike's narrative, indicating that formal social controls can disrupt substantive desistance. Formal desistance, being deterrence based, with instrumental compliance developing into habitual compliance to become formal desistance, without any fundamental internal change, is not the preferred type of desistance and is perhaps indicative of failure. Indeed, within Nugent and Schinkel's (2016) sample, an 'act desister' was returned to prison, highlighting that, in the absence of 'identity' and 'relational' desistance, long-term desistance is unlikely to be maintained. However, the lengthy post-release periods of the formal desisters in the present sample, ranging from 27 months to 13 years, indicate that this can be maintained long-term.

The process of substantive desistance highlights similarities with previous theorising of both desistance from non-sexual offending (Giodarno et al, 2002; Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009) and sexual offending (Göbbels et al, 2012), although differences in temporal ordering are highlighted. Theorising of substantive desistance aligns most closely with the theory of cognitive transformation proposed by Giodarno et al (2000), although slight differences in relation to the temporal ordering of phases within the substantive desistance process are identified. Somewhat surprisingly, the ITDSO (Göbbels et al, 2012) affords little concern to stigmatisation and the barriers this may present to identity reconstruction, nor does it acknowledge the necessity of identity transformation and the protracted process to the achievement of this, highlighted in the present sample. Furthermore, the ITDSO proposes that the optimal outcome of phase two is "a successful reconstruction of the self" (Göbbels et al, 2012: 457) - in substantive desistance, "a successful reconstruction of the self" links conceptually with identity transformation, phase three of the process.

Support for elements of previous empirical work on desistance from sexual offending are also found. Respondents in Harris's (2012) study demonstrating identity change were those released for the longest periods. Neutralisations featured in the early stages of Farmer et al's (2015) desisters, who also experienced the deterrent effects of formal criminal justice sanctions.

Given that the first chapter of this thesis explored the criminal careers of sex offenders and the associations between types of sex offender and risk of recidivism; offender types, sentence lengths and post-release periods were explored, to identify whether these revealed any associations with the types of desistance identified (see Appendix D). Perhaps unsurprisingly in a relatively small sample such as this with a wide range of offence types, sentence lengths and post-release periods, only one association was found. Five of the six intra-familial (contact) offenders were identified as substantive desisters, in support of previous findings that this offender type demonstrates less risk of recidivism (Quinsey et al, 1995; Alexander, 1999; Seto et al, 2015). Stigma management techniques were employed by both formal and substantive desisters (see Appendix D). It was somewhat surprising that the formal desisters employed such techniques, given that they demonstrated little evidence of the internalisation of the harm caused by their past offending. Two of the three formal desisters displaying stigma management techniques (Alan and Kevin) presented as being particularly manipulative and at some points in the interviews, seemed to display impression management techniques in attempts to achieve positive self-presentation, which on other occasions were discarded.

Whilst it was my intention to explore desistance in a sample of CSOs with post-release periods of six years or more, the differing post-release periods of the sample ultimately accessed were useful for identifying two types of desistance, and providing an insight into the temporal ordering of the external and internal factors involved. Qualitative research with CSOs often involves small sample sizes, perhaps due to the difficulties in accessing a suitable sample. Thus, whilst the present findings cannot be generalised to broader populations of adult male child sex offenders, their echoes of previous theories of desistance suggests theoretical generalisation (Lewis et al, 2014) of the two types of desistance identified.

The theoretical types of formal and substantive desistance from sexual offending may also be applicable to desistance from other types of serious offending which result in lengthy prison sentences and lead to stigmatisation and exclusion. The complex process of substantive desistance appears to be particularly protracted due to the stigmatisation of CSOs resulting in barriers to reintegration which, in turn, hinders the development and stabilisation of a non-offending identity.

The two types of desistance identified in the present study highlight the significance of Allan Weaver's question in the film 'the road from crime' – "what are we asking people to desist into?" (McNeill, 2015). If desistance as defined in the present project as no further sexual offending since most recent prison sentence, then all respondents are (self-reported) desisters. However, if the focus of research is secondary desistance, as suggested by Maruna and Farrall (2004), then only ten of the present sample are desisters, having demonstrated change along a continuum of identity transformation. Given that two of the formal desisters were constrained by irreversible physical disability, then further contact sexual offending is prohibited and thus, desistance is likely to remain long-term. For the two formal desisters who had simply changed the age of sexual preference, the maintenance of long-term desistance from sexual offending may be somewhat dubious.

The concluding chapter of this thesis proceeds to summarise the key findings which are assessed in relation to the project's central research question. The implications of these findings for policy and practice are then addressed. Given that research is rarely without limitations, these are discussed, together with suggestions for further research.

# Eight: Reflections and Implications

## 8.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the process of desistance from sexual offending, a topic largely neglected by previous research. Whilst empirical work and theorising on desistance from non-sexual offending has developed over previous decades, little attention has been afforded to the study of desistance from sexual offending. Narrative interviews were conducted with a sample of 15 men convicted of a sexual offence involving a child. The men had received prison sentences ranging from nine months to 12 years and, at the time of interview, had been residing in the community for periods ranging between one and 15 years. Three prominent themes emerged from the data, reflecting the significance of 'control', a feature of the new penology (Feeley & Simon, 1992) evident within the contemporary criminal justice landscape. This concluding chapter summarises the study's key findings, relating these to the continuum of identity transformation and the two types of desistance identified in the data. The findings hold implications for policy and practice relating to sex offenders, in relation to both their treatment and management, which are considered in this concluding chapter. Given that no research is without limitations, these are then addressed, followed by suggestions of potential avenues for future research.

## 8.2 Thesis overview and key findings

Chapter One considered the contemporary penal climate within which the community governance of CSOs is focused on public protection and the management of risk. Perhaps the most vilified and stigmatised offender group, sex offenders targeting children have become the modern day 'folk devil' (Cobley, 200), consistently constructed by the media as 'dangerous strangers' from whom the public must be protected (Brown, 2005). Such representations serve to encourage punitive public attitudes (McAlinden, 2007) and overlook the fact that the majority of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child (Grubin, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Fitch, 2006).

Chapter One discussed the prevalence of sexual offences in England and Wales, and the law encompassing these. The management of sexual offenders in the community was then considered, noting the formal social controls to which CSOs are subject. Sexual offenders' criminal careers were then explored, demonstrating that despite popular belief, recidivism rates of CSOs are relatively low. The differing offending trajectories displayed by different types of

sexual offenders were then explored. The chapter concluded, prior to outlining the thesis, with an examination of employment legislation applicable to CSOs in England and Wales.

Research focusing on desistance from non-sexual offending has grown exponentially over the last few decades (e.g., Sampson & Laub, 1993; Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002; Farrall & Calverley, 2006), identifying that although age remains a useful predictor of desistance (McNeill et al, 2012), external sources of informal social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993) together with internal changes, involving agency and identity change are also significant (e.g., Maruna, 2001; Giodarno et al, 2002). Research focusing on desistance from sexual offending has, until recently, been largely neglected. Upon commencement of the current project, the only identifiable research had been conducted in 2000 by Krutschnitt et al, whose quantitative study found that a combination of stable employment and sex offender treatment programmes assisted desistance. The neglect of this area of research has since been recognised, resulting in a small number of publications (Farmer et al, 2012; Göbbels et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015). Chapter Two explored a number of empirical and theoretical accounts of desistance from non-sexual offending, followed by a review of the limited amount of empirical and theoretical accounts of desistance from sexual offending. In addition, other theories considered to be of potential relevance were discussed in this chapter. These included rational choice, deterrence, and theories of compliance with community penalties.

This project sought to provide a contribution to the small body of existing literature focusing on desistance from sexual offending. Chapter Three discussed the methodology employed within the current project and the extensive ethical considerations necessary to research with vulnerable populations. Of particular significance were issues of anonymity and confidentiality, together with the limits of this. Purposive sampling was necessary in order to secure a sample suitably positioned to discuss their experiences, in order to respond to the research question 'which internal and external factors are involved in the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders?'. Accessing a suitable sample was a protracted and difficult process involving contact with numerous police force areas, which ultimately resulted in only one participant. Following an advertisement via Unlock (reformed offender association), a further 14 men volunteered to participate, with a broad range of offence types and post-release periods. Their experiences were explored through narrative interviews lasting between one and three hours, conducted in various locations and providing a wealth of in-depth data. The transcripts were then subjected to thematic analysis, which highlighted significant themes of formal social control, informal social control and internal (re)sources of control, broadly reflecting those identified in previous research on desistance from sexual offending (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Brogden & Harkin, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015). Little attention

has previously been paid to the role of formal social control exercised by criminal justice agents in sex offender desistance, although sex offender treatment has previously been found to aid desistance (Kruttschnitt et al, 2000; Farmer et al, 2012; Harris, 2014; Farmer et al, 2015).

Chapter Four explored the theme of formal social control, focusing on the penal sanctions to which respondents were subject, and the criminal justice professionals responsible for their supervision and management. The risk management focus of the new penology (Feeley & Simon, 1992) has resulted in increasing legislation and policy developments designed to control and manage CSOs' behaviour within the community. Whether intended or not, this has taken precedence over rehabilitation. CSOs, upon release from prison, become subject to a 'monitored existence' (Garland, 2000) via the terms and conditions of the SOR, which includes visits from police PPOs. The frequency of visits is dependent upon the assessed risk that individuals are deemed to present to the public. Visits serve a number of purposes, including checking that information provided by the registrant is accurate, and also to conduct further risk assessment. Chapter Four explored the participants' experiences of imprisonment, sex offender treatment, and community supervision by both probation and the police. Prison was described to be, on the whole, better than expected, however, themes of bullying and the hierarchy of sexual offenders in prison on occasion led to unpleasant experiences, more so in VPU wings than dedicated sex offender prisons. It was clear that prison served as a deterrent to reoffending as respondents expressed the desire to avoid a return. The majority of participants (*n*=13) had undertaken sex offender treatment whilst in prison and claimed to have found this useful. This seemed to be influential in encouraging cognitive transformations in relation to understanding of their offending behaviour and the harm caused by it, although those convicted of non-contact offences struggled to accept that their behaviour had created victims.

Differences in management approaches both across and within probation and police force areas were highlighted in respondents' accounts, highlighting the power and discretion available to criminal justice professionals. It was common for participants to focus on relationships with their PPOs, with, on the whole, little reference made to the input of probation officers. Unsurprisingly, the men most likely to discuss their probation officers' input were those on licence at the time of interview. The welfare and surveillance models identified by Healy (2012) were evident in participants' narratives, with the former, including the provision of practical support, being more valued and perhaps more enabling for desistance from sexual offending.

Chapter Five discussed participants' experiences of accessing sources of informal social control. The significant barriers to reintegration encountered by sexual offenders previously identified (Cowan et al, 1999; Brown et al, 2007; McAlinden, 2009; 2010) were experienced by members

of the current sample. However, generally, respondents' success in negotiating these barriers demonstrates that these were not insurmountable. Finding stable accommodation was viewed as important to providing the roots for a stable lifestyle. Accommodation was secured through private landlords, through friends, or via assistance from the probation service. CSOs are often required to relocate following prison release due to licence conditions or housing restrictions which may be imposed as part of a SOPO. The majority of participants were able to return to their original geographical area and chose to do so for reasons of nearby support networks. Three participants relocated, two of these due to a desire to distance themselves from their victims and the third being deported back to England from the country in which he lived at the time of his offending. Whilst relocation allowed for concealment of the individual's actual social identity, a sense of pervasive anxiety was apparent in Terry's self-narrative, who feared vigilante attacks should his conviction become community knowledge.

Demonstrating the exercise of agency, the majority of the men had secured employment, albeit after a lengthy process which tested their resilience and determination. Employment was often achieved through lack of disclosure requirement, or through friends, the latter reflecting an additional benefit of social bonds. Simon's employment played an influential role in his desistance. Further to his employer becoming aware of his previous conviction, he agreed to maintain Simon's employment, and indeed later promoted him, due to his proficiency in his role, reflecting the certification of desistance (Meisenhelder, 1977) which served to reinforce internal resources and encourage continued desistance. Four of the respondents were engaged in intimate relationships, which for Terry, Pete and Russ provided certification of desistance, as their intimate partners acknowledged their change and provided continued support. The ability to obtain intimate relationships was seen as the most problematic source of social bonds for the majority of participants, due to issues of disclosure which often deterred them from actively seeking such relationships.

Chapter Six explored the internal (re)sources of control evident within respondents' self-narratives. Themes of agency, hope and trust, and generativity emerged, with respondents undertaking generative roles both in the early and latter stages of desistance. In contrast to these positive themes, a more negative recurring theme related to feelings of self-stigmatisation resulting from their sexual conviction. The criminal justice system is guilty of encouraging internalisation of the 'sex offender' label in attempts to encourage individuals to acknowledge that their past offending dictates their persistent risk, which they are taught to manage through treatment. However, internalisation of this label threatens the individual's personal identity which carries the risk of engagement in secondary deviance. Perpetuation of the 'label' was a prominent theme within the data in relation to various sources of formal social control. The title

of the sex offender register was considered problematic by implying present rather than past offending. Sex offender treatment programmes were difficult to negotiate as participants lamented that it was difficult to 'say the right thing' without being considered at increased risk, in support of Lacombe's (2008) findings. The latter point was also a common feature of other interactions within the criminal justice arena and is a consequence of the new penology's (Feeley & Simon, 1992) focus on punishment and public protection. This type of approach is likely to prove counter-productive by encouraging dishonesty.

The broad range of post-release periods within the sample allowed for the identification of a continuum of identity transformation, beginning with cognitive transformations and culminating in identity transformation, discussed in depth in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven presented the two types of desistance identified in the data – formal and substantive desistance. The continuum of identity transformation is involved in the complex process of substantive desistance, whilst in contrast formal desistance involves no identifiable process. The process of substantive desistance is driven primarily by internal factors; however, sources of formal social control also provide a deterrent effect. Phase one within the process of substantive desistance required self-acceptance and a positive sense of self, often achieved through the use of stigma management techniques. Respondents displayed various techniques to negotiate feelings of self-stigmatisation. The neutralisation technique 'denial of responsibility' (Sykes & Matza, 1957) was employed by four respondents who related their offending to psychological or mental health problems from which they suffered at the time of their offending, but from which they had now recovered. This type of neutralisation reinforces to the individual (and others) that now they are 'cured' this behaviour will not recur. Respondents' neutralisations were often unconvincing, but perhaps through repetition, it appeared that they had internalised these and almost as though they 'believed' themselves. Furthermore, individuals' self-narratives provided a way for them to present a coherent story of how and why they had changed, to convince both themselves and others (Maruna, 2001). Denying responsibility allowed respondents to present their offending as a temporary aberration and thus, to separate the offending from their 'core self' as a wholly good person (Maruna, 2001). This finding supports Farmer et al (2015) who identified that the early stages of desistance in sexual offenders required a positive sense of self as an essentially good person which required engagement in a process of neutralisation. I therefore argue that neutralisations in this context promote psychological adjustment and act as a highly adaptive mechanism for maintaining self-esteem (Snyder & Higgins, 1988). Chapter Six discussed the variety of additional stigma management techniques, often relating to 'distancing', employed by respondents. The neutralisation technique of denial of responsibility and the alternative techniques employed by respondents are grouped together under the umbrella term 'stigma management techniques'. These techniques were argued in Chapter Six

to allow for the negotiation of feelings of self-stigma, which, if internalised, is likely to reduce self-esteem and negatively impact goal attainment (Corrigan et al, 2009).

The first phase of the substantive desistance process also included the desire to change, the belief that this was achievable, and a readiness to change, in support of previous findings (e.g., Giodarno et al, 2002). Respondents in phase one often also displayed cognitive transformations in relation to understanding of their offending and the harms caused by this, although this was less common in non-contact offeners. In phase two, the individual recognises the benefits of meaningful external sources of social and structural support and actively seeks these hooks for change (Giodarno et al, 2002). The attainment of these external sources assists in the construction of a new prosocial identity, which is 'ongoing work in progress'. Respondents in phase two identified as non-offenders and, although they could envisage a desired future identity, this was unattainable in their current circumstances, reflecting Healy's (2014) 'liminal desisters'. A meaningful substitute identity is adopted which allows for the exercise of agency and "permits expression of at least some elements of the desired future identity" (Healy, 2014: 878). Meaning and purpose were found in social supports, structural supports such as employment or hobbies providing constructive activity, and for some, in romantic partners. These served to develop the individual's identity, highlighting the interdependency of the internal and external sources, operating in conjunction to construct and reconstruct the new identity. Once sufficient external sources of meaning are attained, to provide the necessary essences for full identity development, the individual reaches phase three of the process – identity transformation. For the two men in the current sample who were identified as having achieved phase three, their new non-offending identity had become stabilised through a lengthy process of acclimatisation. Substantive desistance, conceptually linked to secondary desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004), includes the three aspects of desistance ('act', 'identity' and 'relational') suggested by Nugent and Schinkel (2016) to be necessary for the long-term maintenance of desistance. The two respondents who are identified as having transformed their identity demonstrated full acceptance of responsibility, having attained numerous sources of meaning which contributed to the crystallisation of their non-offending pro-social identity, far removed from their old offending identity and completely incompatible with offending.

The process of substantive desistance, whilst reflecting similarities with a number of previous theories (Vaughan, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Göbbels et al, 2012) aligns most closely with the theory of cognitive transformation (Giodarno et al, 2002), although differs in temporal ordering. Substantive desistance is predicted to relate to desistance from sexual offending and perhaps other serious offending, given that this appears to be a lengthy and

protracted process, resulting from the stigmatisation assigned to such offenders which presents barriers to the attainment of both external sources and identity change.

The differing approaches of probation officers and PPOs to respondents' management varied both within and across probation and police force areas. These related to the 'surveillance' versus 'welfare' models identified in the approaches of probation officers by Healy (2014). Healy found that offenders in receipt of the welfare approach were more likely to provide positive accounts of their supervision. Similarly, respondents in the current study in receipt of the welfare approach demonstrated engagement and co-operation and were more likely to achieve substantive desistance. Respondents whose management involved the welfare model were not only managed by their PPOs, but often saw these as a source of support, which seemed to encourage desistance. In contrast, respondents identified as formal desisters were in receipt of the surveillance approach and demonstrated a lack of engagement with officers. Formal desisters tended to perceive their sanctions (and the agents delivering them) as lacking in legitimacy, and often demonstrated a defiant, antagonistic approach towards criminal justice agents. Formal desistance can be defined as "simplistic obedience to rules" (Parker, 2002: 27, cited in Robinson & McNeill, 2008: 434) and was underpinned by three mechanisms: simply increasing the age of sexual partners to accord with the law; behaviour constrained due to physical disability; or disrupted substantive desistance. The latter was evidenced in Mike's self-narrative which indicated prior engagement together with investments in informal social controls, which appeared to have been disrupted by the termination of his relationship by the criminal justice system, followed by the imposition of a SOPO.

Substantive desistance, including the construction of a non-offending identity, is underpinned in the early stages by normative compliance with the law which becomes habitual and progresses to substantive desistance in the long-term. This contrasts with the instrumental compliance underpinning formal desistance, thus a negative avoidance motive drives desistance, rather than the approach motive within substantive desistance. Formal desistance involves involves simple adherence to the law and lacks cognitive transformation or internalisation of the harms caused by past offending. Simple change in behaviour is evidenced, rather than a change in attitudes and identity. The lack of internal change within formal desistance is perhaps indicative of failure, as 'act desistance' alone is unlikely to maintain desistance (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). However, the formal desisters in the present sample had lengthy post-release periods up to 13 years, indicating that this can be achieved long-term. Those whose formal desistance was physically constrained are perhaps more likely to maintain desistance in the long-term, however, formal desistance involving legally aged sexual partners is potentially dangerous and

carries the risk of relapse given that it is not always possible to determine whether individuals are above the age of sexual consent.

This thesis has addressed the central research question 'which internal and external factors are involved in the desistance process in adult male child sex offenders? and concludes that the process of achieving substantive desistance involves the internal factors of agency, self-belief, a positive sense of self, resilience, determination, hope, optimism, gaining trust, and a continuum of identity transformation. The external factors include the informal social controls of stable accommodation, stable (and meaningful) employment, social supports and investments in significant others, not necessarily romantic partners. The external and internal factors are interdependent, as a non-offending identity is constructed in accordance with meaningful social and structural supports. Findings indicate that formal social control in the form of sex offender treatment is beneficial to aiding cognitive transformations in those who engage with treatment. The formal social controls of prison and the SOR served as a deterrent to further offending, thus aiding desistance. A common theme within respondents' self-narratives was the desire to avoid a return to prison. The supervision involved in the SOR highlighted to respondents that apprehension and further imprisonment was a likely result of further reoffending. However, welfare approaches to the management of sexual offenders are preferable over more rigid surveillance approaches. The former is more likely to result in sanctions perceived as legitimate and ultimately lead to substantive desistance, whilst the latter serves to reinforce negative labelling and the perception of sanctions as lacking in legitimacy, more likely to result in formal desistance.

The narratives of the men in the current sample evidence that attempts at reintegration are fraught with difficulties for those with a sexual conviction. The acquisition of informal social controls including social supports/networks is inherently problematic given that their past harms are usually linked to relationships with others. However, readers should not be misled that my exploration and presentation of the difficulties experienced by convicted sexual offenders aims to evoke sympathy, or serves to condone the actions of individuals who have committed serious harms against children. Given that few sexual offenders are likely to be incarcerated indefinitely, it is important that research identifies the factors which enable desistance. The findings from this research highlight that an exclusionary approach to convicted sex offenders is unlikely to enable desistance. A life of social isolation and exclusion is a life lacking meaning and thus, the offender has little to lose by reoffending, resulting in further victimisation – the precise outcome which society seeks to avoid.

### 8.3 Implications for policy and practice

The events of recent years have highlighted the widespread, pervasive nature of child sexual abuse. Significantly, the Jimmy Savile scandal was followed by revelations of numerous historical child sexual offences committed by the celebrity and led to the conviction of several other celebrities found guilty of similar offences. Whilst this brought the topic of child sexual offences to the forefront of the popular media, it may also have served to heighten the moral panics surrounding sexual offending, leading to increased fear and societal revulsion of sexual offenders. Sex offenders tend to be uniformly labelled and treated as dangerous psychopaths, irrespective of offence type (Quinn et al, 2004). They are popularly perceived as irredeemable, unamenable to treatment and incapable of change, a notion perpetuated by politicians and the media alike, and to a lesser extent, by agents of the criminal justice system. Together these factors hold serious consequences for sexual offenders attempting to reintegrate following a period of incarceration. The findings from this project refute the popularly held belief that sexual offenders are irredeemable and incapable of change, highlighted by Kevin's quote and included in the title of this thesis: "*my history is not my destiny*".

Public education is required to alleviate public fears of the paedophile as the 'dangerous stranger'. The low prevalence of such opportunistic predatory sexual attacks requires wider communication as this detracts from the fact that most sexual abuse of children is perpetrated by someone known to them (Grubin, 1998; Fitch, 2006). Public education is necessary to ensure that parents/guardians are informed about these more common concerns, although this notion is likely to prove uncomfortable.

The public should also be made aware that sexual offences against children, whilst all illegal and with the potential to create serious long-term consequences for victims, exist along a continuum of severity. For example, Howard's offence related to his consensual relationship with an 18 year old male, at a time when homosexual relationships under the age of 21 were illegal. This of course constituted an offence which required punishment but it is arguably questionable that Howard was the 'predatory paedophile', presenting a high risk of harm to the community. The heterogeneous nature of child sexual offenders and the broad spectrum of offences should be portrayed in public education campaigns. Within this dialogue, the more common and real dangers of grooming online and the caution required when children engage with social networking sites can be communicated. Given that "no other crime invokes such negative perceptions" (Quinn et al, 2004: 217), the notion that convicted sex offenders should be entitled to a meaningful life is perhaps an uncomfortable one for most to contemplate.

Public education should include raising awareness of campaigns by organisations such as 'Stop it now' (no date), operated by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. This offers support and education to parents/carers and also those concerned about their own sexual thoughts regarding children. The majority of respondents in the current project were unaware of such organisations and several felt that this would have provided a useful support prior to their conviction. Of course, accessing such supports requires that any admission of offending is reported to the authorities, which may deter those who have commited offences.

The current research indicates that the reintegration of sexual offenders is crucial to the development and maintenance of desistance. With this in mind, encouraging desistance from sexual offending is not solely the job of the criminal justice system. It would therefore be useful to educate the public that how society responds to those with a conviction for a sexual offence is significant to desistance. The absence of healthy relationships and social bonds leaves the sexual offender in the community unaccountable to others and renders ostracisation and exclusion of CSOs detrimental to the protection of children (Mills, 2015).

Respondents' narratives indicate that agents of formal social control are also guilty of encouraging internalisation of the sex offender label in attempts to encourage individuals to acknowledge the perpetual risk that those with a conviction for a sexual offence present. The present data indicate that some criminal justice agents commonly perceive those with a sexual conviction as unlikely to change and lacking any possibility of rehabilitation. This type of approach may reinforce 'othering', thus presenting barriers to identity negotiation. These messages are not conducive to desistance and may be more likely to encourage reoffending. Criminal justice agents responsible for any aspect of sex offender management or treatment should be further educated on the possibility of change for some. Enforcement and management practice with sexual offenders should also attempt to align public protection strategies with a more goal-oriented approach. Of course, it is acknowledged that some individuals with sexual convictions present a high risk of harm to the public and therefore this risk must be managed. However, the success of some participants in achieving substantive desistance demonstrates that the management of risk can be successfully aligned with a welfare model of management. The data indicate that the adoption of a supportive role, which also monitors risk levels, is enabling for substantive desistance by allowing the individual to look to the future, rather than consistently focus on past harms. Engaging and working *with* offenders not *on* them (McCulloch, 2005) can align public protection concerns with rehabilitation.

Little information is available relating to the use of the GLM within sex offender treatment programmes in England and Wales. However, the use of treatment programmes' terminology

such as the 'Better Lives Booster', implies the welcome emergence of strengths-based underpinnings to treatment. The provision of treatment involving an approach goal focus in contrast to the generally negative, avoidant focused nature of treatment and management is more likely to encourage individuals' self-belief and lead to the attainment of the primary human goods necessary to a good life, rendering them more enabling for desistance. The current research finds support for the GLM-D model of assessment and treatment proposed by Laws and Ward (2011: 33), who suggest that:

> Everything therapists do when intervening with sex offenders should reflect a concern to enhance their ability to achieve lives they want while ensuring that inevitable restrictions are ethically justified and proportional to the assessed level of threat or risk.

The current findings indicate that this approach should also extend beyond therapy to the supervision and management of CSOs, as a rigid surveillance approach can potentially disrupt substantive desistance. Retrospective approaches continually reinforce to the individual what he cannot do and provide little opportunity to develop a more positive alternative (Weaver, 2014). Strengths-based approaches to both treatment and management may also serve to enhance their perceived legitimacy, also significant to the achievement of substantive desistance.

Furthermore, individuals displaying neutralisations and other stigma management techniques, and therefore not accepting complete responsibility for their offending behaviour, should not be excluded from participation in treatment programmes, as such techniques were found to assist substantive desistance in the present study. Rather, these should be viewed as an adaptive mechanism, which serve to aid self-esteem and to enable substantive desistance. Therefore such discourse should not necessarily be interpreted as implying greater risk. The finding that such techniques appear to cease after protracted periods (apparent in the narratives of the two respondents 15 years post-prison release) supports Janoff-Bulman and Timko's (1987) assertion that that processes of denial allow for change to occur gradually and are discarded when no longer required. Blagden et al (2014: 1708) also argue that techniques of denial assist identity work in allowing the individual to achieve a positive sense of self, and that "Breaking down this identity could be potentially damaging for the offender". These techniques should be seen as encouraging, rather than disabling, for desistance from sexual offending.

### 8.4 Limitations

No research is without limitations, and this study is no different. The findings of the current study should be interpreted with caution, primarily due to the small sample size. Findings may result from sample artefacts, particularly the finding that stigma management techniques

appeared to cease as desistance progressed, given that eight respondents had been released for less than 54 months. However, this timescale is longer than many sex offender recidivism evaluations.

Accessing the sample was extremely problematic and ultimately depended upon the accounts of a self-selecting sample. A purposive sampling approach was unavoidable, given that participants were required to meet the sample criteria in order to address the central research question. In the absence of any financial incentives for participation, a self-selecting sample is likely to include those with strong opinions on the phenomenon in question and therefore, self-selection bias may occur whereby those volunteering to participate have some kind of inherent bias. Conversely, a self-selecting sample may ensure the recruitment of true desisters, who, whilst experiencing or having experienced the process may wish to share their success stories. Several respondents voluntarily expressed that their motivation to participate in the study was their desire to ultimately benefit others in similar circumstances, reflecting Maruna's (2001) concept of generativity. In order to ensure the men were not under any illusions about the purpose of my research I informed them that it was very unlikely that the research would change government policy on the management of sexual offenders, but that I was hoping to disseminate the findings via academic publication/s.

Participants self-reported that they had not committed a further sexual offence since their most recent prison release. As with any research exploring desistance, one cannot be certain of desistance until death (Maruna, 2001: 23); an issue which is magnified in relation to sexual offences, given that a large amount of these are likely to remain undetected. However, as participants were members of Unlock (reformed offenders association), and initiated contact in response to my Unlock advertisement, thus self-identifying as having ceased sexual offending, they were arguably likely to be refraining from further sexual crime.[37]

With the exception of participant one, Alan, to whom access was obtained via his local police force, it was not possible to verify participants' conviction records. Where possible, an internet search was conducted to identify any reports of participants' offences. Some had provided me with first names only, thus excluding a search, but for those who provided surnames, it was possible to obtain newspaper reports on the offences of three participants, which verified their own accounts of the offence for which they were convicted. Should all respondents have been approached by agents of the criminal justice system, their motives to participate would

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[37] The advertisement referred to research on 'what stops men who have previously committed sexual offence/s against children from reoffending' (see Appendix A), rather than employing the term 'desistance'.

potentially differ, as they may have felt pressure to do so. Furthermore, as Farmer et al (2015: 324) note "the low re-offending rate amongst sexual offenders actually means that statistically the likelihood of interviewing a desisting sex offender is far larger than interviewing an active or persisting one".

As Harris (2014) points out, the inability to verify participants' accounts is a limitation of all self-report studies. The validity of sex offenders' accounts may be further questionable due to popular stereotypical views of this offender type as deceptive and manipulative. Findings from the current research indicate that such a stereotype is perpetuated by treatment and management approaches whose inherent focus on risk may prove counter-productive by encouraging dishonesty in this offender type. The men participating in the present study were not predicted to be deceptive as the research focused on how they experienced the process of desistance rather than discussing or challenging their offence accounts. Indeed, many of Harris's (2014: 1574) (ex-)sexual offender participants commented that they had "no reason to lie" in research interviews regarding their desistance. Furthermore, to assume that treated sexual offenders are deceptive implies pessimism in the efficacy of treatment programmes. Qualitative research is based on differing epistemological considerations than the positivist nature of quantitative research, and as such, the aim of qualitative interviews involves a commitment to listen and present data from participants in a way that respects their own 'truth'. Narrative approaches involve the individual's construction of their 'story' and provide a way to explore both the internal and external factors involved in participants' accounts. The voice of the desisting sexual offender is privileged in this thesis in an attempt to understand how the desistance process is subjectively experienced. The experiential process cannot be understood from the perspective of the sexual offender unless they are allowed a voice. To aid transparency of analysis and interpretation, excerpts from respondents' narratives are presented in Chapters Four to Seven, however, it is unlikely that qualitative research can be entirely devoid of subjectivity. Given that the majority of sexual offenders are not incarcerated indefinitely, it is important to understand the experience from their perspective in an attempt to reduce reoffending, as Waldram (2007: 969) articulates "…we need to hear from them if we are to avoid being harmed by them". Indeed, child sexual abusers' own accounts are argued to be important for developing future preventative programmes (Brogden & Harkin, 2000). Several respondents noted that the opportunity to tell their 'stories' outside of the criminal justice arena was welcome and some expressed gratitude for the opportunity to do so.

Ideally the sample would have been at least six years post-prison release at the time of interview in an attempt to capture the experiences of those who, according to statistics, are more likely to refrain from reoffending (most reconvictions for sexual offences occur within six years (Hood et

al, 2002)).    Securing participants for interview with such post-release timescales was unfortunately prohibited due to lengthy, and ultimately failed, negotiations with numerous 'gatekeepers'.    Ultimately, obtaining a sample of individuals between one and 15 years post-prison release was advantageous as the data indicated patterns in the desistance process which would not have been illuminated had the sample all been at least six years post-prison release. However, the cross-sectional design of the current project prohibited exploration of whether formal desistance may ultimately lead to substantive desistance.    A longitudinal design is therefore preferable and may provide answers to such questions.

Of course, the findings from this project cannot be generalisable to broader populations of adult male child sex offenders, due to the size and nature of the sample, which is unlikely to be representative of the ex-sex offender population.    Generalisability is more often the aim of quantitative studies rather than exploratory qualitative studies.    The two types of desistance identified in the present study reflect elements of previous research on desistance from both non-sexual and sexual offending, particularly those of Giodarno et al (2002), although differ in temporal ordering.    Therefore theoretical generalisation is proposed, using my findings to make connections that may apply beyond the immediate research setting (Lewis et al, 2014).    It is hoped that this study will ultimately contribute to a body of research which is predicted to develop further in forthcoming years.


## 8.5 Future research

The current findings present several potentially fruitful avenues for future research.    It would be useful for further research to explore the distinct types of formal and substantive desistance from sexual offending using larger sample sizes and focusing on those convicted of sexual offences involving a child, as the present study has.    Further support for these types of desistance would serve to strengthen the call for treatment and management approaches which aid perceptions of legitimacy, that is, strengths-based approaches aligned with risk management involving support rather than purely rigid enforcement.    Future research involving a longitudinal research design would be useful for exploring the potential of transition from formal to substantive desistance.

None of the present sample had been released from prison for periods between four and a half and nine years.  Given that the use of stigma management techniques appeared to cease with the passage of time, future research could explore this further in a sample with a broader range of post-release periods in order to explore this missing time period in the present study.  Support

for the present findings would serve to reinforce the adaptive nature of stigma management techniques.

As Laws and Ward (2011) note, the differing offending trajectories of sex offenders suggests potentially differing desistance trajectories. Identifying sub-groups of sexual offenders allows for the possibility of associations to be explored which may ultimately prove beneficial in relation to policy and practice. The intra-familial contact offenders within the current sample were most likely to achieve substantive desistance (five of the six intra-familial offenders were identified as substantive desisters). Given this finding, which aligns with recidivism studies indicating that intra-familial offenders demonstrate less risk of recidivism (Quinsey et al, 1995; Alexander, 1999; Seto et al, 2015), it would be useful for future research to focus on desistance in extra-familial offenders, as recidivism studies indicate that such offenders present greater risk of recidivism (Hood et al, 2002), particularly those abusing males (Abel et al, 1987; Hanson et al, 1993; Grubin 1998; Soothill et al, 2000; Harris & Hanson, 2004). Finally, future research with the ability to access a sample via criminal justice agencies would allow for triangulation of participants' accounts with official records which may enhance validity.

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# Appendices

*Unlock advertisement*

**Can you help to provide a valuable contribution to the rehabilitation of sexual offenders?**

**Important PhD research at the University of Sheffield aims to find out what stops men who have previously committed sexual offence/s against children from reoffending**

**If you have previously served a prison sentence of 30 months or more for this type of offence and been released for at least a year, we would like to hear how you have moved on**

**The research involves informal interviews of around 2 hours.  Your identity will remain anonymous and information provided is confidential\***

**If you feel you can help, or for more information, please contact Joanne Hulley:**
**0752 8391827**
**lwp11jlh@sheffield.ac.uk**
**School of Law, University of Sheffield, Bartolome House, Winter Street, Sheffield, S3 7ND**

\*unless risk of harm or undisclosed sexual offences stated

*Participant information sheet*



# <u>Research on what stops men from sexual reoffending</u>

**What is the research about?**

This research is for my PhD, for which I am studying at the University of Sheffield. I want to find out what stops men who have previously committed sexual offences against children from committing further similar offences. To do this, I am interviewing men about their lives, to try to discover what they feel has helped them to stop committing further sexual crime. The interview does not involve me bombarding you with questions, but rather you telling me your story. They are therefore quite informal. Very little research into this topic has previously been done, therefore your own account will be extremely valuable and may ultimately prove useful in helping other men to stop committing sexual crime. Your experiences of stopping offending and what helped you to do this may help to guide how criminal justice agencies deal with this type of offender.

**What would taking part involve?**

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please feel free to ask (using the contact information on page 3) if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Your involvement is **completely voluntary** and it is your decision as to whether you wish to take part. If you do wish to take part it is likely that the project will involve one interview, lasting around two hours. You can end the interview at any time and if you change your mind and no longer wish to be involved, you can do so at any time without giving a reason and any information you have given me will be destroyed if you wish. The interviews are **not** for therapy or counselling, nor to discuss previous offences, but simply for the purpose of collecting information for my research. If you do not agree to participate there is no penalty or loss of benefits to yourself. Whether you agree to take part or not, any current contact you may

have with police or any other criminal justice agency will not be affected.  Should you wish to take part, there are several methods through which you can contact me at the end of this document.

It is unclear at present where the interviews will take place in your area.  It may be a university, community centre, or library.  Reasonable travel expenses (by public transport, not taxi) to the venue will be reimbursed upon production of a receipt.


**What will happen during the interview(s)?**

During the interview I would like to find out about your life since your conviction. If there is anything you would prefer not to talk about, or which you may find upsetting, we would avoid discussing this in the interview.

I would like to record the interview using a digital recorder, as in interviews of this length it would be difficult to make handwritten notes.  However, the recording will be kept on a secure system at Sheffield University and will be destroyed when the project is completed.


**What will happen to the information you give me?**

All the information I collect about you in the course of the research will remain strictly private and confidential.  However, if you tell me about any sexual offences for which you have not been convicted, or of any risk to yourself or others, this will be passed on to the relevant Police Sergeant in the Sex Offender Management team.

The interview will be typed up as an anonymised transcript – it will **not** contain your name or any other information which could identify you.  The information will be used to write my PhD thesis and any other articles or books which may be published after the research is completed; again **none** of these would contain any information which may explicitly identify you.  All the men who take part in my research will be given a fake name to protect their identities and any other information you give me, such as place names, will also be altered or removed.  I can provide you with a copy of the transcript if you wish.


**About me**

I have lived in South Yorkshire all my life and returned to education as a mature student to undertake a first degree and a Masters degree at Sheffield Hallam University.  I am now studying for my PhD at the University of Sheffield.  I do not work for Police or Probation or any other criminal justice agency. I have previously worked voluntarily with all types of offenders as a member of the Independent Monitoring Board in a prison. My PhD research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, an independent research body.  The University of Sheffield's Research Ethics Committee have approved the research and confirmed that the study can take place.

**Who can I contact if I wish to take part?**

Joanne Hulley
School of Law
University of Sheffield
Bartolome House
Winter Street
Sheffield
S3 7ND

Mobile - 07528391827
Email – lwp11jlh@sheffield.ac.uk

If you would like to discuss this research with someone else at the University, or you have any problems whilst taking part which you would prefer not to discuss with me, you can contact either of my research supervisors at the University of Sheffield in confidence:

Professor Stephen Farrall – 0114 2226718
Email – S.Farrall@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr Gwen Robinson –  0114 2226863
Email – G.J.Robinson@sheffield.ac.uk

**Thank you for reading this information.**

*Interview guide*

My research is aiming to find out more about how men who have been convicted of a sexual offence against a child move on and rebuild their lives.

Before we start I just need to make sure that you have read the information sheet? Do you have any questions regarding this? As the information sheet states, I need to record the interviews so that I can transcribe them accurately. I can assure you that the contents of the recording will only be listened to by myself. The recording will be stored on a secure file at the University of Sheffield which can only be accessed by myself as it is password protected. When the contents of the interview are written up, you will be given a false name. Your location in the country will not be revealed. The PhD itself and any other articles or books to be published from it will include your false name. You can withdraw from the research at any time without providing a reason.

The contents of the interview will remain confidential UNLESS you tell me that you have committed an offence which you have not been convicted for, or indicate that you pose a risk of harm to yourself or others – which I would be obliged to report to the necessary authorities.

Are you happy to continue with the interview?

Would you mind answering a few questions first about yourself and your offence? These are the only formal questions I have. Then if it's OK with you I would rather we had an informal conversation about your life since your conviction. You don't have to discuss anything you would rather not. I'd like to begin by asking you a few general questions.

**General information**
- Please could you tell me your age?
- What was the length of the prison sentenced you received? And how much of this was spent in prison?
- How long is it since you were released from prison?
- Had you any previous convictions for any offences ?
- Were you convicted of one or more sexual offences?
- What offence were you convicted of? (contact or non-contact)
- Was the child male or female?
- At the time of your conviction were you married or with a partner?
- Were you employed at the time?
- How about now? Are you married or have a partner?
- Are you employed?

Can you begin by telling me about the time you were convicted?

*Use prompts regarding the following if the respondent does not cover these*

*Phrasing*
*Please could you tell me more about…*
*Can you explain….*
*How did you feel about…*
*Some people say…what are your feelings on this…*

- **Can you tell me about life in prison?**
  *Participation in courses? How did you find these?*
  *Work in prison? How was this?*
  *How did you feel in prison? (unpleasant, bullying?)*
  *Visits from partner/friends/relatives?*

- **What was life like when you left prison?**
  *Can you tell me about accommodation? (relocate or return to same community?)*
  *Time on licence? probation supervision?*

- **Are you currently working?**
  *Was it difficult to find work?*
  *Offence disclosed?*
  *Do you enjoy your job?*

- **Can you tell me what life is like now? Daily routine etc**
  *Friends? Hobbies? Family contact?*

- **Look out for talk on people/things which have had a positive/negative influence**

- **The sex offender register?**
  *What does this involve for you?*
  *How often are you visited by police?*

**LOOK OUT FOR**
- **Evidence of identity change**
- **How they see the future**
- **Important scenes/events, positive or negative, which stand out as being significant**
- **Single greatest challenge faced in life, how was this dealt with?**
- **Was the assistance of other people involved?**
- **Does there appear to have been a turning point?**
- **Did ceasing offending appear to be a conscious/unconscious decision?**
- **Identity change? Self efficacy? Internal locus of control?**
- **Offending as an addictive behavior? Control not cure?**
- **Avoidance of risky situations?**
- **Effects of imprisonment?**
- **Effectives of treatment programmes?**
- **Effects of SOR?**
- **Evidence of generativity – church, voluntary work, does he have children?**
- **Part of a social network?**

*Comprehensive sample information*

| Participant | Age bracket | Offence type* | Custodial sentence length (months) | Post-release period (months) | Treatment? | Stigma management techniques? | Compliance mechanism | Identity transformation phase | Type of desistance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1  Alan | 70s | EF; C; F | 30 | 156 | ✓ | ✓ | I; H; C | None | F |
| 2  Terry | 40s | IF; C; F | 60 | 40 | ✓ | ✓ | N; H | 2 | S |
| 3  Simon | 50s | IF; C; F | 120 | 54 | ✓ | ✓ | N; H | 2 | S |
| 4  Pete | 40s | IF; C; M | 30 | 177 | ✓ | ✗ (in the past) | N; H | 3 | S |
| 5  Kevin | 40s | EF; NC; F | 42 | 27 | ✗ | ✓ | I | None | F |
| 6  Mike | 50s | EF; NC; F; M | 12 | 132 | ✓ | ✓ | I; H | None | F |
| 7  Russ | 20s | EF; NC; F | 30 | 24 | ✓ | ✓ | N | 2 | S |
| 8  Adam | 20s | EF; NC; F; M | 48 | 27 | ✓ | ✓ | N | 2 | S |
| 9  Vic | 60s | IF; C; M | 84 | 120 | ✓ | ✗ | I; H; C | None | F |
| 10 Derek | 60s | EF; C; F | 48 | 180 | ✓ | ✗ (in the past) | N; H | 2 | S |
| 11 Nigel | 60s | IF; C; F | 144 | 12 | ✓ | ✓ | N | 2 | S |
| 12 Patrick | 50s | EF; C; M | 72 | 108 | ✓ | ✗ | I; H | None | F |
| 13 Howard | 60s | EF; C; M | 48 | 108 | ✓ | ✗ | N; H | 3 | S |
| 14 John | 20s | EF; NC; F; M | 9 | 20 | ✗ | ✓ | I; N | 1 | S |
| 15 Ian | 40s | IF; C; F | 96 | 18 | ✓ | ✓ | N | 2 | S |

*Abbreviations:*

* Offence type includes victim relationship, contact/non-contact offence and victim gender

EF:     extra-familial victim (unrelated child)          IF:     intra-familial victim (related – includes stepchildren)
C:      contact offence (e.g., sexual assault)           NC:     non-contact offence (e.g., collecting pornographic images of children)
F:      female victim                                    M:      male victim

*Compliance mechanisms:*

I:      Instrumental                                     N:      Normative
H:      Habitual                                         C:      Constrained